

THE CCC OFFICERS COMMUNITY CONSULTATION TOOLKIT



This Community Consultation Toolkit has been developed to provide CCC Officers with a systematic, practical guide to ensure that we involve and consult communities in a way that is coordinated, consistent, coherent and constructive.

Stage 1 - Planning Your Activity

Establish a clear brief to ensure that you have the necessary information, resources, time and approach to achieve the desired outcomes. A brief should include:

Background

- What do you want to achieve?

Purpose /Key Objectives

- Why do you need to consult and involve the communities/service users?
- Do you want to improve service delivery, identify gaps in the service, establish the needs of the communities or involve the community in decision-making.
- Has a similar exercise already been undertaken and can you use these results to avoid duplication.

Target Audience

- Who are you trying to consult/involve?

Methods

- How will you consult/involve them?

Plan

- Time scales (including waiting for responses) costs (skills, commitment money, time, staff and other resources), who is responsible?
- Timing is key- consultation often takes much longer than expected.

Results

- How you intend to analyse your results and how the results will have an impact.
- How will the results be fed back to the consultees? Is it clear what the outcome is from the results and have the participants been made aware of this?

Feedback

- How do you plan to feedback the results?

Evaluation/Monitoring

- How will you know if it has been successful?

Attached is a useful checklist to ensure that you have considered all these points.

Community Consultation / Involvement Check List

The following checklist will help to make effective use of any consultation /community involvement exercise and should be used in advance to think through what will be required.

Background	
Purpose of Consultation	
Existing data available	
Target audience	
Methodology	

Dates of consultation	
Sample method (if quantitative)	
Sample size (if quantitative)	
Identified and Allocated resources	
External consultant (if applicable)	
Partnership opportunities (if applicable)	
Feedback	

Monitoring & Evaluation	
Lead Officer	

Signed (Lead Officer) _____ **Date** _____

Please note: Welsh Language Requirements

All consultation undertaken by the Council will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme guidelines as outlined below.

- All consultation conducted by the Council in Wales will be conducted bilingually or in English or Welsh, according to the preference of the consultee. This includes consultation with all external stakeholders e.g. residents, service users, businesses, voluntary organisations, partner organisations and Town and Community Councils and also with internal stakeholders e.g. officers, trades' unions, elected members.
- Questionnaires, consultation documents and associated information will be published bilingually and be equally accessible to consultees.
- Stakeholders should be given the choice of participating in interviews, discussion groups or interactive forums in English or Welsh.
- When planning consultation, consideration should be given to whether Welsh speakers or English speakers should be consulted as a specific target group.
- Quantitative consultation **should determine whether satisfaction varies between Welsh speakers and English speakers** in the community. This means that information about their preferred choice of language will need to be collected.
- If consultation is to be undertaken by an external agency, the above requirements should be included in the brief and the subsequent contract between the Council and the agency.

Stage 2 – Undertaking your Activity - Why, What, When, How and With Whom?

Why

- It is vitally important to clarify the purpose of the Community Consultation Involvement (CCI) activity. You should understand why the exercise is required and develop clear aims and objectives, together with time scales for completion of it (see Stage 1).

What

- What level of CCI is needed? Is the exercise primarily information giving/sharing, consulting over plans or involving communities in decision making?
- What previous CCI activity has taken place that you can draw upon?
- What groups do you involve? Communities of interest are made up of people with different needs, interests and perspectives. This diversity needs to be fully understood and valued so that there is equal involvement from all the communities in the CCI activity.

When

- People are less likely to get involved if they feel that decisions have already been made, and that their involvement is of minor importance. The earlier the involvement, the more likely it is to be a successful CCI activity.

How

- How will the information from the CCI activity be used – be clear from the start what you want to get from this!
- Which of the Council's decision-making processes (e.g. Committees, CMT, DMT) apply in these circumstances? Check the internal processes you may need to be aware of and plan the activity around them.

