

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY IN YOUR PROJECT

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appraisal: data collection.

Baseline data: information collected at the start of the project, against which you can compare any change.

Consultation: defined as 'a process of dialogue that leads to a decision'.

Evaluation: comparing the monitoring information against the desired outcomes. Making changes to the project where necessary.

Feasibility Study; identifying all the possible options for the project; their description, costs and impact (including a do nothing option).

Impact: the broad, longer-term effects of your project.

Monitoring: regularly collecting and recording information (this should be done systematically).

Outcomes: all the changes and effects that happen as a result of the project.

Outcome indicators: things you can measure to show whether you have achieved your desired outcomes.

Participation: full involvement in decision making processes. Genuine two way communication from the outset.

Qualitative information; a record of comments and suggestions in response to open questions. Provides an explanation and greater understanding of the quantitative information.

Quantitative information: statistics and finite numbers.

Targeted approaches; using a method to ensure participation of a specific age group or social group. Efforts are made to invite particular people and organisations; you select who will be involved.

Universal approaches; using a method without a specific age or social group in mind. Those involved are self selecting although there will be a general invitation and encouragement to get involved.

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Introduction

The Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) was established in 1929 as a registered charity which aims to improve and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work in the rural areas of Essex. It encourages self-help community projects and speaks out to the relevant authorities on issues that matter to people living in rural Essex.

The work of the Rural Community Council of Essex is based on enabling communities to become strong, active and empowered, capable of doing things for themselves – defining the problems they face and then tackling them together. Most Essex towns and villages have active local groups that provide services and facilities for their communities on a voluntary basis. Occasions arise when these groups need to gather information and evidence about their service - its strengths, what needs improving and proposals for the future - by undertaking some kind of survey.

This Pack provides information and advice to community groups about different types of surveys – the advantages and disadvantages of different methods, good practice in carrying out surveys and how to use the information gathered. The survey methods included in this pack have been used by towns and villages in Essex for many years and there are examples from across the county.

Assistance, advice and support is available at all stages of your survey. Please contact your local field officer at the Rural Community Council of Essex at the address below for further information:

Rural Community Council of Essex
Threshelfords Business Park
Inworth Road
Feering
Essex CO5 9SE

Tel: 0844 477 3938
Fax: 01376 573524
email: rcce@essexrcc.org.uk

Why do we need to gather information?

A common reason for undertaking a survey is to find out if there is need and support for a specific project. For example - regeneration of a recreation space, alterations/extension of a village hall, or setting up a completely new community facility, service or enterprise. Another reason might be to find out if an existing service or facility is actually meeting local needs or whether it could be improved. For example - the equipment at a Toddler Group or the activities at a Youth Club. Sometimes a survey of the whole parish, covering many topic areas is undertaken.

Whatever the reason, it is important to assess what is 'needed' and 'wanted' before embarking on a new project or making changes to an existing service or facility. Surveys will need to be undertaken before committing to a plan of action.

The surveys will provide:-

- Evidence of need for the project
- Evidence of support for the project
- Evidence of community involvement in shaping the project
- Evidence that we are not duplicating an existing service or project
- A basis for a Project Plan (Business Plan)

If the project will require grant funding, or the partnership involvement of a statutory organisation, the surveys will provide the evidence they will require before committing to the project.

The process of gathering information through different types of survey is a good way of involving people and ensuring local ownership of the project. We hear a lot about "consultation" but sometimes this means asking for comments on an almost finalised proposal. It is better to aim for "participation" and fully involve people from the outset in shaping the project and making the decisions.

Suggested further reading:

Whole parish projects

- RCCE Parish Plans Information Pack
- RCCE Village Design Statements Information Pack

Village Hall and Church projects

- Plan, Design and Build by Alan Wilkinson
- The key to successful fundraising for church and community projects by Keith Derry

Who should be involved?

You will need to identify who has an 'interest' in the project. Ask yourself:-

- who are the potential users of the service or facility
- who has the technical skills and expertise that we need
- who will be affected by any decisions made
- who will promote a decision, provided they are involved
- who will obstruct a decision, if they are not involved
- who is directly responsible for decisions on relevant issues
- who holds positions of responsibility in interested organisations

All these people (sometimes referred to as 'stakeholders' in the project) should be involved at an appropriate stage in the information gathering process. The flowchart on page 5 shows the different stages. The detailed appraisal requires wide involvement of users; the feasibility study will need to involve professionals with relevant expertise e.g. architects for building projects.

Everyone should have the 'opportunity' to give their views and opinions – not only those who speak loudest. Special effort should be made to target particular groups to ensure their involvement, for example young people, the elderly, disadvantaged groups, people from particular geographical areas, etc. See Appendix 2 for more detail.

Whenever you are gathering information about people's needs and aspirations, it is essential to gather information about the participants themselves so you know who has taken part in the survey. Age (within ranges) and gender are the bare minimum, but you may want to gather other information if relevant to your project. e.g. ethnicity, disability, employment status etc. See Appendix 1 for details. These participation records will be your evidence of community involvement in the project and will enable you to see whether you have gathered information from a representative sample of the community.

What survey methods are available?

There are many methods of gathering information to ensure that local opinion genuinely shapes a project so that it satisfies local need. This pack includes a selection of methods, most suitable for community-led projects, on pages 6 to 10 and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each are shown overleaf. There are many others; well established methods can be adapted to suit particular situations and new methods are being devised all the time. Suggested further reading on Survey and Consultation and a fairly comprehensive list of methods is included in Appendix 4.

As a general rule, avoid public meetings for debate and consultation. Public meetings are excellent for presentations and for providing information but not a good way of gathering views and opinions. You will only hear the opinions of those most confident to speak. Your information gathering process needs to be socially inclusive (see Appendix 2).

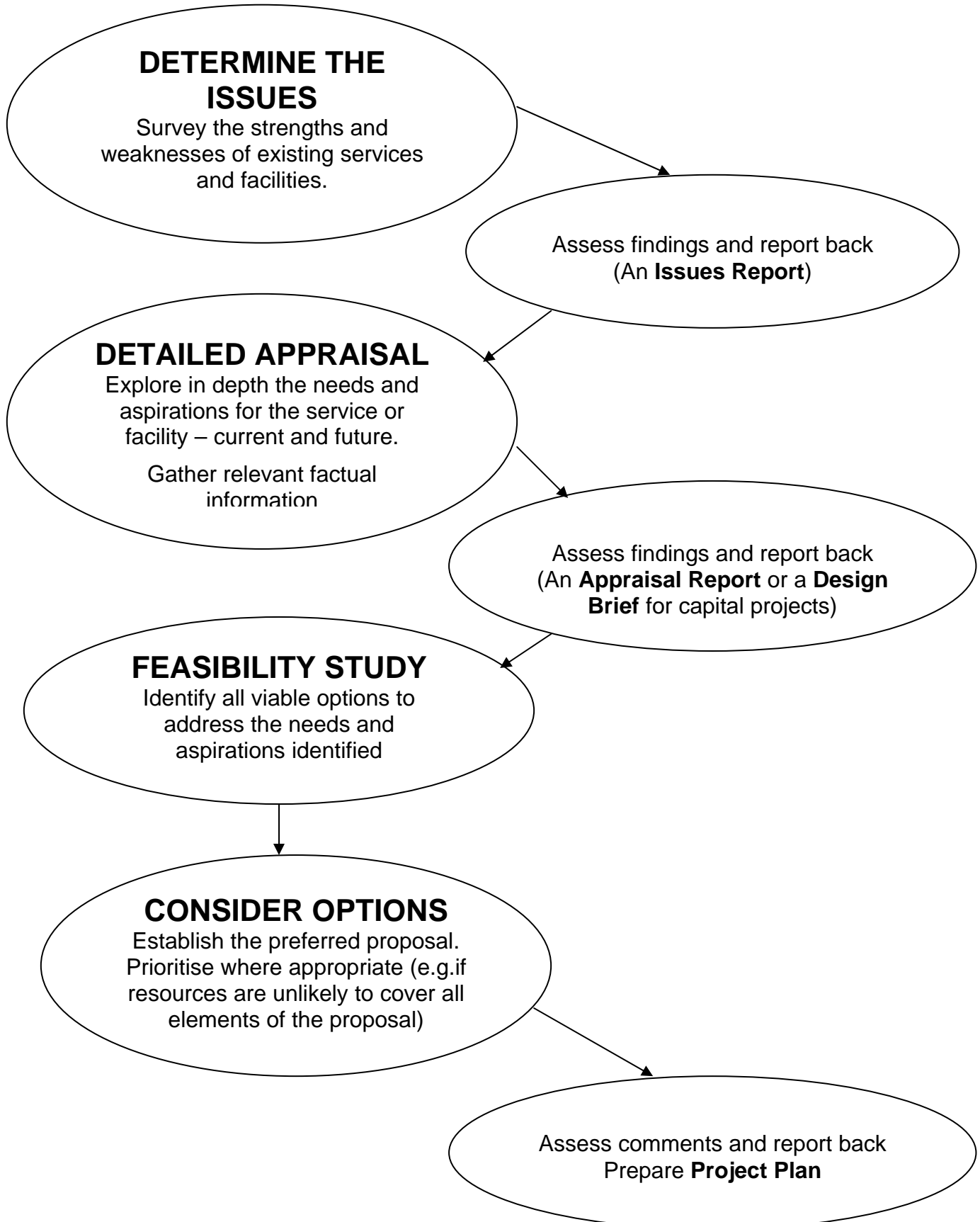
Different methods are suited to different stages in the information gathering process. Some methods are excellent at the start of the process when you are determining the main issues and priorities. Some methods are better suited to gathering views on specific options or proposals. Some methods are particularly successful in involving young people. You are likely to need to conduct several surveys before having sufficient information for your Project Plan.

