

middlesbrough

partnership

Framework for  
Engaging with  
Communities

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK & TOOLKIT

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Community engagement lies at the heart of many of the changes now affecting public services. The Government is increasingly emphasising the need to involve citizens and stakeholders in decisions that will affect their lives. Indeed one of the underpinning principles of the Community Strategy is that it should reflect local needs and priorities.

***“Community Strategies offer a fresh opportunity to put local people at the heart of partnership working and should be grounded in the views and expectations of those people.”***

DETR: Preparing Community Strategies

Community Engagement empowers citizens by providing them with an opportunity to tell The Partnership about their own vision for their communities and neighbourhoods, and about what they want and need in terms of service provision. It also enables them to work with The Partnership to realise their vision and improve their communities and thus, their quality of life. Ultimately, engagement can lead to citizens being empowered to manage the services that they receive. Engagement is also a mechanism for Partnership organisations to tell local people about what they do, what services they can and cannot provide, and how their priorities and policies are determined.

## Developing the Framework & Toolkit

The Middlesbrough Partnership is fully committed to engaging with citizens and other key stakeholders. In a report to the Middlesbrough Partnership on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2001, it was proposed that one of the key aims of the Partnership should be to develop joint arrangements for engaging with citizens and stakeholders. It was agreed that a Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit be developed to provide guidance to partners who are carrying out community engagement exercises, and to ensure that community engagement throughout Middlesbrough is streamlined and carried out to a consistently high standard.

A Partnership ‘steering’ group was established to oversee the development of the framework. The group was made up of senior staff from partner agencies, and people who are directly responsible for engaging with the citizens of Middlesbrough.

## Linking in with existing policies

Over recent years, there has been a wealth of policy and strategic documents relating to community engagement in the public sector. This framework and toolkit draws on best practice guidelines from local and national source documents, many of which have been produced by partner agencies.

## Establishing a Support Structure

To ensure that partner agencies are utilising the framework and toolkit, and are adhering to the principles that are laid out within the document, it is essential that a sound support structure be established. This will need the following:

### **Community Engagement Advisory Network**

A Community Engagement Advisory Network is being established to provide guidance and support to partner agencies and the five Middlesbrough Partnership theme groups. The network will be a forum for people who are involved in community engagement to meet and share best practice, discuss current and planned engagement activities and provide advice and guidance to colleagues. This will enable partner agencies and theme groups to identify scope for joining up community engagement exercises wherever possible, thus avoiding duplication and over consulting residents.

### **Community Engagement Database**

An audit of past, present and future engagement activities is currently taking place within the partnership. The ultimate outcome of this exercise will be the development of a Partnership database of engagement activities. The database will be a central reference point for people who are planning to carry out their own community engagement and will include details of other exercises that have taken place throughout Middlesbrough, and eventually the Tees Valley. This will enable people to identify and share best practice, and will also facilitate joined-up working. This will be an ongoing exercise and it is essential that all future community engagement exercises are registered so that the database remains up to date.

### **Community Engagement Strategy / Forward Work Programme**

A further outcome of the audit will be a forward-work programme for community engagement throughout the partnership. This is a further mechanism for identifying areas where joined-up community engagement can be carried out.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

## Framework – Section 1

# AIMS & OBJECTIVES

### Aim:

The overarching aim of the Middlesbrough Partnership Community Engagement Framework is to ensure that citizens, visitors and other key stakeholders in Middlesbrough have a voice to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives, and to inform the way in which services in Middlesbrough are planned and delivered.

### Objectives

- ◆ To ensure that throughout the Partnership there is a clear understanding of and commitment to engaging with communities about decisions that affect their lives.
- ◆ To establish a co-ordinated and consistent approach to community engagement in Middlesbrough.
- ◆ To ensure that community engagement in Middlesbrough is carried out to the highest possible standard.
- ◆ To ensure that Community Engagement is inclusive by giving every citizen of Middlesbrough the opportunity to express their views and that those views will be listened to and respected.
- ◆ To ensure that the outcomes of community engagement impact on decision-making and the way in which services are delivered.
- ◆ To plan and deliver services, strategies and policies that reflect the needs of the citizens of Middlesbrough.
- ◆ To provide a framework for sustained community engagement in the work of the Partnership.
- ◆ To ensure that the community engagement process is transparent and accessible to all.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

### What is Community Engagement?

The term 'community engagement' is used to embrace a whole spectrum of activities that support the two-way communication process between the Partnership and citizens, visitors and other key stakeholders in the town.

'Consultation', 'involvement', 'participation' and 'research,' are all terms that are regularly used, often interchangeably, to describe community engagement activities. However, each term refers to intrinsically different forms of engagement, which are dependent on the overall objective of your exercise. It is important that the appropriate terminology is used when undertaking any form of engagement activity in order to avoid confusion and clarify purpose. The five levels of community engagement are outlined below.

**Table 1: Levels of Community Engagement**

**1. Information-giving**

This is the simplest level of engagement and is simply about providing information to stakeholders. Although it is a form of engagement in itself, information-giving underpins all other levels of engagement, as it is essential that participants are provided information (in varying detail and formats) about the issues about which they are being engaged so that they are able to make informed and considered choices. Participants should also receive feedback after engagement has been completed and this is in itself an information-giving exercise.

**2. Consultation & Learning**

The objective of consultation and learning is to seek the views and opinions of citizens, to inform the decision-making process of organisations. This method is NOT about working with others or putting their ideas into action and it implies a pre-disposition to change on the part of the organisation. In other words, organisations embarking on this type of exercise must be open to suggestions and be prepared to take on the ideas of the community.

**3. Involvement**

Here, citizens are actually involved in decision-making and deciding together on the future of their neighbourhoods and other decisions that affect their lives. This can give citizens the power to choose, without fully sharing the responsibility for action.

**4. Acting together**

This involves both deciding together and acting together, and also sharing responsibility.