With whom

- Have you identified the target audience? The list of who to involve will vary according to the service.
- Are there any Equality & Diversity considerations that need to be considered?
- What about hard-to-reach groups? They can be defined as groups who experience barriers such as poverty, language, disability, transport and childcare etc.
- This can be overcome by conducting focus groups, carrying out in-depth interviews, by providing material in appropriate formats e.g. large print, additional languages and plain English as opposed to jargon, on tape or by providing Translators or Signers.
- Have communities of interest been identified e.g. BME, Disabled People, Older People, Children and Young People etc.?

Useful tips in involving communities of interest are outlined below:

- Who are your community? How involved are they and how accessible are your methods of involvement.
- Liaise with Communities of Interest groups e.g. Older People's groups and Ethnic Minorities, for example, which are operating in the community to ensure that they have their voices heard.
- Use a variety of community venues for meetings with local communities and ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Consider how the timing of events can affect local people such as school hours, meal times, religious festival, public transport etc.
- Remember to cater for people who may not read or write, by using visual aids, such as video or pictures or offering to write down people's comments.
- Ideally a budget should be determined to support community involvement costs, such as child care, signers, translators, personal assistance, travel expenses and a gift voucher to people who participate, as a thank you gesture.

- Have communities of place (geographically located communities) been identified e.g. Community Partnerships.

Stage 3 - Key features to CCI

Recognising different agendas

- Care needs to be taken to distinguish between “their statutory requirement to consult communities, and communities wishing to raise their own agendas”.
- Space needs to be given to both types of consultation to encourage community involvement. The community should feel that they have ownership of any consultation and community involvement activity including a sense of participation where possible.

Clarity of Purpose

- Research shows that most individuals and communities will only want to be involved in community consultation if they can see how a particular issue has a ‘direct impact’ on their lives.
- Care needs to be taken to carefully consider how to communicate with the community in a positive and effective way, whilst ensuring that clarity is maintained as to what their impact and involvement will have.
- The most successful CCI activities are usually those that involve people in practical or direct ways, and show clear evidence of how changes could have a direct impact on their lives.
- Hands-on activities such as ‘Planning for Real’ or the development of practical improvements to a neighbourhood have proved to be more effective ways of generating the interest and involvement of communities rather than public meetings.

Honest and Realistic

- The Officers undertaking the CCI activity need to be ‘honest and realistic’ about the purpose and parameters of the CCI they are undertaking. It is imperative not to raise expectations, which cannot be met.

Responsiveness to community priorities

- The best examples of CCI are those, which have been able to ‘respond quickly to communities priorities’. If the community can see how their involvement has resulted in tangible changes and benefits, they can recognise the value of contributing their time and ideas.
- It is not always possible to respond quickly to the community, but if they can see that the Council is keeping them involved from the beginning, and updated on progress, including barriers that are encountered, the overall response from the community will be generally positive and help build trust for future CCI activities.
- A transparent process enables the community to understand the way in which the council needs to work and not feel that their ideas and views are being ignored.
- Feedback does not always have to be in the form of a report. Posters, leaflets, local radio and other communication methods can provide people with the feedback they need to understand how their involvement has influenced decision-making and encourage their continued interest and support.

Providing opportunities for different levels of involvement

- It is important to build the capacity and skills of the communities involved by providing training and resources to empower them to participate in decision-making at all levels.

Timeframes

- There needs to be enough lead-in-time to consult or involve people. Sometimes, tight deadlines are given to get the community involved, which can ultimately affect the quality of community involvement.

Monitoring and Evaluating

- Every CCI activity needs to ensure that systems are in place to monitor and evaluate its process and effectiveness.
- Helps you understand whether the CCI activity is working as a way of providing a mechanism that helps the Council listen and respond to the members of the public and other key stakeholders.
- Helps to improve CCI activity by looking at the best and worst of your experiences!
- We can use resources for CCI more effectively in the future.
- Evaluating the CCI should be open and honest – something to learn from and share best practice.

What to evaluate?