The importance of gathering factual information is outlined on page 11. The factual information gathered is your 'evidence base' against which you can assess the views and opinions highlighted in your surveys. For example, the surveys may say that traffic speeds into the village at 60mph, but the traffic speed analysis undertaken by county council may not support this. Or the survey may show that people feel unsafe when crime statistics are very low. Perception must be separated from fact. Factual information should also be gathered about similar services and facilities in the area and whether the proposed project will have any impact on them.

Your RCCE field officer can advise on the suitability of methods in particular situations. Examples of, and materials for, each of the methods on pages 6 to 10 is available in separate 'RCCE Resource Packs'.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Questionnaires	<p>Taken to (and collected from) the participant.</p> <p>Can reach a large number of participants – potential for high response rate.</p> <p>Easy to process if restricted to closed questions and provides good quantitative information.</p> <p>Can cover specific topics or a wide range of issues.</p>	<p>Requires basic level of literacy.</p> <p>Complex or technical issues can be hard to explain.</p> <p>If lengthy they can be uninviting.</p> <p>Open questions increase processing burden.</p>
Participatory Appraisals	<p>Portable and visual – taken to the participant.</p> <p>Appeals to different ages and social background.</p> <p>Gathers a lot of qualitative information.</p> <p>Fun!</p>	<p>A scribe is needed to note comments from those with poor eyesight or poor literacy.</p> <p>Cannot tackle complex issues.</p>
Workshop	<p>Lively discussion about issues using non-confrontational methods.</p> <p>Can help build consensus on some issues.</p> <p>Can bring together local people and external stakeholders.</p>	<p>Relies on the participant coming to the event and staying for a fixed period of time.</p> <p>A meeting for a relatively small group may not be representative.</p> <p>Will usually need professional facilitation or support.</p>
Drop-in/ Open Day/ Exhibition	<p>Can provide information as well as gathering information.</p> <p>Possible to include information about complex issues.</p> <p>Uses a variety of written, visual and participatory media.</p> <p>Extended opening may allow large numbers to attend.</p>	<p>Relies on the participant coming to the event – people who attend may not represent the community as a whole.</p> <p>People coming and going may restrict discussion and exchange of ideas.</p>
Focus Group	<p>In depth discussions on technical and complex issues.</p> <p>Can bring together specific people and ‘experts’ in small groups.</p>	<p>Relies on the participant coming to the event.</p> <p>The failure of one key person to attend may be crucial.</p> <p>Participants may not represent the community as a whole.</p>

A Flowchart showing different stages of Information Gathering



Questionnaires

There is a particular skill in designing a good questionnaire. It should be as short as possible whilst still gathering the information required; questions should be worded simply and not be leading or ambiguous; the layout should be clear and interesting. Software packages are available to assist with the design and processing of questionnaires. You may feel confident in drafting and processing your questionnaire using home computers or you may wish to engage the help of a data processing company. Your RCCE field officer can advise on this. It is usually better for a small group of people to form a questionnaire design team; a questionnaire designed by a large committee can be a long drawn out process.

The RCCE Questionnaire Resource Pack contains examples of questionnaires produced by local groups across the county from which you can find a format and style best suited to your project. The format and content will depend on who the questionnaire is aimed at – young people, every member of the household, businesses, users of particular services, etc. You may be producing several questionnaires aimed at different groups and want them to have a similar style. There are many different types of question: closed (or multiple choice) questions require a tick-box answer, ranking questions require options to be prioritised and open questions invite the respondent to make comments. Closed and Ranking questions are easier to process and provide clear quantitative information whereas the open questions, although more difficult to process, provide useful qualitative information.

All questionnaires must contain some questions at the start to gather information about the respondents so you can assess whether your findings are representative of your target group. Anonymity is usually important to respondents so if you are asking for people to put their names forward as volunteers, this should be on a piece of paper separate from the questionnaire. Overleaf is a checklist of things to consider when designing a questionnaire.

When you have designed your questionnaire it is recommended that you test it as a pilot or practice run. Ask a small group of people who have not been involved in the design process to complete it. This will give a fresh look at the questionnaire and should highlight any of its faults or omissions. Also critically examine the questionnaire and ask yourself how you will be able to use the answers to each question. Will the responses enable you to arrive at meaningful conclusions?

When you have finished designing your questionnaire you need to consider delivery and collection. It may be possible to deliver the questionnaire with another circular e.g. parish magazine, free papers etc although you may wish to deliver separately to ensure it is not mistaken for 'junk mail'. The highest response rates are usually achieved with face to face collection, using a publicised collection point as back up to collect late completions. Some groups have also had success with postage paid envelopes.

As the use of home computers continues to grow, groups may like to consider use of a web based questionnaire.

Things to consider when designing a questionnaire

Every individual must have the opportunity to respond. There should either be a separate questionnaire for each person, or a household questionnaire should contain columns that each individual can adopt for their answers.

If designing a separate questionnaire for young people, will this be delivered separately or will it be incorporated into a 'household questionnaire'. How will it be distinguished - different colour paper?

What are the age limits for 'adult' respondents. Over 14, 16, 18? Other?

Consider needs of people with poor eyesight, poor literacy etc. Respondents may need help with completion – give details in covering letter/ introduction page and when you collect the questionnaires.

The questionnaire should be as short as possible whilst still satisfying your requirements. For a village appraisal 40 - 60 questions is recommended (remember that each question adds significantly to your processing time) and the suggested maximum size is 12 sides of A4 paper (including information and instructions page). Surveys addressing a single issue will usually be much shorter.

Questions should be short and worded simply to avoid confusion. Avoid ambiguous words such as 'usually' or 'often' and avoid asking for predictions of behaviour.

The questionnaire should contain a mix of closed and open questions (closed questions are easier to process but open questions provide the qualitative information). Include a space at the end for people to comment on issues they are concerned about that may not have been covered.

Questions should flow in a logical sequence.

The layout of the questionnaire should be clear and interesting.

You may want to offer an incentive to increase response rate. Some questionnaires include a prize draw number or alternatively, a raffle ticket can be handed to the respondent when the questionnaire is collected.

Include contact names and numbers/email address in case people have any queries.

Make it clear that the findings will be made available and provide information about how the findings will be used. If people know the survey is for their benefit they are more likely to respond.

Participatory Appraisals

A participatory appraisal is a portable, visual method of gathering information. It can be taken out to where people meet (either village group meetings or events such as fetes) to explore strengths and weaknesses in the early exploratory stages of a survey or to prioritise options at a later stage of a survey. People can spend as much or as little time as they wish to take part.

To determine the issues at the start of a survey, a participatory appraisal can ask 'What is Good about ...' (this service, this village etc); 'What needs Improving'; and possibly, 'What action should we be taking'. Responses to these broad questions are usually written onto paper on flip chart stands. If people are not confident to write, then a scribe will need to note down the comments made.

To establish priorities (either for broad issues at the start of a survey or to select specific options at a later stage of a survey) a selection of choices can be listed on flip chart paper and participants can be given a number of sticky dots to 'vote' for their priorities.