**5. Supporting**

This is the most ambitious level of engagement and aims to maximise community empowerment and capacity building. Organisations play a minimal role in making decisions and putting them into action. The role of the organisation is to help communities to develop and implement their own plans.

## What / who are Communities?

It is important to recognise that 'communities' can be defined in different ways. A simple and broadly accepted definition is as follows:-

- **Communities of place** – the 'community' is defined by an area with physical boundaries, eg a housing estate, neighbourhood etc
- **Community of interest** (also referred to as an interest group) – the 'community' is defined by a shared interest, experience or demographic characteristic – for example young people, people with disabilities, working population, ethnic minorities or gay/lesbian/bi-sexual.

People can belong to more than one community and communities are therefore by their very nature heterogeneous. It is also worth noting that members of defined communities may not necessarily regard themselves as such and consideration must be given to this when approaching different 'communities.'

## Who are our 'Stakeholders?'

The term 'stakeholders' is used regularly throughout this document. 'Stakeholders' is a generic term for all people who have an interest in the well-being of Middlesbrough. This includes residents, visitors, businesses, government, public service organisations, voluntary organisations etc.

## Hard-to-Reach Groups

The term 'hard-to-reach groups' is used frequently throughout this document. It is a widely recognised term to describe those groups or communities who experience social exclusion and are generally perceived by agencies as being difficult to access and are thus 'disempowered.' However, it is important to note that many of these communities are not actually that 'hard-to-reach' and do not consider themselves as such. It is simply that organisations have not put enough effort into seeking their views.

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The following principles have been designed to ensure that community engagement in Middlesbrough is consistent and carried out to the highest possible standards.

- ◆ Engagement should only be carried out where there is an identified need. Typical circumstances where engagement may be necessary are as follows:
  - a) there is an identified knowledge gap in the Partnership
  - b) Stakeholders themselves want to be engaged with
  - c) A particular policy, strategy or initiative will have direct implications for stakeholders
- ◆ Where engagement is necessary, efforts must be made to avoid duplication of effort by auditing past, present and future engagement activities throughout the Partnership and joining up resources wherever possible.
- ◆ Written and verbal communication throughout the engagement process should be clear and concise, using language and terminology that can be understood by all. Jargon and acronyms must be avoided at all costs.
- ◆ Engaging with people to influence the services provided by the Partnership and decision-making processes means involving them at the earliest stages in the planning of services and projects wherever possible, rather than simply consulting them about pre-determined options, or decisions that have already been made.
- ◆ A named member of staff who has the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out the activity effectively, should be given responsibility for each engagement activity and their name will be given to participants as a point of contact.
- ◆ Agencies must be able to clearly justify why they have chosen a particular 'target community' and, if appropriate, how and why they have selected the sample.
- ◆ It must be recognised that communities may wish to engage at different levels and that some may not wish to become fully involved. Individuals should therefore be invited to participate, with the pro's and con's of engaging being made clear. Stakeholders should never participate under duress, but in ways that they themselves are comfortable with.
- ◆ The level of commitment that is being asked from the participants must be made clear at the outset, particularly in terms of time.
- ◆ Agencies should recognise that certain 'communities' often experience social exclusion and disengagement and proactively seek the views of 'hard-to-reach' groups using appropriate means of communication

- ◆ The method of Community Engagement that is used should be 'fit for purpose'. This means that the engagement tool that you select must be appropriate for your overall objective and for the community with whom you are engaging.
- ◆ The processes and outcomes of Community Engagement must not discriminate against anyone.
- ◆ The purpose and aims of the engagement will be made clear at the beginning of the activity to those who have agreed to be involved
- ◆ When embarking on a community engagement initiative, you must always be open and honest about what can and cannot be achieved or influenced, and about the constraints or boundaries within which your organisation is operating.
- ◆ Wherever possible participants will be given sufficient notice to take part in any engagement activity. Where there are exceptional circumstances and notice is not possible, this should be communicated to the participants.
- ◆ Where complex issues are being discussed, enough time and information should be provided to participants in order to enable them to make considered and informed decisions. The information should be provided in appropriate format that can be understood and accessed by all, and where possible should always be provided at least seven days before any engagement activity. Organisations must try to overcome possible barriers that may prevent certain groups from participating, including literacy, numeracy, sensory impairment and language.
- ◆ Engagement activities must be held in venues that are easy to get to and at times and in places appropriate to the participants. The particular needs of individuals should be met to enable them to effectively participate eg, provision of translators, signers, crèche etc
- ◆ Participants will be told how and when feedback from the engagement activity will be provided.
- ◆ Participants will be given an opportunity to see any written information recorded as a result of the engagement activity and agree whether it is a true record of their views.
- ◆ Participants must receive feedback at appropriate times, on how the views they express will be fed into decision-making processes and what will happen after the engagement exercise is complete
- ◆ Evaluation and monitoring procedures should be built in at the outset to ensure that there is a mechanism to measure whether the outcomes of engagement have impacted on policy and strategy development and that they have been both effective and have met community expectations within available resources.
- ◆ All participants will be given the opportunity to comment on the engagement process after it has been completed.
- ◆ The results of the community engagement process should be made available to participants, partner organisations and wherever possible, the general public and other key stakeholders in Middlesbrough.

- ◆ Participants will be told to whom they can make any complaints about consultation.

## WHY ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES

We are constantly told that we need to engage with communities and that it is both worthwhile and necessary. However, community engagement requires a great deal of effort and commitment and can be time and resource intensive. So what incentives are there for the Partnership and the citizens of Middlesbrough to engage with each other?