- Did the exercise meet its objectives? If not, why not?
- Were the objectives clear and right? Were they relevant to the consultation? Did they link to the wider process?
- Were they clear to everyone involved? Did you get views from those you wanted?
- Were you successful in consulting minority, disadvantaged or under represented groups?
- Did different groups respond to different methods? Was feedback given to those consulted?
- Did those consulted feel that the exercise was worthwhile?
- Were the methods right for your objectives? Did one method work better than other, and if so, why?
- Did you get the required response rate/representative sample/information?
- Was the timetable clear and kept to, and if not, why? Was enough time allowed for responses?
- Was the information used easy to access?
 - relevant to the consultation?
 - produced in plain English and easy to understand?
 - available in other languages and formats?
- Did you budget adequately? Were there any unforeseen costs?
- Were there any over/under spends?
- Did you get views you could use? If so, how were they used?

- How has your service/policy changed as a result of the consultation?
- Has the consultation changed the relationship between you, your users and others?

Importance of Feeding back to Participants

- Providing feedback to the participants that have been involved in the consultation activity is part of effective CCI. It is also our duty to tell those involved what we have concluded and what we plan to do with the information – feedback is an important part of the process.
- It is good practice to let participants know how their views and opinions have been taken forward and if they haven't, then why. Consultation & Community Involvement is a two-way process and providing feedback is an essential element of maintaining the participants confidence in this process.
- All respondents should feel that their contribution has been valued as it may encourage them to take part in future CCI activity.

Stage 4 – Consultation Methods And Techniques

Consultation Objectives & Purpose

- This section is dedicated to providing more detailed information about carrying out a number of consultation methods and techniques.
- In order to identify which method is the most appropriate it is useful to think about the objectives and purpose of your consultation (see below).
- There is no ‘best’ method to consulting and involving communities, although CCI activities that use a combination of methods will present the best overall results (see below).

Objectives and Purpose of CCI Activity

- Providing Information/Listening
- Consulting and Getting Feedback
- Getting Judgments/Deciding Together

There are many consultation /involvement methods and techniques, some of which are listed below:

- Roadshows
- Open days
- Exhibitions.
- Public Meetings
- Surveys – postal, telephone, face to face
- Citizens Panel
- In Depth Interviews
- Focus Groups
- E- petitioning / E- consultation
- Citizens’ Panels
- Area Assemblies
- Seminars and Conferences
- Community Workshops

- Neighborhood Committees

Basically, research methods can be defined as being either qualitative or quantitative.

Qualitative methods e.g. Open Days, Roadshows, Exhibitions

- Undertaken using in-depth interviews or discussion groups among a relatively small number of people.
- To provide exploratory and explanatory information.
- Results are based on smaller sample sizes.
- Often not representative of the population, but provide much more detail on behaviour, attitudes and motivation.

Points to bear in mind when conducting qualitative consultation:

- Notes should be taken either on flipchart, on note form or tape recorded to record the discussion that has taken place.
- Discussions can be summarized into key themes, common views or noticeable differences in opinions between different groups or individuals.
- Summaries shouldn't be too long and should include all relevant points made within the sessions.
- Details of the group's composition and profile should be included within the report.
- External agencies will produce a summary report if requested.
-

Open Days, Roadshows, Exhibitions

- These can be a good way of informing and listening to users (and potential users) about the service provided.
- Information can be collected through self-completion questionnaires, comments cards, questions asked by interviewers or members of staff through informal discussions.

- Information can be given through display boards, models, written material, DVD etc

Pros

- Gives the public flexibility of when and where to attend.
- Arouses interest by giving your attendees something to see or do.
- Provides ad hoc feedback on services and ideas for change.
- A source of suggestions and comments.
- Gives users a chance to become familiar with your premises and staff.
- Provides opportunity to promote services and contact non/potential users.
- Can be arranged fairly quickly and without too much expense.

Cons

- People who attend may not be particularly representative.
- Doesn't always provide statistical data.
- Feedback will depend on what information was distributed and can easily be biased.

What you will need to do

- Consider your target audience before planning the event.
- Publicise well in advance and widely to generate interest.
- Ensure that provision is available to record all ideas and suggestions put forward.
- Keep a record of who attended – for feedback, further events.
- Participants should be informed of what will happen to the comments they made.
- Let the participants know how you will feedback to them the overall results from the CCI Event – and when they can expect to get this.
- Provide your full contact details to the participant so that they may contact you at a later stage regarding the CCI Activity. This also provides the consultees with a point of contact in the authority.