Maps and plans can be used in participatory appraisals and are especially useful where the project is about a specific geographical area e.g. redesigning a playground, plans for a village hall, parking and traffic control, or indeed a holistic plan for a whole village. A map or plan is mounted on one inch thick polystyrene board. 'Comment flags' are made out of cocktail sticks and post-it notes; the post-its can be different colours to record responses to different questions. The Planning for Real © method adds a model to the map or plan and uses comment cards rather than flags. The Planning for Real © method can only be used by accredited users – please see your RCCE field officer for details.

As with all surveys, it is important to gather information about participants to validate any conclusions drawn from the responses. See appendix 1 for information.

Participatory methods can be easily adapted for different circumstances and different purposes and their visual, fun nature particularly appeals to young people and those with literacy problems.

Materials for running participatory appraisals are available in a separate RCCE Resource Pack.

Workshop

A workshop is a specially organised, structured event, typically lasting two to three hours for adults, one hour for young people. Participants are required to attend for the whole period. The event is usually run by an independent facilitator using non-confrontational methods to gather information about particular subjects. This enables all participants' views to be recorded. There is often also an element of 'information giving' as part of the workshop, to enable informed comments to be made.

Workshops can be organised at the start of a survey to draw out the main issues by exploring strengths and weaknesses (sometimes also ideas for improvement) and voting on priorities. The workshop findings (issues report) can provide a sound basis for the development of a questionnaire. Workshop instructions for the initial stages of a Parish Plan or a Village Design Statement project are included in the separate RCCE Workshop Resource Pack. These workshop formats can be adapted to suit the needs of your project.

Workshops for young people are generally welcomed in schools as they fit well with the curriculum for geography and for citizenship. A meeting with the head teacher and/or class teacher is usually organised to plan the workshop. There are examples of workshop materials in the RCCE Workshop Resource Pack and your field officer can provide further advice.

An Action Planning workshop can explore options for action and priorities, bringing together local people and outside experts to discuss various proposals. There are several non-confrontational methods that can be used, two of which are included in the resource pack. Your RCCE field officer will be able to offer further advice.

Rural Community Council of Essex has experience in designing and running workshops for a variety of projects. If you would like some assistance or if you would like RCCE to facilitate your workshop, please contact your local field officer.

As with all surveys, it is important to gather information about participants to validate any conclusions drawn from the responses. See appendix 1 for information.

Drop in session or Exhibition

A drop in session has an extended opening time at a fixed venue. It uses similar techniques to a participatory appraisal to gather information but is less portable because it also seeks to provide information in the form of an exhibition. People are required to come to the venue but can then spend as much or as little time as they want.

A drop in session can be used at any of the stages of gathering information (see the flowchart on page 5) as it can explore strengths and weaknesses, can ask specific questions, can offer the opportunity to vote on priorities and can rank ideas as high, medium or low (used particularly for village hall and other capital projects). Participatory methods are used to record comments, examples of which are included in the separate RCCE Resource Pack.

A drop in session can also be an opportunity for groups to promote themselves. For example, a local toddler group or pre-school can run a crèche; the local school can exhibit work contributing to the project; local interest groups can display their activities etc. Involvement of local groups can help to attract participants who might not usually attend.

As with all surveys, it is important to gather information about participants to validate any conclusions drawn from the responses. See appendix 1 for information.

Focus Group

A focus group is a meeting of interested local people and external experts, usually by invitation rather than open to the public, to explore complex issues. The meetings would last approximately two hours. Focus groups are particularly useful at the feasibility study stage (see flowchart on page 5) to identify all viable options to address the needs and aspirations identified and examine each one in detail. A table for recording the focus group discussions is suggested below. It may be necessary to record other information arising from the meeting.

A focus group meeting is a good opportunity for interested local people to learn about all feasible actions and their implications e.g. impact on village life, sustainability, funding, timescales etc. They will then be in a better position to consider options for action. It is essential that local groups receive professional advice and understand the implications of proposals before presenting choices / options to the wider community.

Objective

Evidence of need

Option for Action	Social, Environmental and Economic Impact		Other considerations		
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Timescale	Funding and Resource Implications	Long Term Sustainability

Factual Information

Surveys gather a lot of information about people's views and opinions but it is important to compare these perceptions with factual information to enable a thorough understanding of the problems that need to be addressed.

Sometimes facts will confirm people's opinions e.g. a traffic survey may show that over 50% of vehicles are exceeding the speed limit. On other occasions, the facts will indicate that the problem is different to the one perceived e.g. feeling unsafe to walk home may not be supported by crime figures indicating a 'fear of crime' problem which may be solved by improved lighting etc. The facts that will need to be researched will depend on your survey findings. Examples of factual information (sometimes known as community profiles) are included in the RCCE Factual Information Resource Pack.

It is essential to understand local need for your proposed project by researching demographic information, e.g. if you are proposing to provide or improve a service for children, you will need to ascertain the potential number of children, their ages, the number with disabilities, access / transport implications etc. If you are proposing to introduce a new facility you will need to check that you are not duplicating an existing facility and that the new provision will not threaten the viability of another similar facility. This may mean finding out about services and their use in neighbouring parishes. In addition it will be important to find out whether your project proposal complements the plans and strategies of other organisations.

Much of the factual information you need will be contained in documents produced by the local authority or other statutory service providers e.g. police, health trusts etc. If you need assistance in gathering factual information your RCCE field officer may be able to advise.

It is recommended that the draft Project Plan, outlining the proposed actions, is subjected to an 'impact assessment' to see how it will affect people's quality of life. This is sometimes also known as a 'health impact assessment' or a 'sustainability appraisal'. A checklist to assess the 'impact' of your project plan is contained in the separate RCCE Factual Information Resource Pack.

STEP 1 – Set Targets and Objectives

The flowchart on page 5 shows the different information gathering stages. For each stage, set yourself targets and objectives by asking these questions.

What do we want to find out?

Be clear about your main aim and the scope of the surveys. Determine the types of information that you will need to enable decisions to be made. You will need different types of information and different levels of detail at each stage. Decide on the key aspects to explore.

What information do we need to provide?

Provide sufficient information to enable people to make an informed decision. For some projects you may need to provide detailed technical information or raise awareness of specific laws or regulations that have to be followed.

Who do we need to involve?

Identify stakeholders as outlined on page 3. At different stages this may be the whole community, or it may be target groups (e.g. asking young people to select the play equipment that they will play on at the options stage). For other stages it may be professional experts (e.g. feasibility study). Identify whether any of the people you wish to involve will need special targeted approaches (see Appendix 2)

How many?

Set yourself targets for numbers of participants or respondents. This could be total numbers attending events or responses from a proportion of those surveyed (relevant for questionnaires). You need to be confident that the information gathered is representative and valid. Also set targets for the number of people involved in the project as volunteers e.g. running events, delivering and collecting information, assessing findings and preparing reports.

How much do we want to enjoy it?

Keep a sense of fun – the process does not need to be a chore. Meet in social settings wherever possible but make sure that business still gets done. Involve lots of people. Ask people to do small manageable tasks to spread the workload. Don't give yourself unnecessarily tight time pressures.

You need to decide whether you are at the beginning of the flowchart on page 5 or whether the issues have already been clearly identified and documented. Surveys may already have been undertaken which identify the issues. For example a Parish Plan may have highlighted the need for improvement to a play area, road safety and parking problems or lack of transport services. If this is the case you may have sufficient background information to move on to your detailed appraisal.

STEP 2 – Choose Methods

Once you have set your targets and objectives you can select the most appropriate survey methods to meet those objectives at each stage of the process. You are likely to need a mixture of 'universal' and 'targeted' approaches. Universal approaches are those aimed at and open to everyone e.g. open days and exhibitions. These should be organised to be 'inclusive' but it may not be possible to overcome all barriers to involvement. Targeted approaches aimed at specific groups may also therefore be necessary to ensure as far as possible that everyone has the opportunity to 'have their say' and no-one is excluded (see appendix 2 for details).

For each stage consider:-

Which survey method will involve the desired number of participants?

Which mix of universal and targeted methods will reach all the 'stakeholders' identified?

How should any technical information be communicated e.g. written news sheets, background information included in questionnaire, magazine articles, exhibition, focus group, public meeting?

What are the resource implications of the survey methods selected i.e. costs, number of volunteers and whether any professional help is needed?

What are the processing implications of the survey methods selected?
Does the group have the skills and resources to process the information?

It may help to draw up a plan for your information gathering process. An example is shown overleaf.

If the numbers involved in the various stages of your survey fall short of your targets or you feel that the views gathered may not be representative, you may need to make additional efforts to include people. It is worth having a contingency plan to undertake additional targeted surveys to ensure you have sufficient information on which to base decisions.