There are many benefits that can be gained by both Partner organisations and by citizens. By listening to and working with the community, we can achieve the following:

◆ ***Plan and provide suitable and localised services that are tailored to the needs of the community***

Community engagement is at the heart of evidence-based policy and practice. Stands to reason that people who live and work in Middlesbrough and receive the services that we are trying to improve, are best placed to tell us what issues affect them and what is needed to improve their quality of life. By defining issues and debating problems and solutions with the public, agencies can target resources where they are needed and thus provide suitable and localised solutions that are tailored to the needs of the community. This helps us to provide public services that are more responsive to the needs of the citizens of Middlesbrough, but always, of course, within the resources available to us.

◆ ***Empower people to define the vision for their own community***

People who belong to, live in or work in particular communities, should have the right to influence the future of their community. If people can be involved in defining the vision for their community, it will create a greater sense of ‘community spirit,’ belonging, and pride. This is at the heart of the notion of sustainability.

◆ ***Provide information and opportunities for the public to be better informed.***

Sharing information helps the public to gain an understanding of the Partnership’s policies or priorities. It also helps to manage expectations, as the Partnership is able to explain what they can and cannot be achieved, why something is or is not being done and what constraints exist. Research has revealed that agencies who are perceived to be more effective at communicating with the public score higher levels of service satisfaction.

◆ ***Monitor & measure performance.***

In an ever-increasing culture of performance management, community engagement, particularly consultation through surveys, is an effective way of establishing base-line data for performance indicators that organisations can use to ‘measure’ issues such as user-satisfaction etc.

◆ ***Encourage local people to become actively involved in the democratic process***

One likely effect of enhancing community engagement is the reinvigoration of the democratic process and a reversal of the declining trends in voter turnout for both general and local elections. It is important to note that the engagement itself is an exercise in participatory democracy that many people will find much more satisfactory than simply exercising their right to vote.

◆ ***Build on 'responsible citizenship'.***

If communities are enabled to play a significant role in improving their neighbourhood, or in planning and developing a project or initiative, they are more likely to develop a greater sense of responsibility or ownership towards it. This will strengthen the role of the community in the management of their neighbourhoods.

◆ ***Improves relationship between partner agencies and the public***

Community Engagement makes organisations more open and accessible to the public and by making public services more responsive to the needs of the public, helps to build upon and improve relationships.

◆ ***Build capacity***

Community engagement can help to build capacity of participants. If participants are engaged with effectively, their knowledge base and skills are likely to develop. They will learn about their community and the specific issues that are under discussion, and also about organisational structures and processes. If they are engaged with on a level of involvement or above, their negotiating and debating skills will be developed and their confidence will grow. If members of the local community can be involved in actually implementing community engagement, practical skills can be developed, such as carrying out surveys, interviewing people and analysing information. Some engagement activities may require participants to be trained in order to enable them to take part. This training could result in accreditation.

And if all this isn't enough to convince you, one final reason for engaging with communities is as follows:

◆ ***Because we have to!***

The Government have placed statutory obligations on agencies and local strategic partnerships to engage with communities about issues that affect them, regardless of whether or not the communities in question want to be engaged! Consultation is a core element of the Community Strategy, the Community Safety Strategy, the NHS Plan etc. Also, certain organisations (the Council, the Police Authority and the Fire Authority) are subject to a statutory duty of Best Value. This is a driver for high quality services, and requires by law that organisations consult the public, businesses and their representatives.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

## LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Whenever decisions are being made about issues that will affect the lives of people who live or work in Middlesbrough, community engagement must always be a primary consideration. Citizens and stakeholders should be given the opportunity to participate at every stage of the decision-making process from defining issues through to formulating and implementing the solutions.

Effective and comprehensive planning is essential to ensure that community engagement meets your needs and carried out to the highest possible standard.

Before you can develop an action plan, you first need to ‘lay the foundations’ of your engagement by clarifying the overall aims of the consultation exercise. To do this, it is necessary to consider the key questions that are outlined below:

1. **What are your key objectives?**
2. **What level of engagement is required?**
3. **Who do you want to engage with?**
4. **What is being done elsewhere?**
5. **Do you need to engage about engaging?**

### Set your objectives

The first stage of the planning process is to clarify your objective, in other words you need to ask yourself, ***‘what are you trying to achieve by engaging with the community?’***

You need to consider why are you embarking on a community engagement exercise and what do you hope to get out of it. This requires having an in depth background to the project. You need to identify who and what are the drivers for your engagement activity, what information is required, and how the information will impact on policy or strategy development

### What level of engagement is required

Once you have set your overall objective, you need to consider the appropriate level or type of engagement that you require from the community in order to meet your objective. For example, if your decision has already been made then why waste resources on anything more than information-giving. Furthermore, if you choose a level of involvement that is greater than consulting, you need to be sure that you are embarking on the engagement with an open mind, are willing to accept new, innovative and perhaps controversial suggestions and be prepared to change as a result of the outcome. The various levels of engagement are detailed in section two of the Framework.

What is important to understand is that the greater the level of engagement or involvement, the greater the opportunity to empower citizens and build capacity. However, high levels of engagement such as acting together or supporting have greater resource implications in terms of both time and cost, as the citizens who you are engaging with will require a great deal of support and training.

### **Who do you want to engage with?**

The next step in planning community engagement is to define your target audience – the communities with whom you want to engage. It is important to remember the differences between communities of interest and communities of place, and to recognise that individuals belong simultaneously to a number of both types of community. People will identify with different communities according to their circumstances and the issues under discussion. It will therefore almost always be necessary to engage with a range of individuals, groups or communities in order to achieve your objective. It may also be beneficial to engage not only with current service users, but also with potential customers.