Quantitative methods **e.g. Surveys & Questionnaires**

- Incorporates the statistical (“how many?”) element- e.g. surveys.
- Looks at a target group.
- Designed to quantify awareness levels, opinions, beliefs and behaviour.
- Results are based on a large sample size that is representative of the population.
- Results of the research can be repeated in order to conduct comparisons or look for trends or changes over time.

Points to bear in mind when conducting quantitative consultation:

- Statistical and qualitative research analysis is an acquired skill.
- If a large, complex survey has been conducted then assistance may be required from an external agency when analysing the results.
- When conducting the survey internally it is important to consider who is going to input the data, produce the results tables, carry out the analysis and write the report.
- Lead officers for the activity are responsible for the analysis and should be involved in the design stage of the questionnaire.
- Decide which statistical package is going to be used to analyse the information.

Surveys & Questionnaires

- Surveys are a means of collecting information in response to set questions. They can be carried out by post, by person or by telephone.
- Surveys collect representative data on the views, opinions and activities of respondents in a standard format that can be used for monitoring and comparisons. They mainly

collect quantitative information so are not suitable for trying to understand people's inner feelings.

- Unless the population is very small the aim is usually to survey a sample. If the sample is representative then the results can be applied to the whole group.

Pros

- Large numbers of the population can be sampled.
- Access to minority samples becomes easier.
- Relatively low cost for targeting large numbers e.g. Postal or telephone surveys.
- Cover a wide range of issues and topics.
- Produces reliable, statistical information.
- Data provided can be used for comparisons, to monitor changes over time and to measure performance, benchmarking with other authorities e.g. Quality of Life Survey.
- It may be easier to reach people geographically dispersed.

Cons

- Process doesn't allow for two-way dialogue.
- Results may be misleading if the questionnaire is poorly designed.
- Little control over who responds.
- Information that is given can be poor e.g. inappropriate responses or half filled in answers.
- Costly if an external agency is called in to do the work.
- Response rates can be low if the subject matter is not of particular interest.

What you will need to do

- Resource issues i.e. staff time and cost of the CCI activity.
- Identify what CCI activity has been previously carried out.
- Decide who is going to manage, design, analyse and write the report.
- What IT facilities are needed – they make the process easier!
- Do you have the skills and time to conduct this work? Would an external agency be required? Do you have the budget for this?

- Should be determined how the results will feed in to the decision making process.
- A planning protocol is available within Appendix B, which helps to address all of these issues.
- Agree the objectives! Objectives need to be clear so that the survey and questions can be developed to achieve these.
- Select the most suitable method - postal, telephone or face to face.

Tips on Sampling, Categories and Balanced Scales

Getting a Good Sample

It is important to get the right representation of people in your sample. Sampling well means that you have adequate representation without consulting everyone. Your 'sample frame' is the people who you have identified as those you wish to consult and involve with.

How to Sample

Once you have your sample you can decide the way in which you want to use the sample, for example, by choosing specific groups of people or randomly choosing people depending on what you want your CCI activity to obtain. Sampling can be technical, but can easily be made more straight forward by thinking through some of the following points, and then thinking through what you want your CCI activity to actually cover and what you want to find out.

Some things to think about when developing your sampling frame:

- You will need to decide what people make up your sample frame – are you consulting in a particular area only?
- Are you consulting on a particular topic that affects a particular group?
- You may need to consider capturing your sample by using: the Electoral Register, Council Tax Register or a Postal Address file.

- Utilise a previously used sample frame where you can – this saves time & money, but make sure you are not using the same people!
- Always note where your sample falls short in terms of who you think is missing. Make it clear in your final report why this is the case.

Analysis & Reporting

Analysing the results of your CCI Activity and producing a report is important as it provides you with a clear trail of information. Below are identified the different types of analysing and report content.

The Final Report should contain:

- An executive summary;
- An explanation about the background to the consultation, the objectives, a description of the method(s) used;
- Summary of main findings, conclusions, recommendations, the main findings and a technical appendix; (if it's appropriate)
- How you plan to use the information or how it has been used;
- How you have fed back the results and plan to monitor the impact of the work;
- Data Protection & Freedom of Information Statement;
- The Lead Officer's full contact details;