Project: Use of the Park

Survey Stage	Objectives	Survey Method	Aimed at	Resource Implications
Determine Issues	25 adults, 25 children	participatory appraisal at the school fete	universal	Flipchart and stand,
Detailed appraisal	250 households in village	household questionnaire	universal	printing costs, distribution and collection
Detailed appraisal	year 5 and year 6 children	school workshop	targeted	materials and RCCE assistance
Detailed appraisal	Football club members	participatory appraisal at club meeting	targeted	Flipchart and stand,
Feasibility study	PTA, park committee, FC, parish council, LA officer, architect	focus group	targeted	room hire
Consider Options	60 adults, 25 children	drop in / exhibition	universal	Hall hire and materials

STEP 3 – Consider timescale

It will be necessary to draw up a time plan for the different survey stages, expanding on the plan drawn up at the end of Step 2. The timing may depend on the survey methods being used:-

Questionnaires are less successful if distributed during dark evenings or holiday periods. The best distribution months are April to June, and September to October.

Participatory appraisals, where maps and models are taken outside, are better done in warmer months.

Workshops in schools need to be in term time – some terms are busier than others for teaching staff (e.g. run up to Christmas with school plays etc).

Drop-in sessions that ‘piggy back’ onto existing events are most likely to be in the summer (fetes etc) or at festivals (Easter, Christmas etc).

Within your time plan, allow enough time for preparation. Build in at least 2 months for formulation of questionnaires, which always take longer than expected, and also allow plenty of time for processing of responses, particularly if being undertaken by volunteers.

When exploring the feasibility of options and proposals, allow sufficient time to set up focus groups and other meetings with decision-making organisations. Bear in mind that it may be difficult to organise meetings and complete tasks during July, August and December as they are busy months socially.

After the final survey on the suitability of the options and proposals, allow time for writing the Project Plan and getting cost estimates for the Project.

STEP 4 – Consider funding

A budget will need to be prepared for the survey work. First, estimate the expenditure - consider the tasks and stages of the time plan and consider the costs of each task. Build some flexibility into your cost estimates to cover contingencies.

Costs may include

- hire of meeting halls
- publicity materials
- printing of questionnaires
- materials for participatory methods
- purchasing of computer software
- publishing findings and Project Plan.

Consider the cost of training and professional support if needed. RCCE can be contracted to provide professional support for community involvement in projects e.g. designing the survey methods, facilitating and processing workshops, etc if these tasks cannot be undertaken by local volunteers. Contact your RCCE field officer for information.

You will also need to build into your budget the costs of technical advice and expertise e.g. employing a solicitor, architect, surveyor etc.

Work out a fundraising plan to provide income to cover all your costs. This may include fundraising events, sponsorship, help 'in kind' (photocopying by local businesses etc), requests for funding from the parish council and local authority and other grant funding applications.

Also consider the value of volunteer time as this is a 'hidden cost' of your project. Most grant funders require 'match funding' as your contribution to the project; this is usually a mix of cash and a volunteer time value. If you are applying for grants you will therefore need to estimate the number of volunteer days to be spent on the surveys and include this in your applications. It is important to record volunteer time as evidence for the funding body (see Appendix 1).

Bear the following in mind when making grant fund applications:-

- Grants will not usually cover expenditure incurred before the application.
- Small grants will often have restrictions on the timescale of spending e.g. it may need to be spent within one year or needs to be spent by 31st March.
- Some funders operate several grant schemes but will not usually make multiple awards for the same project.

STEP 5 – Consider publicity and information

Effective communication is paramount. It is vital to keep everyone informed to maintain interest and enthusiasm for the surveys and for the project. Have at least one person (preferably a team of people) responsible for publicity and information.

Use whatever local networks you have – parish magazines, local newspapers, village web site, local notice boards and shop windows. Provide details of what you are doing and why. Encourage more volunteers to get involved in the process. Advertise surveys and participation events. Publicise progress and feedback survey findings quickly.

Combine general publicity with a direct targeted approach. Once you have identified who needs to be involved in the project (page 3) create a database of appropriate groups, organisations and individuals so you can circulate posters and newsletters, invite them to send a representative to events, ask for comments on draft documents and proposals etc. Give the appropriate people plenty of notice (and reminders) about the surveys you need them to participate in.

Think about the information you need to provide to enable people to make informed decisions and how you will provide that information.

STEP 6 – Carry out surveys

If you have followed steps 1 to 5 you should have a detailed survey plan. For each survey stage, check that you are fully prepared.

Venues are booked (where appropriate)

Publicity has taken place

Materials are ready

Manpower has been arranged (volunteers and/or professional support)

Funding covers costs

Processing of responses has been considered

Keep profile sheets and diary of community involvement to evidence the process (see Appendix 1). If the survey does not meet the targets and objectives set for it, you may need to undertake additional surveys to gather sufficient information upon which to base decisions.

Always remember to thank all your volunteers for their help. And thank respondents for taking part in the surveys. Their participation is vital.

STEP 7 – Assess and publish findings

From the surveys, a lot of information will be gathered that requires processing. This is usually undertaken by volunteers but may alternatively be contracted to a data processing company if funding has been raised to cover this. The result either way will be a vast quantity of raw data, both quantitative and qualitative information, to be assessed.

The information gathered will need to be interpreted. Needs, opinion and aspiration for services and facilities will be assessed against factual information and feasible options, and conclusions will be drawn. After each survey stage, you will need to revisit your targets and objectives (step 1) and agree specific questions and provision of information for the next stage.

The results of each survey stage need to be published so that people are kept informed, regardless of whether they responded to the survey. There will usually be a summary that can be distributed as a leaflet or as an article in a local magazine, and a full report that can be made available on request and in public places.

The publications need not be glossy and expensive. Remember that they are working documents. The summary leaflets/articles will record highlights of the survey. The full reports should include the following:

- Purpose of the survey
- Survey method(s)/process
- Numbers of respondents/profile sheet information
- Main findings/how comments have been dealt with
- Conclusions drawn
- How the information will be used/What happens next

Before drafting any report you may need to discuss the presentation of findings with those who will use the document. For example, a Design Brief for a capital project will be used by an architect and surveyors. It is important to discuss the detailed appraisal findings with them before compiling the report. They may need the information that you have gathered to be organised under particular headings.

STEP 8 – Prepare a Project Plan

When all your surveys have been completed and your preferred proposal has been established, you will need to draw up a detailed Project Plan.

The Project Plan (or Business Plan) is your blueprint for action, based on the findings of your surveys. It should contain the following

Organisational structure and partnership arrangements

Who (what group) is responsible for the project? How are you constituted?
Who else is involved?

Description of the Project

Design plans and planning implications if appropriate

Local Community profile

Relevant statistics about the local community / potential users of the project.

Community Involvement in the Project

Method of engagement in the project – a brief diary of the various survey stages.
Numbers of people involved / responding. Summary of findings.

Links to other initiatives

If and how the project complements other strategies and plans.
Demonstrate the positive impact of the project.

Long term sustainability / exit strategy

Demonstrate how the project will continue and become self-sustaining in the longer term (this may be included in the action plan).

Action Plan

A table showing a timetable for the component actions being proposed (see information on SMART Action Plans in Appendix 3).

Budget

Estimate of income and expenditure for each year of the project, split between capital and revenue expenses. Include the value of volunteer time as match funding.

The information in the Project Plan will demonstrate local need and aspiration for the project and will support funding applications for actions within the Plan. Contact your RCCE field officer if you need advice on grant funding or on taking the actions forward.

The survey reports and Project Plan may also be useful for other purposes. Many statutory plans produced by local councils and their partners require detailed local information to inform the provision of their services. The Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework are based on the needs and aspirations of communities and many other local authority strategies require the input of local views and opinion e.g. services for policing and community safety, services for children and their families, leisure and recreation services etc.

Contact the relevant officer at your local authority – most have an officer who is responsible for consultation (and possibly also the community strategy) – who may be interested in your findings. This officer may also be able to help you if you need assistance from your local authority to implement your Project Plan and take your project forward.