### **What is being done elsewhere?**

Before embarking on what could be a resource intensive process of engagement, it is useful to carry out your own research, or 'audit,' to identify what is already being done within the partnership. This exercise has three main benefits:

- i) Identifying examples of best practice**  
Don't re-invent the wheel. It is likely that you will be able to learn from other engagement projects that will have taken place throughout the Partnership.
- ii) Saving resources**  
It may be possible to link in with other projects or build on existing work to meet your needs. You may even be able to use the results from other engagement activities to eliminate the need for further engagement activities.
- iii) Avoiding duplication & streamlining community engagement**  
All of the key organisations in Middlesbrough are constantly involved in community engagement, particularly information-giving and consultation. At any one time there will be numerous consultation exercises taking place. Residents are 'consulted' on numerous occasions and frequently about the same or similar topics. This will inevitably lead to 'consultation-overload,' - the very detrimental effect of over-consulting with communities. Residents and other stakeholders will become tired of answering our questions, especially when they are not seeing any tangible outcomes. This will inevitably lead to cynicism, apathy, and a resistance to becoming 'involved.' Perversely, too much engagement can lead to disempowerment. The Partnership should therefore be joining-up engagement exercises wherever possible by using one exercise or project to address a number of issues. The aim is to have less consultation but with the same outcomes – in other words, to 'streamline' the engagement process.

## **Engage about engaging!**

If you have decided that you wish to maximise community empowerment (ie you intend to engage on a level of involvement or higher) it may be necessary at this stage to approach your target community and 'engage' with them about how they want to be engaged! You will need to reach an agreement with the community about the objective, and at this stage may need to revise it slightly to ensure that it reflects their needs and priorities. You will then need to fully involve them in planning and possibly implementing the engagement activity.

## Toolkit – Section 2

# DEVELOPING A PROJECT PLAN

Having set your overall objective(s), you will now be ready to prepare a detailed project plan that will ensure that you meet your objective. A comprehensive project plan should include the following:

- 1) **What is the most suitable method for engaging with individual communities or neighbourhoods?**
- 2) **Who is going to implement the engagement exercise?**
- 3) **How are you going to encourage people to become involved?**
- 4) **How are you going to ensure that people can make informed and considered choices?**
- 5) **How are you going to analyse your findings?**
- 6) **How are you going to monitor and evaluate your initiative?**
- 7) **How are you going to provide feedback to your participants?**

### What is the most suitable method?

Once the aims and objectives of the engagement exercise have been agreed, you must consider how you are going to engage with the community. You will need to identify the method or methods of engagement that are most suitable for your needs in order to ensure that you are achieving *'fitness for purpose.'* There are a wide range of engagement methods that can be used and selecting those that are most appropriate is crucial if you are going to glean information that is relevant and of value.

The techniques that are available all have advantages and disadvantages, and once your objective has been agreed, the final choice should depend on a variety of factors. When selecting an appropriate method of engagement, ask yourself the following questions:

- a) **What resources are available (time and money)?**
- b) **What type of information do you require?**
- c) **How can you enable everyone to participate?**
- d) **What training and skills are available / will be required?**
- e) **How do your target audience want to be engaged?**

**a) What resources are available (time and money)?**

Community engagement can be time and resource intensive, depending on the level of involvement that you are aiming to achieve, and the audience with which you want to engage. For example, if you want to hold focus groups with a particular ‘hard-to-reach’ ethnic minority community, you need to consider the additional resources that will be required – employing an interpreter, supplying translated written materials etc. You therefore need to fully consider time and financial constraints and be realistic when identifying the most appropriate mechanisms of engagement.

**b) What type of information do you require?**

Here, the main consideration should be how in depth you would like your research to be. When choosing between quantitative and qualitative research, you must be mindful that research requires a high degree of skill and expertise if it is to be carried out well and produce meaningful results.

Quantitative – Quantitative research provides a large amount of data about predetermined questions. This type of research is useful for providing a ‘snap-shot’ of public opinions and attitudes, and the results are measurable and can be used to benchmark. The disadvantage of quantitative research is that it is not suitable for exploring issues in depth. Entire target populations can participate in quantitative research, or the research can be designed so that a smaller, representative sample is selected. The most popular mechanisms for quantitative research are surveys.

Qualitative – Qualitative research is used to explore issues in depth. A typical example of qualitative research is focus groups. The main advantage of qualitative research is that it allows participants to talk freely about issues, rather than simply respond to predetermined questions with set responses. However, the nature of this type of engagement means that it is not practical or even possible, to involve all members of your target population, or even a fully representative sample. You are therefore unlikely to elicit the views that are reflect those of the entire community. However, mechanisms such as focus groups are a useful way of engaging with the ‘hard-to-reach’ groups.

**c) How can you enable everyone to participate?**

Once you have defined your target community / communities, you need to ensure that your chosen mechanism(s) of engagement enables everyone within the community to participate. The nature of the community will dictate the types of methods that you are able to use, as well as how and when this can be done. Some methods of engagement can marginalise certain groups or sections of the community, particularly those ‘hard-to-reach’ groups who often experience social exclusion. You must therefore ensure that the techniques you employ do not discriminate against anyone. For example, when designing a questionnaire you should consider the barriers that may prevent certain sections of the community from participating – language, literacy, disability and so on. To overcome this problem, you should use a range of techniques such as combining a questionnaire with focus groups. This helps to ensure that you have obtained a full range of perspectives and contributions. Engaging with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups is addressed in appendix (ii).

**d) What training & skills are available / will be required?**

The different types of engagement require different levels of skills and expertise to ensure effective implementation and meaningful outcomes. Designing and implementing community engagement, and analysing and interpreting the results requires a high level of expertise in research methodology.

Participants themselves may also require training and support to familiarise them with the issues about which they are being engaged, and also about the organisational structures and processes. Young people are particularly likely to need training and support when involving them in decision-making.

**e) How do your target audience want to 'engage?'**

Public service providers are becoming increasingly committed to engaging with communities about issues that affect their lives, but we cannot assume that these communities will actually want to be 'involved' to the level that you anticipate. They may actually be perfectly happy with the situation as it is, or alternatively may not be interested or have the time or capacity to take part.