APPENDIX 1

Participation Records

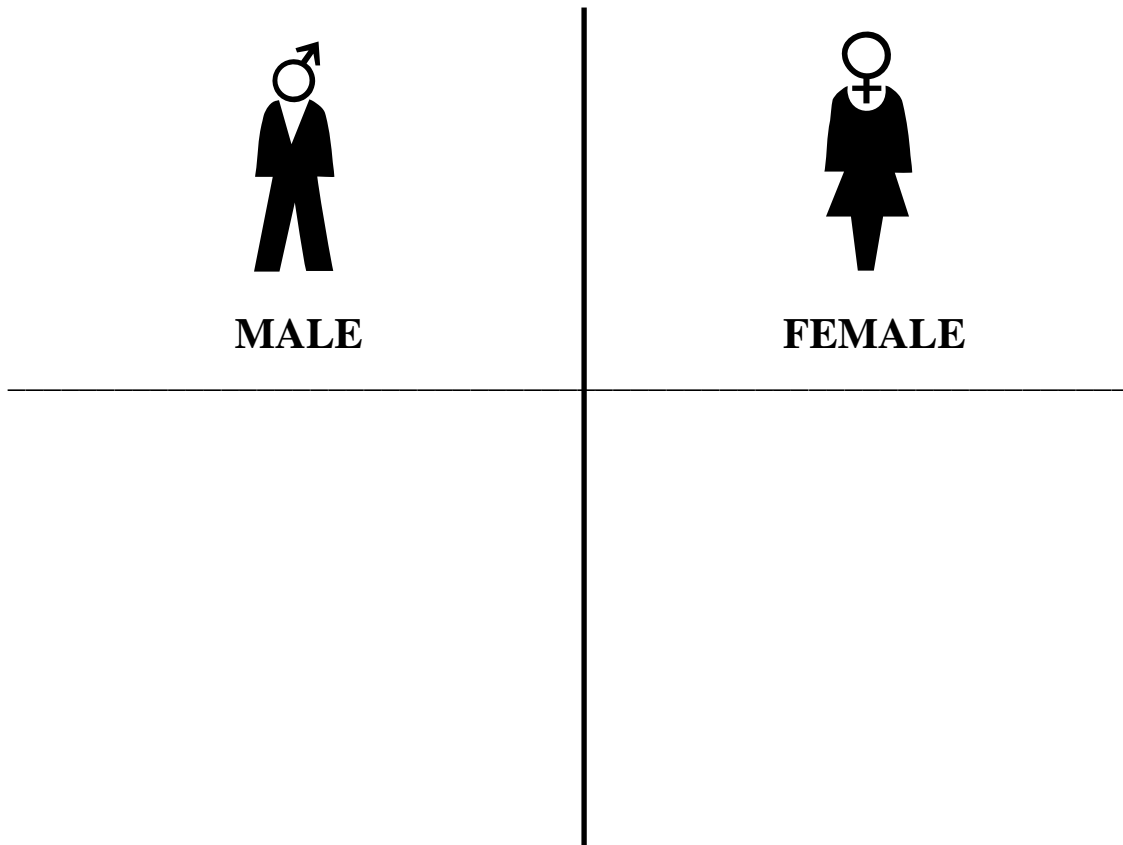
It is important that the following records are kept;

- Profile of Participants and Respondents
- Diary of community involvement
- Volunteer time log

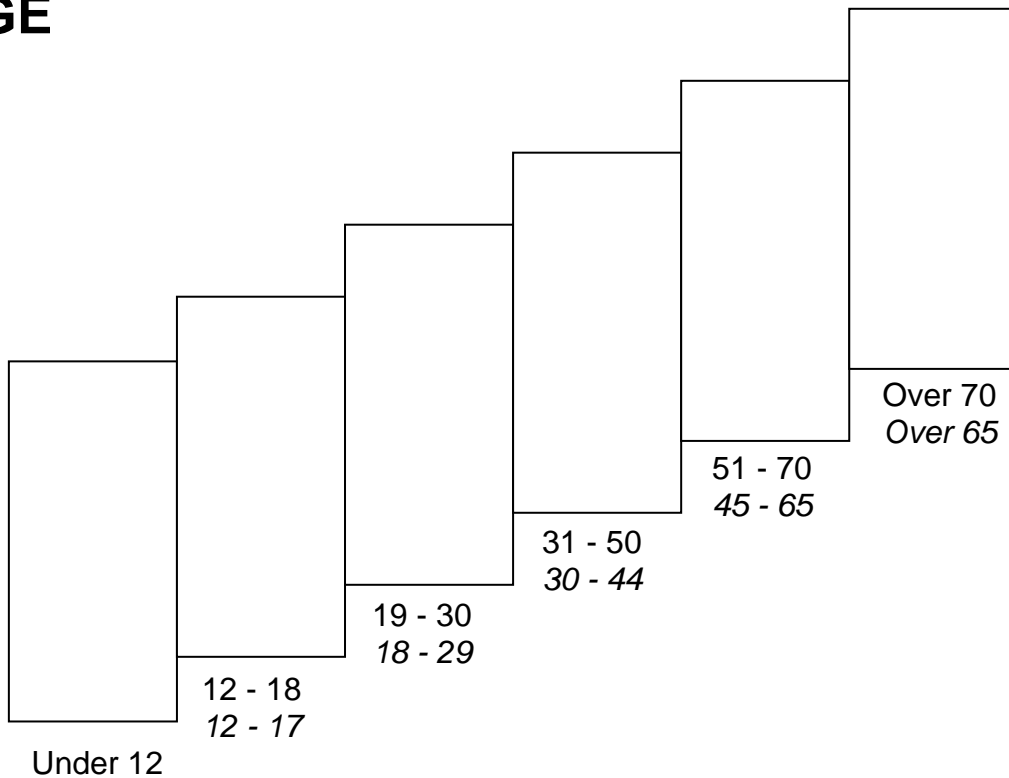
A profile of participants and respondents keeps a record of everyone from whom views and opinions have been gathered. The profile will tell us whether the information gathered is from a representative sample of the population (the information collected can be compared to census data). The basic profile information required relates to age (within ranges) and gender, but other information may also be relevant for the project. For example, information about ethnicity, disability, employment status, area lived in, length of time resident etc. Such information is easily gathered within a questionnaire but special efforts must be made to collect this information at events and workshops. Example profile sheets are on page 2 of this appendix. Participants can be requested to place sticky dots on these profile sheets at events to provide a profile about themselves.

A Diary of Community Involvement provides important evidence of the communication and information sharing within the community during the information gathering process, and of the number of people consulted and responding. An example is on page 3 of this appendix.

The Volunteer Time Log records the number of hours given to the project without remuneration. An example is on page 3. A log will be completed by each volunteer and submitted to a member of the project group for collation and summary. A record of volunteer time will provide evidence to funders that the grants they have awarded have been matched by the value of hours donated to the project by volunteers. Such evidence may need to be provided as part of the grant fund monitoring requirement.



AGE



NOTE: Check the age ranges used by your local authority. Two possibilities are shown above; there may be additional variations across the county.

Example of Diary of Community Involvement

Date	Reason for involvement	Type of involvement	Numbers of people	Other comments
20/2/04	Organising	Meeting of Project group	10	
10/3/04	Organising	Meeting of sub group	5	
22/3/04	Informing	Flyer to every house to update on progress	500 houses	
5/4/04	Survey	School Workshop	30 children from years 5 and 6	
18/4/04	Organising	Meeting of sub group	4	
25/4/04	Organising	Meeting of Project group	11	
1/6/04	Survey	Questionnaire distribution	500 houses	
10/6/04	Survey	Collection	350 houses, 600 adults and 150 youth responses	Others may be put in box at shop

Example of Volunteer Time log

Name

Date	Activity	Location	Duration
20/2/04	Meeting of steering group	Village Hall	2 hours
10/3/04	Meeting of survey sub group	Mary's house	2 hours
22/3/04	Delivery of flyers	High Street	1 hour
5/4/04	School workshop	School	1 hour
8/4/04	Typing up info from workshop	home	1 hour
13/4/04	Drafting youth questionnaire	home	2 hours
18/4/04	Meeting of survey sub group	Mary's house	2 hours
25/4/04	Meeting of steering group	Village Hall	2 hours
28/4/04	Finalise youth questionnaire	Home	1 hour

APPENDIX 2

Good Practice for Social Inclusion

Consider possible barriers to participation within your community:-

- Poor literacy in English
- English not first language
- Other cultural barriers e.g. female involvement
- Lack of transport to events
- Learning difficulties
- Physical and sensory disabilities
- Housebound or long term sick/injured
- Care commitments (children, elderly relative etc)
- Lack of confidence in speaking out
- Lack of interest / apathy

Build into your information gathering process a variety of survey methods to overcome identified barriers and thereby provide an equal opportunity for everyone to take part. It may be necessary to target specific survey methods at particularly identified groups to provide a greater opportunity for them to take part. For example a visual participatory method taken to a travellers site, a facilitated discussion method taken into sheltered accommodation for the elderly, an interactive method taken to groups of young people (see page 3 of this Appendix).

Tips for working with 'hard to reach' groups:-

1 Identify a contact

Find someone who can organise the group or is influential within the group you are trying to involve. This person will be your point of contact and may be able to assist with venues, local advertising/publicity, dissemination of results etc.

2 Advertise and publicise the consultation

Use local networks to communicate – local magazines, notice boards, word of mouth, web site, posters in key places. Your local contacts will know what works best for their group.

3 Take the consultation to the group

Choose a local venue and pick times to suit local circumstances (e.g. when mums collect kids from school, after commuters return home etc). Take advice from your local contact on the best place and times. Consider “piggy-backing” onto an existing activity if there is one – this has the advantage of publicity already undertaken and a ready made ‘audience’.

4 Be clear about your objectives

Know what you want from the group. Keep it simple. Don't assume too much prior knowledge by the group. If covering complex issues, provide information to enable people to make informed comments. Provide information handouts and the opportunity to comment later.

5 Make consultation relevant to the community

People identify with their own place and their own issues. This may mean slightly altering information each time to provide local focus. Be honest and open about the constraints as well as the opportunities.

6 Use a variety of methods

Make it interesting. You will need to use specially adapted methods in targeted consultations for 'hard to reach' groups. Participatory and visual methods using maps, photos, post-it notes and sticky dots work well. You may need to use questionnaires/documents for comment but consider levels of literacy.

7 Avoid public meetings for consultation purposes

Traditional public meetings are really good for sharing information but can be a disaster when used for debate and consultation. Only those most confident to speak are heard and it can turn into a 'rock throwing' session. Avoid at all costs.

8 Consider manpower needed

Make sure you have enough volunteers if you are working with people who need extra support to participate. You may decide you need professional help and support. If you are facilitating yourselves, you need to consider dress code, language and style. Make it clear you are there to listen. Don't parachute in and leave as soon as possible. Establish a relationship.

9 Consider extra incentives

You may want to offer transport to a venue to increase number of participants. You may need to provide a crèche or offer to cover the costs of child care.

10 Keep a profile

Record basic information about participants (age, gender etc) without taking names and addresses. People will then feel free to comment anonymously.

11 Feedback

Inform people within a month of the findings of the consultation – ask them how they would like it fed back. Use the contacts and links in 1 and 2 above. Thank people for giving up their time to take part. Continue to tell people what is happening.

Suggested Further Reading

Including the Excluded: From Practice to Policy in European Community Development by Paul Henderson

£12.99 ISBN 1861347 45 6

Get Heard Toolkit developed by the UK Coalition Against Poverty. Order the toolkit for £22.50 from UKCAP by tel:0161 272 9111 or download from www.ukcap.org/getheard/index.htm

Involving Young People

Survey methods used for adults can be specially adapted so that they appeal to young people. Methods that determine the issues focus around 3 main questions:

- What is special?
- What are the problems?
- What improvements could be made?

1 The Good, The Bad and The Future

A flip chart sheet is drawn up as shown below. Young people are asked to write comments in relation to the above questions on post-it notes (individually or in groups).

The post-it notes are placed on a sheet of paper under the appropriate headings (the good, the bad and the future)

Tip: use different coloured post-it notes for the three questions.

Advantage: This method is ideal for drop-in sessions or an informal event, e.g. at a youth club.

Limitation: This method does not highlight priorities.

The good	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Profiles (male/female) (under 12 / 12+) </div>	The bad
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> The future </div>	

2 Post-it notes by Topic

This activity is ideal for a classroom setting (e.g. Personal and Social Education or Citizenship Curriculum) or a formal youth group session. Young people sit in groups and write comments on post-it notes.

The post-it notes are placed on sheets of paper, grouped by headings (e.g. Health, Leisure and Recreation, Transport, Personal Safety and Crime etc.). Comments of a similar nature can be grouped together. Votes (using sticky dots) can be placed against certain ideas as a method of prioritisation.

Tip: different coloured sticky dot votes can be used to distinguish gender. Discussion can follow about which agencies and organisations deliver services under each of the headings.

Advantage: comments can come from groups or individuals.
All comments must be noted improving respect for other people's opinions.

3 Mapping

This exercise is based on a map, mounted on 1" thick polystyrene board (available from builders merchants). It is portable and can be taken to wherever young people gather. Comments are written onto flags (made from post-it notes and cocktail sticks) and then placed on the map at the appropriate site. This is an effective method of gathering ideas linked to a particular site/area.

Tip: Different colours can be used to distinguish answers to the three questions above, or specific questions relating to the site or project.

Advantage: This method is portable and can be used on site.

Limitation: This method does not highlight priorities.

Young people may also need to be involved in the Detailed Appraisal and in considering suggested options and proposals. The methods will need to be tailored to engage young people. Questionnaires and Priority Voting will need to be focused on issues that are relevant to the young people and proposals in which they have an interest.

Suggested Further Reading

Hear by Right: Standards for the active involvement of children and young people by Harry Wade and Bill Badham

A package of materials including book, CD-Rom, poster and three leaflets offering tried and tested standards to improve practice on the active involvement of children and young people. Available by post: National Youth Agency, Eastgate House, 19-23 Humberstone Road, Leicester LE5 3GJ by tel: 0116 242 7427 (or 7350) by email: sales@nya.org.uk website www.nya.org.uk

Changing Places: Children's Participation in Environmental Planning by Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham

Published by The Children's Society, Edward Rudolph House, Margery Street, London WC1X 0JL Tel: 020 7841 4400 email: publishing@childsoc.org.uk website: www.the-childrens-society.org.uk (click on shop and books)

Participation in Practice: Children and Young People as partners in change by Carolyne Willow

Published by The Children's Society, Edward Rudolph House, Margery Street, London WC1X 0JL Tel: 020 7841 4400 email: publishing@childsoc.org.uk website: www.the-childrens-society.org.uk (click on shop and books)

Video

Experts in their Field

Available on loan from RCCE

APPENDIX 3

SMART Action Plans

What is the difference between an objective, an action and an outcome?

An objective (or aim) is a destination; it is the 'place' you are aiming for. You will have achieved your objective when things are the way you want them to be.

An action (sometimes referred to as a target or an output) is the task that you need to do - or think you need to do - in order to achieve your objective.

An outcome is a measure of what you have achieved, an indication that you have succeeded.

An example...

The objective is to maintain access by road to the village throughout winter, the action is to grit the roads when icy conditions are expected and keep at least one access road clear of snow, the outcome might be that residents are not 'snowed in' during winter.

A **SMART** action plan should contain all three elements and is...

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable (achievable)

R = Realistic/ Relevant

T = Time Related

Specific

If the action or objective is too vague (e.g. improve 'facilities') it will be difficult for readers and users of the action plan to understand precisely what is being proposed. A 'big' action or project (e.g. build a new community centre), that will be delivered in stages over a long period of time, may need to be broken down into its component tasks so that progress can be monitored.

Measurable (also see Evaluation of Action Plans overleaf)

There needs to be some way of measuring whether the objective has been achieved – there needs to be a clearly defined outcome and an 'outcome indicator' to record success.

Where a piece of equipment is being provided or a specific piece of work is being carried out, success will be measured by completion of the action.

Where the objective is to improve, increase or reduce something, the outcome will need to indicate from 'what' to 'what', and the action will say 'how' this will be achieved; success will then be measurable. It may be difficult to measure objectives that relate to behaviour e.g. improve respect for others; improve relationships. The evaluation of such action plans will have to rely on qualitative rather than quantitative information. Some behavioural action plans can be quantified e.g. reduce the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour to no more than one a week (the 'indicator') by doing x, y and z. Sometimes objectives relate to continuation of a service. A target outcome should be added to make the action measurable e.g. 'continue to promote the community information point', may have a target outcome of 'increase the number of information requests to 30 per week'.

Attainable

Short term objectives must be achievable; they must be at the right level. If they are unreachable it will lead to demotivation. If the short term objectives appear impossible, the action plan will be meaningless.

Some action plans include longer term objectives or 'visions' that are more of a 'wish list'. This may occur when an objective is important to the community but it is unclear exactly how or when it could be achieved e.g. reduction of traffic volumes that could only be achieved by new highways infrastructure. This may be acceptable provided short term actions are working towards this longer term objective.

Realistic/Relevant

The actions must be feasible in terms of the resources available. If the action is of a specialised nature it must also be technically and legally feasible. The action must be relevant to the objective; it must be capable of delivering the outcome.