You therefore need to fully explain the proposed engagement process to your potential 'participants.' This requires openness and honesty about what they can hope to gain from the engagement process, the extent to which their involvement will impact on the decision-making process, and the level of commitment that will be required from them. It may be worth offering a range of appropriate engagement mechanisms that they can choose from.

### **Who is going to implement the engagement exercise?**

Here, a key consideration should be about how objective or subjective you want the research to be. Of course all research / engagement should be as objective as possible. However it is easy to design engagement activities that are fundamentally biased, even if it is done unintentionally. For example, it is relatively easy to design a biased questionnaire where the responses are influenced by the wording of the questions, or the set responses that are offered.

Therefore if you are addressing a sensitive issue, where there may be hidden or conflicting agendas', it may be worth contracting with an independent provider to carry out the research. There are many market research companies who have a great deal of experience with working with public sector organisations to engage with communities.

Potential benefits of working with independent providers are as follows:

- ◆ They have greater capacity in terms of skills and resources
- ◆ They are able to be completely objective
- ◆ They are likely to have greater credibility, especially if the findings are controversial.

## How are you going to encourage people to engage with you?

Community engagement not only requires a time commitment from the organisation(s) involved, but also the participants themselves. You must therefore consider how you are going to encourage people to give up their time to participate in the engagement process, and how you are going to maintain their interest.

### ◆ **Issues that are relevant**

People are most likely to become involved if:

- a) **the issue is of interest or matters to them**
- b) **they stand to lose or gain something**

However, you must always be open and honest from the outset about what can be achieved or influenced, and the limitations and constraints within which you are operating. You should also be realistic about outputs and time-scales. Be clear about whether they can expect to see tangible outputs in the short term or are you looking to develop a long-term strategy that they might not see any benefits from for several years. In other words, you must be mindful of *inadvertently raising expectations*.

### ◆ **Make it fun!**

It is not just young people who want to have fun – nobody wants to spend their spare time at dull, bureaucratic meetings, or completing long-winded questionnaires! You are far more likely to attract interest if you can devise innovative and even entertaining means of engaging, such as role plays, or communicating via different mediums – internet, films, CD ROM's etc. If you need to hold meetings, consider the format. Is it appropriate to hold 'structured' meetings, with agendas, minutes and chairpersons? This type of forum may prove intimidating to someone who is not accustomed to this type of environment, and will therefore prevent them from contributing. However it is often seen as the easy way for agencies to operate because we are more comfortable with this style.

### ◆ **Ensure that the participants are not out of pocket.**

Participants are giving you their time so you should therefore ensure that it is not costing them anything. At a minimum, travel costs should be reimbursed and consideration should be given to other expenses that are likely to be incurred, for example caring costs (childcare etc). However, avoid making payments which might put at risk any participant's benefit entitlements.

### ◆ **Providing refreshments**

This is a useful gesture that shows that their participation is valued.

### ◆ **Financial rewards**

It is not unusual for people taking part in exercises such as focus groups to be offered a financial incentive. Indeed offering money usually results in a very high response rate. However, one concern here is the motivation of the people who attend. They may not be attending because they genuinely care about the issue, and may not therefore have a valuable input to the discussion. However, this risk must be balanced with the fact that it may be a useful means of engaging with people who would not otherwise be interested in taking part. Again, care needs to be taken to avoid putting participants' benefits at risk.

### How are you going to help people to make informed and considered choices?

If people are to influence the development of policy and strategy, they need to be given sufficient time and information to explore ideas and think them through, especially if the issues are complex. Any background information that is provided should be in an appropriate format. You should also give consider any barriers that your chosen format may impose, for example language problems, literacy or sensory impairment.

### How are you going to analyse the data?

You should know how you are going to code, input and analyse your data from the outset. These are not simple tasks and they require expertise and in the case of quantitative analysis, appropriate software, if the results are to be meaningful and accurate.

### How are you going to monitor and evaluate your initiative?

A systematic process for monitoring and evaluating the process and outcomes of the engagement initiative should be built into your project plan from the outset. It is however important to note that the monitoring and evaluation effort should be proportionate to the time and resources that have been committed to the exercise!

The initiative should be monitored and evaluated against the agreed objective as well as whether it has adhered to the key principles that are laid out in section three of the framework.

**Monitoring** involves an ongoing assessment of your project and facilitates the ‘fine-tuning’ and adjusting of the project to ensure that you are meeting your objectives and adhering to the principles that are laid out in section three. Monitoring should take place at every stage of the engagement process. This may involve ensuring that you are reaching your target communities and meeting quotas, that the project is keeping to the given timescale, and that the participants are happy with the engagement process. Seeking constant feedback from participants is essential if you are to ensure that the initiative is going to be a success. Afterwards, seek further feedback so that you can learn for future exercises.

**Evaluation** involves assessing whether your project has achieved its objectives and has adhered to the principles of engagement. In order to evaluate the outcomes (ie the impact of the engagement process on policy, strategy and project development), it may be necessary to complete an audit trail, from disseminating the results through to the development of policies and strategies. This helps to ensure accountability and transparency in the decision-making process.

When monitoring and evaluating projects, you need to measure three aspects of your project:



**Inputs:** Resources spent on community engagement (time and money) to achieve the overall aim. These are relatively easy to measure and are useful when carrying out cost / benefit analysis. However they are not particularly meaningful when monitoring and evaluating your project in terms of the aims and objectives.

**Outputs:** The outputs are the engagement activities (sometimes referred to as deliverables) that were carried out with the resources (for example number of completed questionnaires or interviews, the actual results of the engagement process and reports that are written etc). Again these are easy to measure, and are also fairly meaningful in terms of the project aims and objectives.