Time related

A date for undertaking the action should be included in the plan. Some plans say short, medium or long term, but moves should be made towards stating dates, particularly for short term actions, so that the plan can be monitored. A timescale for achieving the outcomes should also be set. For increase/decrease type outcomes, this may be some time after the actions are undertaken so that 'indicator' data can be collected and assessed. Such evaluation procedures will set a useful review date for the action plan.

The following verbs are useful examples for writing SMART action plans

For Objectives (aims)

Enable, Improve, Increase, Reduce, Maintain, Involve, Promote,

For Actions (targets/outputs)

Complete, Provide, Construct, Identify, Evaluate, Organise, Arrange, Write, Meet, Run, Set Up, Use, Attend, Inspect

The following verbs should be avoided

Consider, Seek, Review, Endeavour, Lobby,

EVALUATION OF ACTION PLANS

Service providers and funders are focusing on outcomes as a way of monitoring and evaluating the success of their involvement in a project. It is becoming increasingly important that **measurement of outcomes** is included as part of the action plan and that 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' procedures are in place i.e. 'outcome indicators' are in place, 'baseline data' is collected at the start of the project, and there is a method for collecting and recording data.

APPENDIX 4

Further survey and consultation methods

This list was compiled by the Bedfordshire & Milton Keynes Consensus Building Network (B&MK CBN) and formed Appendix 1 of “Bringing strategic documents to life in their development and delivery: using advanced process design” Sept 2004.

For further information contact Julia Holmes, BedsRCC, The Old School, Cardington, Beds MK45 3SX tel 01234 832646 email juliah@bedsrcc.org.uk

A List of Methods for Participative Processes

Here is an extensive, but probably not exhaustive, list of methods that can be used in participative processes. All can and should be adapted for different circumstances.

Method	Description	Approach
Leaflets, brochures, information pack, video, newsletters	Various mediums through which information can be communicated in written or visual formats to a given target audience.	Information Giving
Exhibitions /displays (non-staffed)	Non-staffed exhibitions or displays set up in public areas or at conferences to convey information about specific issues.	Information Giving
Advertising	Advertisement placed in local or national media to convey information and raise awareness about specific issues.	Information Giving
Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers, other printed media)	The publishing of an article in a local or national newspaper (or other publications such as magazines), or the production of a TV or radio programme, to convey information and raise awareness about specific issues.	Information Giving
Internet (information provision)	Use of website to provide information only, either in written or visual form, to those who have access to the Internet.	Information Giving
Site visits	Organised meetings of individuals or groups who have the opportunity to look around a site and see activities and issues in real life.	Information Giving
Exhibitions/ displays (staffed)	Exhibitions or displays set up in public areas or at conferences to convey information about specific issues. Staffed by specialists who can provide information, answer questions and receive comments.	Information Giving / Gathering
Open house	Spaces where the public can view displayed information on relevant issues and ask questions of representatives from the relevant authority throughout the day. Those participating are encouraged to provide written comments and take further information away with them.	Information Giving / Gathering

Method	Description	Approach
Public meetings	Local meetings which are open to any member of the public. Usually take on a question and answer format where the relevant authority or decision making body provides information and members of the public have the opportunity to ask questions.	Information Giving / Gathering
Surgeries	Face-to-face conversations between specialists (or representatives from decision making body) and stakeholders or members of the public. Have been used in conjunction with public meetings allowing people to discuss their issues and concerns in advance of, and after, the meetings in more detail and in a less confrontational setting.	Information Giving / Gathering
Free telephone lines (Automated or Staffed)	A free telephone number for people to call in order to receive information, ask questions or provide comments/feedback.	Information Giving / Gathering
Teleconferencing	Individuals that are geographically separated use digital cameras and the Internet to see and talk to each other (as if face-to-face), ask questions and deliberate on issues.	Information Giving / Gathering
Consultation Document	The traditional mode of consultation where a consultation document is published and sent out (by post, electronic mail) or made available to stakeholders and members of the public (designated location, website). Comment and feedback is invited, usually in a written form.	Consultation
Consultation Workshop	A means of involving up to 50 targeted stakeholders or citizens to map their issues and concerns, help define a problem, and receive feedback on information or proposals. Usually takes the form of a one-off (one day) workshop that involves a presentation by the organiser and moves between plenary sessions and small facilitated groups. A report is produced to represent the content of discussions within the workshop.	Consultation
Internet (information / feedback)	Website used to provide information, either in written or visual form and as a means for providing written feedback, for those who have access to the Internet.	Consultation
Questionnaire survey	Used to gauge public opinion about a specific issue. Administered remotely by post, web or e-mail to a random or quota selected sample designed to be representative of the wider public. Limited to closed questions or predefined categories. May involve very limited information provision.	Information Gathering
Telephone survey	Structured interviews conducted by researchers over the phone used to gauge public opinion about a specific issue, usually with a sample designed to be representative of the wider public. Open as well as closed questions allow interviewees to explore underlying values and reasonings behind responses. May involve information provision.	Information Gathering
Interview survey	Face to face structured or semi-structured interviews, usually undertaken with a sample designed to be representative of the wider public, that allow values, attitudes, opinions and beliefs of interviewees to be explored more deeply. Open questions allow for in-depth responses that explore underlying values and reasonings. May involve information provision.	Information Gathering

Method	Description	Approach
Focus Groups (or Discussion Groups)	6-8 people, usually chosen to represent certain demographic characteristics, come together in a group (usually one off) mediated by a facilitator/researcher to discuss attitudes, opinions, needs and concerns in relation to an issue or proposal. Usually involve information provision or the introduction of materials that serve as discussion prompts. Can also be used to encourage deliberation and reflection with minimal prior framings or prompts. Groups are usually taped, transcribed, analysed, leading to the production of a report by the facilitator.	Information Gathering
Deliberative opinion poll	A type of opinion poll that seeks the views of informed citizens. 250-600 participants are surveyed for opinions and demographics. Smaller groups recruited randomly (representative of larger group in terms of attitude and demographics) are provided with information and undergo 2-4 days of group deliberation and expert questioning in plenary sessions. Views are measured before and after the process, and changes in opinion are represented in a report to the commissioning body.	Information Gathering
Research Panels	Large sample of 500-5000 members of the public, which can be used flexibly to track changes in opinion over time using a number of techniques. The panel, recruited by post or telephone, is representative of the wider population and replaced periodically to avoid stagnation. The same panel can be subject to a range of participatory methods including: questionnaire surveys, focus groups, workshops, citizens juries, or consensus conferences.	Information Gathering
Interactive panels	Standing panels of 12 citizens that meet 3-4 times a year to deliberate on issues set by a commissioning body. Panel members are recruited by quota sampling to cover a range of demographic characteristics, with regular turnover to prevent stagnation. Participants receive information prior to panels, discussion is tape recorded and transcribed, and participants record views on a decision sheet. Panels are facilitated by an independent researcher, who prepares a report for the commissioning body.	Information Gathering
Citizens' juries (and other variations including citizens' panels, planning cells, etc.)	A panel of 12-16 citizens, recruited to be broadly representative of their local area, meet for 4 days to consider a particular issue. The process is independently facilitated and panel members receive evidence from selected specialist witnesses, and may have the opportunity to question and cross examine them. The jury produces a report (setting out its views, recommendations, decisions and any differences of opinion between them) which is then submitted to the commissioning body.	Information Gathering
Consensus Conference	Involves a panel of 10-20 lay public, usually recruited through advertisements, who select and ask questions of experts on a particular subject, assesses responses, discusses issues, and produces a report. The panel attends preparatory weekends where it receives information, selects specialist witnesses and formulates questions. The conference lasts for 3-4 days and is mediated by a facilitator. A key feature of consensus conferences is that they take place in public and the audience has the opportunity to question and discuss issues.	Information Gathering