**Outcomes:** Outcomes are the impacts or effects of the engagement activities on project, policy or strategy development. Measuring outcomes is the most meaningful exercise in terms of how far the aims of the community engagement initiative have been achieved. However it is also the most challenging as many outcomes are strategic and are therefore less obvious and take a long time to realise. Furthermore, it is not always possible to identify the actual impact of community engagement. Differentiating between the role of the engagement activity, and other external, local or organisational factors that may have influenced the development of policies, strategies or projects, can be difficult, if not impossible. However, although evaluating engagement is not a straightforward task, it is essential. The following are questions that you may need to address when evaluating any community engagement initiative:

- ◆ *Has the exercise achieved the overall objective(s)?*
- ◆ *Did you obtain the range of views that were required (ie did you manage to engage with all sections of your target community, including the 'hard-to-reach' groups?*
- ◆ *Did you meet the Partnership's principles of engagement?*
- ◆ *How did the outputs of community engagement impact on the key decisions that were made?*
- ◆ *Did the participants feel that engagement mattered?*
- ◆ *Were participants 'empowered?'*
- ◆ *What methods worked?*
- ◆ *What didn't work?*
- ◆ *How would you do it differently?*
- ◆ *What lessons have been learned?*
- ◆ *How can these be passed on?*

## How are you going to providing feedback to participants?

Providing feedback is one of the most important stages of the engagement process, and is all too often the one that is missed. Telling people about how what the information they provided will be or is being used shows people that their involvement is worthwhile and actually counts, thus helping to avoid apathy and a 'what's the point' attitude. This in turn encourages future engagement. Providing feedback is particularly necessary when the outcomes are relatively 'invisible,' for example where strategies or policies have been developed, but there are no immediate tangible outputs.

Providing feedback is in itself a mechanism of engagement that requires planning in the same way that the original exercise did. When planning the feedback process, it is necessary to consider what the most appropriate mechanism is. It is worth asking participants how they would like to receive feedback. Would they prefer newsletters or meetings?

**And now you are ready to 'engage!'**

# TRANSLATING OUTCOMES INTO POLICY

You should have been clear from the outset about how the information that has been collected, is to be used in terms of informing policy, strategy and project development.

### Analysing and Interpreting your findings

As already mentioned, data analysis can be a complex process that requires knowledge and skills in research methodology and statistical analysis. If the skills are not available within your organisation, it may be worth contracting this process out to an external provider, or asking another partner who does have the expertise.

Qualitative data (from unstructured interviews, focus groups etc) is the most difficult to analyse, as it is not structured and there are no standard analysis processes that you can follow. It is useful to analyse qualitative data by themes that have emerged, in order to identify key issues.

Quantitative data is more simple to analyse, although requires a greater knowledge of statistical procedures. For most cases, using frequencies and percentages will suffice as many people understand and can relate to this level of information. Depending on the design of your research, you should be able to 'drill down' into your data and produce 'cross-tabs' – tables that break down results by demographics, such as age, gender and ethnicity. This helps you to identify any significant patterns and trends, and is critical in ensuring that service delivery meets the needs of all our communities.

One note of caution is that when you have produced your frequencies, and percentages, you need to be wary of how you use your research, and be aware of when your results are significant and require further analysis or action, and when they should be disregarded. Wherever possible you should try to place your results into context, for example comparing satisfaction scores to national / family benchmarks / trends, or the previous results.

When interpreting your findings and drawing inferences, it is essential that you remain objective. Your analysis may come under scrutiny from participants and other key stakeholders, especially if the subject is politically sensitive or controversial. You must therefore ensure that you are able to justify any conclusions that you come to.

### Reporting on your results

Reporting on your results serves three main purposes:

- ◆ It informs managers and decision-makers of your findings, or the outputs of the community engagement, together with any appropriate recommendations in terms of project, policy or strategy development.
- ◆ It is a mechanism for providing feedback to participants in the engagement process
- ◆ It is a mechanism for you to share your findings and experiences with partner agencies and other interested stakeholders.

In light of this you may need to present your findings in a variety of ways.

1. **A formal, in depth report** written specifically for your organisation – this will be the most complex report, and should include detailed analysis and descriptive statistics if applicable, together with key recommendations.
2. **A summary report** that can be accessible to participants, the public and partner organisations.
3. **Presentations** are also a useful way of communicating your findings. They help you to reach sections of the community who you would not normally reach particularly if they are entertaining!

However, no matter how you are reporting on your findings, you should always remember the following:

- ◆ **Be clear and concise**, avoiding jargon and baffling people with confusing statistics – even people who work within your organisation. Lengthy papers are unlikely to be read by many people and your key message can be lost.
- ◆ **A picture can paint a thousand words** - diagrams, graphs etc are always visually impactful and can convey your message a lot more strongly than text.

## APPENDICES

- Appendix (i) Toolkit for engaging with communities
- Appendix (ii) Engaging with hard to reach groups
- Appendix (iii) Hard to reach groups contact list **(To follow)**
- Appendix (iv) Existing engagement mechanisms (community groups, community councils, citizens panel etc) **(to follow)**
- Appendix (v) Contact list for community engagement throughout the partnership **(to follow)**
- Appendix (vi) Bibliography

## **Appendix (i)**

# **Tools of the Trade; Mechanisms for Community Engagement**

There are numerous 'tools' or methods that can be used to engage with communities. A list of these is given below, with a summary of why and how they should be used, associated advantages and disadvantages and also any local examples if applicable. This list is only intended as a 'rough guide,' and is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive. Organisations should constantly be seeking to identify new and innovative ways of engaging with communities.

The tools of engagement that are discussed are as follows:

- ◆ Publicity
- ◆ Consultation Documents
- ◆ Exhibitions & Roadshows
- ◆ Referenda
- ◆ Comments & complaints system
- ◆ Self-completion survey
- ◆ Citizens Panel
- ◆ Structured face-to-face & telephone interviews
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews
- ◆ Unstructured / in depth interviews
- ◆ Focus groups & discussion groups
- ◆ Ward Councillor Contact
- ◆ Formal, committee style meetings
- ◆ User Panel
- ◆ Forums
- ◆ Public Meetings
- ◆ Advisory boards
- ◆ Seminars / workshops
- ◆ Futures Conferencing / Visioning Exercises
- ◆ Physical Planning
- ◆ Citizens Juries
- ◆ Community Needs Analysis
- ◆ Virtual Consultation

**Source:** *DETR Guidance on enhancing public participation*  
*Audit Commission 'Listen-up! Effective Community Consultation*

## **PUBLICITY – newsletters, multi-media (CD ROM, VR, media coverage)**

**Objective:** Information-giving

**Purpose:** To provide information specific to an organisation, neighbourhood or initiative

**Local Examples:** 'Middlesbrough' newspaper;  
New Deal for Communities in West Middlesbrough (Newsletter)  
PCG matters;  
University Virtual Reality Centre – Middlehaven;  
Evening Gazette

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Potential for regular updates
- ✓ Can be reach a wide audience depending on coverage and readership of the publication

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Can be costly and time consuming to produce and distribute
- 7 Skills needed to write articles of interest and edit a newsletter
- 7 Newsletters can be perceived as junk mail
- 7 Not always read / seen by target audience
- 7 Although media coverage can be free if it is newsworthy, the media may slant the story

## **Consultation Documents**

**Objective:** Information-giving / consultation

**Purpose:** To provide information and can also be used to gather views by including a response slip / form

**Local Examples:** 'Audit of Crime and Disorder'  
'Who do you want to run Middlesbrough?'

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Good starting point for consultation
- ✓ Makes the views of the organisation clear

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Can be costly to produce and circulate
- 7 Document may not be read by many
- 7 Needs to be produced in variety of formats if it can be accessible by all (minority languages, braille, large print etc)
- 7 Does not cater for people with learning disabilities

## Exhibitions, Roadshows, Open-days, sign-boards

<b>Objective:</b>	Information / Consultation
<b>Purpose:</b>	Used to provide information and to obtain views on specific projects or services
<b>Local Examples:</b>	MBC Best Value Fundamental Performance Review Consultation on Streetscene
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Effective in publicising services / organisations</li><li>✓ Can give the public longer to comment on issues</li></ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Groups who are reached are dependant on location and timing of roadshow, exhibition etc</li><li>7 Likely to obtain views of a small number of people who are not representative of the target population</li></ul>

## Referenda

<b>Objective:</b>	Involving
<b>Purpose:</b>	A formal poll on a single issue. Asks for a response to a single question. Can be postal or traditional. The outcome (ie a 'yes' or 'no') is binding.
<b>Local Examples:</b>	Mayoral Referendum
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Opinion of entire population can be obtained quickly and efficiently</li><li>✓ Postal ballots can be used to improve turnout</li><li>✓ The organisation <u>must</u> act on the outcome.</li></ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Requires publicity to improve response rate</li><li>7 Should only be used for issues that require little or no explanation</li><li>7 Can only give a yes / no response or make a choice between a limited number of options.</li></ul>

## Comments & Complaints System

<b>Objective:</b>	Consultation
<b>Purpose:</b>	Provides direct feedback form service users
<b>Local Examples:</b>	Health Action Link South Tees Community Health Council
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Shows that you are committed to service improvement through listening to and responding to comments and complaints</li><li>✓ Can identify persistent weaknesses</li><li>✓ Formal mechanism for pursuing a complaint</li></ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Very unlikely to yield positive comments</li></ul>

- 7 Fails to elicit views of non-service users
- 7 Procedures must be established for dealing with complaints
- 7 Information may not always be reliable
- 7 Difficult to establish whether the complaint is about a one-off incident or a general feature of the service
- 7 Confidentiality must be a key consideration
- 7 Care must be taken to ensure that a previous or persistent complainant is not 'labelled' as such and that the services provided to them are not compromised.

## Self-completion questionnaires / surveys

**Objective:** Consultation

**Purpose:** Market research exercise used to gather quantifiable information on uncomplicated issues. Can be used to gather views and opinions and to measure attitudes, satisfaction and performance. Postal surveys can be used.

**Local Examples:** Housing needs survey

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Low cost in time and money
- ✓ Effective way of gaining information from a lot of people very quickly
- ✓ Analysis is relatively straightforward for someone with the relevant skills
- ✓ Data can be updated and compared against local and national benchmarks is designed well
- ✓ Allows for anonymity and can therefore be used to consult on potentially sensitive issues
- ✓ Can include open ended questions to explore issues in more depth

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Unsuitable for addressing complex issues as usually only allows people to respond to set questions with predetermined answers
- 7 Open-ended questions can be difficult to analyse
- 7 Needs statistical and research expertise to design the research and analyse the data
- 7 Can yield a low response rate so requires a large sample
- 7 May be boring for respondents
- 7 Difficult to engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups
- 7 Needs to be produced in a variety of formats (eg for sensory impairment, minority languages)
- 7 Cannot always control how different people interpret questions
- 7 Cannot be certain of honesty / seriousness of responses

## Citizens Panel

<b>Objective:</b>	Consultation
<b>Purpose</b>	To gather quantifiable information from demographically representative cross-section of the population. Can be used to gather views and opinions and to measure attitudes, satisfaction and performance, usually by postal or telephone survey
<b>Local Examples:</b>	Voiceover Citizens Panel
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Can select and invite demographically representative people to become panel members</li><li>✓ A readily available 'pool' of willing respondents to consult with on any issue of relevance</li><li>✓ Can yield a good response rate</li><li>✓ Relatively cheap once the panel has been set up</li><li>✓ Provides a snap-shot of local opinion</li></ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Cannot be used to discuss complex issues</li><li>7 Can be expensive and time-consuming to set up</li><li>7 Risk of 'over-consulting' with panel members</li><li>7 Panel members are unlikely to represent the views of the general population, as they are self-selecting and want to be consulted.</li><li>7 Members may become 'experts' and conditioned to providing the 'right' answers therefore the panel needs to be refreshed regularly (existing members replaced with new ones). Again this is a resource intensive process.</li><li>7 Members are not anonymous so may not be a suitable means of consulting about sensitive issues.</li></ul>