Method	Description	Approach
Deliberative mapping	Involves both citizens (in a series of citizen panels, each representative of certain demographic characteristics) and specialists/experts participating in parallel deliberative multi-criteria mapping processes. Citizens and specialists also interact in a workshop process. Participants explore issues relating to a subject, review policy options, develop criteria and evaluate policy options against these criteria. Facilitators/ researchers report to commissioning body providing informed decision input, including recommendations on which policy options should be implemented.	Information Gathering / Consultation / Bounded Dialogue
Community Advisory Committees (CACs)	Small groups of 8-12 local stakeholders, representing particular interests or knowledge, who meet regularly (for 2-3 hours) over an extended period. The group discusses issues of concern (usually relating to a specific local project or plan), reflects on, and refines, its views from meeting to meeting. CACs are highly flexible as the group: discusses issues as they arise; responsively receives and accesses information appropriate to its needs; interacts with experts; and provides informed and timely input into decision making.	Information Gathering
Planning for Real ©	A means of engaging local stakeholders in groups to identify local problems and issues through a community model (3D model or map) which is reviewed to identify what should be done to address them. Options can then be prioritised using visual hands-on techniques and developed into an Action Plan.	Bounded / Open Dialogue
Visioning	Engages local stakeholders in workshops or meetings to consider the question 'what sort of future do we want?' Identifies issues and needs and develop a shared vision of a desirable future for a local community.	Open Dialogue
Workshops (ongoing or part of a wider programme of participation)	Highly flexible group process that is often tailored to the specific needs or purpose of the exercise. Tend to be task driven and work towards specific outcomes. Can be used to provide information, discuss issues and solve problems for a small group of professional and local stakeholders. Can also bring together citizens, to consider issues with the potential to develop highly interactive relationships with specialists / experts.	Consultation/ Bounded / Open Dialogue
Stakeholder Dialogue (Consensus Building)	A process where stakeholders (professional or local) are brought together in repeat meetings by a third party in facilitated dialogue in order to find common ground between them, uncover what lies behind their different positions, and develop consensus on proposed actions. Allows stakeholders to build highly interactive relationships with decision-takers and sponsors, and directly influence decision making. Employs a range of methods, tools and techniques including meetings, mediation, workshops, joint fact-finding, and so on.	Open / Bounded Dialogue
Joint fact finding (and other forms of collaborative analysis)	Engages professional and/or local stakeholders, selected to represent the interests of others, in a working group or workshop processes that seeks to frame scientific analysis conducted by technical experts. The group works with technical experts to define the questions to be answered in analysis, the methodology used, how findings should be reported and interpreted.	Open Dialogue

Method	Description	Approach
Strategic Action Planning	An approach that enables multi-stakeholder groups to: reach agreement on what information/research is required to enable a fair assessment of competing options; make underlying assumptions explicit; and plan contingencies based on alternate future possibilities.	Open Dialogue
Stakeholder Decision Analysis (and other deliberative multi-criteria approaches)	Between 10-15 professional stakeholders come together in a 4-5 repeat deliberative workshop process to discuss issues and come up with planning, management or decision priorities. Participants go through a structured qualitative multi-criteria analysis process that identifies issues/options, develops evaluation criteria, assesses options, and reaches agreement on priorities. Participants draw on their own information or responsive information provision throughout the process. Can be used with local stakeholder groups (and possibly with citizens).	Information Gathering / Consultation
Multi-criteria mapping	Professional stakeholders, representing different interests, take part in individual in-depth interviews where they review the range of policy options relating to an issue, define criteria with which to evaluate options, and assess the effectiveness of options (highlighting any uncertainties). The researcher feeds back analysis of results to the group of individuals who provide feedback. The individuals are then brought together to discuss results in a group discussion. Report is produced by the researcher. (MCM can also be used with citizens, see deliberative mapping).	Information Gathering / Consultation/ Bounded Dialogue
Internet dialogue	Geographically separated group of individuals engage in written, verbal or visual communication and interaction that is mediated by a facilitator over the internet and structured to replicate a face-to-face dialogue process.	Information Gathering / Consultation/ Bounded / Open Dialogue
Delphi process	Seeks to identify consensus and difference between professional stakeholders on issues either through a series of repeat questionnaires (postal, internet, telephone) creating a nominal group process, or through a face-face group process.	Information Gathering / Consultation/ Bounded / Open Dialogue

Suggested Further Reading

The Community Planning Handbook by Nick Wates

A comprehensive how-to-do-it handbook on community involvement in planning and design. Earthscan Publications, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 1JN Tel: 01903 828 800 (Littlehampton Book Services) email: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk website: www.communityplanning.net

Participatory Workshops by Robert Chambers

A sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities. Earthscan Publications as above.

Website: www.earthscan.co.uk

APPENDIX 5

INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS

Rural Community Council of Essex

Threshelfords Business Park
Inworth Road
Feering
Essex CO5 9SE
Tel: 0844 477 3938
Fax: 01376 573524
email: rcce@essexrcc.org.uk

East of England Planning Aid

EEPAS
PO Box 3057
Norwich
Norfolk NR3 4XQ
01603 624145
e-mail; rtpi@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

The Council for the Protection Of Rural Essex

The Garden Office
79 Springfield Road
Chelmsford
Essex, CM2 6JG
Tel; 01245 268667
Fax; 01245 268667
e-mail; cpre@freeuk.com

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

Somerford Court
Somerford Road
Cirencester, Glos GL7 1TW
Tel; 01285 653477
Fax; 01285 654537
email; acre@acre.org.uk

BTCV (formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)

Unit 5, Jarmin Road Depot
Jarmin Road
Colchester, Essex CO1 1XW
Tel; 01206 764470
Fax; 01206 764470
e-mail; btcv@btcv.org.uk

Essex Association of Local Councils

47 Stortford Road
Dunmow
Essex
Tel; 01371 879722
Fax; 01371 879733
e-mail; ealc@ealc.gov.uk

English Nature

Harbour House. Hythe Quay
Colchester
Essex CO2 8JF
Tel; 01206 796666
Fax; 01206 794466
e-mail; essex.herts@english-nature.org.uk

Environment Agency

Mary Parodi
Partnerships Officer
Cobham Road
Ipswich
Suffolk, IP3 1JE
Tel; 01473 70601
e-mail; mary.parodi@environment-agency.gov.uk

Essex Churchyard Conservation Group

William & Mary Cottages
Witham Road
Cressing, Near Braintree
Essex CM7 8PD
Tel; 01367 584386
Fax; 01376 582278
e-mail; wenlock@compuserve.com

Essex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Writtle College
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 3RR
Tel; 01245 424233
e-mail; essex@fwag.org.uk

Essex Wildlife Trust
Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve
Fingringhoe
Colchester
Essex CO5 7DN
Tel; 01206 729678
Fax; 01206 729298
e-mail; admin@essexwt.org.uk

Open Spaces Society
25a Bell Street
Henley-on-Thames
Oxon
RG9 2BA
Tel; 01491 573535
Fax; 01491 573051
e-mail; hq@oss.org.uk

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ESSEX

Essex County Council
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX
Tel; 01245 492211
Fax; 01245 352710
www.essexcc.gov.uk

Basildon District Council
The Basildon Centre,
St. Martin's Square
Basildon
Essex SS14 1DL
Tel; 01268 533333
Fax; 01268 294350
www.basildon.gov.uk

Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex CM7 9HB
Tel; 01376 552525
Fax; 01376 552626
www.braintree.gov.uk

Brentwood Borough Council
Town Hall
Ingrave Road
Brentwood
Essex CM15 8AY
Tel; 01277 312500

Fax; 01277 312743
www.brentwood-council.gov.uk

Castle Point Borough Council
Kiln Road
Thundersley
Benfleet
Essex SS7 1TF
Tel; 01268 8822
Fax; 01268 882455
www.castlepoint.gov.uk

Chelmsford Borough Council
Civic Centre, Duke Street
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1JE
Tel; 01245 606606
Fax; 01245 606747
www.chelmsfordbc.gov.uk

Colchester Borough Council

PO Box 884
Town Hall
Colchester
Essex CO1 1FR
Tel; 01206 282222
Fax; 01206 282288
www.colchester.gov.uk

Rochford District Council

Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex SS4 1BW
Tel; 01702 546366
Fax; 01702 545737
www.rochford.gov.uk

Epping Forest District Council

Civic Offices,
High Street
Epping
Essex CM16 4BZ
Tel; 01992 564000
Fax; 01992 564229
www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Southend-on-sea Borough Council

Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex SS2 6ER
Tel; 01702 215000
www.southend.gov.uk

Harlow Council

Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow
Essex CM20 1WG
Tel; 01279 446655
www.harlow.gov.uk

Tendring District Council

Town Hall
Station Road
Clacton-on-Sea
Essex CO15 1SE
Tel; 01255 686868
www.tendringdc.gov.uk

Maldon District Council

Council Offices
Princes Road
Maldon
Essex CM9 5DL
Tel; 01621 854477
Fax; 01621 852575
www.maldon.gov.uk

Thurrock Council

Civic Offices
New Road
Grays
Essex RM17 6SL
Tel; 01375 652652
Fax; 01375 652359
www.thurrock.gov.uk

Uttlesford District Council

Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
Essex CB11 4ER
Tel; 01799 510510
Fax; 01799 510550
www.uttlesford.gov.uk