## Structured face-to-face and telephone interviews

<b>Objective:</b>	Consultation
<b>Purpose:</b>	Market research exercise used to gather quantifiable information on uncomplicated issues. Can be used to gather views and opinions and to measure attitudes, satisfaction and performance.
<b>Local Examples:</b>	Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Survey (face-to-face) Government survey on towns with prospect of Mayoral elections
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Fieldworkers complete questionnaires on behalf of respondents so tends to yield a good response rate</li><li>✓ Easier to engage with hard-to-reach groups as overcomes problems with literacy, visual impairment and language barriers</li><li>✓ Can be used to obtain responses from demographically representative sample of population through use of quotas</li><li>✓ Can be easy to analyse, if person involved has the necessary skills</li></ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Cannot be used to discuss complex issues</li></ul>

- 7 Interviewer cannot respond to any questions from the respondent
- 7 Can be perceived as intrusive as respondents may feel that their privacy has been compromised
- 7 May be boring for the respondent
- 7 Needs statistical and research expertise to design the research and analyse the data
- 7 Can be costly and time consuming
- 7 May have to use external market research company
- 7 Personal safety of fieldworkers can be jeopardised when carrying out face-to-face interviews, particularly on doorsteps
- 7 Lowest income group may not have access to a phone, or may only have a mobile.

### Semi-Structured Interviews

**Objective:** Consultation

**Purpose:** One-to-one interviews to explore issues based on a loose set of questions.

**Local Examples:**

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Allows issues to be explored in depth by use of probing questions
- ✓ Interviewer can respond to questions
- ✓ The structure of the interview can be changed, to an extent, to fit in with what the respondent wants to talk about

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Specific skills are required to conduct the interview
- 7 Interviews are time-consuming
- 7 Interviews only involve one person at a time, therefore may only involve a small number of participants
- 7 Views not necessarily representative
- 7 Can be difficult to analyse

### Unstructured / Indepth interviews

**Objective:** Consultation

**Purpose:** A one to one interview where the interviewer is able to explore a theme without being restricted to a series of questions

**Local Examples:** Dr. R. Macdonald, University Teesside '**Youth, the 'Underclass' and Social Exclusion**'. Research conducted under the ESRC Youth, Citizenship and Social Change Research Programme

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Interviewer can pick up on particular issues and probe deeper
- ✓ Gathers a large amount of detailed information
- ✓ Very personal and can be used to explore sensitive issues

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Specific skills are required to conduct the interview
- 7 Interviews are time-consuming

- 7 Likely to involve a small number of participants
- 7 Can be difficult to generalise views
- 7 Can be difficult to analyse

### Focus Groups & Discussion groups

- Objective:** Consultation / Involvement
- Purpose:** Facilitated group discussion to explore issues in depth and seek views of particular interest groups. Can be used to generate ideas.
- Local Examples:** Consultation on access to public services, Summer 2000
- Advantages:**
- ✓ Can be designed to involve those who are perceived as 'hard-to-reach' and disengaged
  - ✓ Can be used to explore complex issues
  - ✓ Provides in depth information
  - ✓ Useful for building on survey or questionnaire findings
  - ✓ Allows interaction and spontaneity between participants
- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Can be costly and time-consuming
  - 7 Requires expertise to facilitate discussion as it can easily 'veer off' at tangents
  - 7 Consideration needs to be given to a suitable venue
  - 7 Can only achieve limited representativeness
  - 7 Discussions can be difficult to transcribe and analyse

### Ward Councillor Contact

- Objective:** Consultation
- Purpose:** A contact point for citizens to express their views and concerns about issues that affect them.
- Local Examples:** Ward Surgeries
- Advantages:**
- ✓ Good for public relations
  - ✓ Makes people feel that they are being listened to and that their issues matter
  - ✓ Enhances the representative role of local councillors.
- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Provides a limited and unrepresentative perspective

### Formal, committee style meetings

- Objective:** Information-giving, consultation
- Purpose:** Formal public decision-making. Public may attend and occasionally be permitted to contribute without voting
- Local Examples:** Middlesbrough & Eston PCG Community Involvement Sub-

Committee

**Advantages:** ✓ Provides a formal structure for decision-making

**Disadvantages:** 7 Limited public involvement

## User Panel

**Objective:** Consultation

**Purpose:** To seek views about service delivery and development from service users

### **Local Examples:**

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Group has knowledge, experience and understanding of the issue / service in question
- ✓ Regular dialogue can help the discussion
- ✓ Membership can be rotated so to maintain a balance of old and new members
- ✓ Opportunity for direct liaison and feedback between panel members and service providers

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Provides limited and not necessarily representative perspective
- 7 Group can grow too close to the organisation to be able to provide an objective viewpoint
- 7 Cannot be used for discussing a wider range of services
- 7 Does not address needs of non-service users

## Forums

**Objective:** Consultation / Involvement

**Purpose:** Structured and regular meetings with interest groups to consult about issues of local and town-wide importance. Used to provide information, seek views and develop / endorse local plans and strategies for the community or whole town.

**Local Examples:** Community Councils / Clusters  
NDC Business Forum  
Youth Parliament

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Regular process of engagement
- ✓ useful link between partner agencies and local people and businesses
- ✓ Can be used to seek committed involvement from local people
- ✓ Relatively cheap
- ✓ Can be held at times and locations appropriate to target communities

**Disadvantages:** 7 Attendees are likely to be the 'usual suspects' and are unlikely to represent the views of the whole community

- 7 Can be dominated by the 'most vocal'
- 7 Agenda can be taken over
- 7 Needs effective management

## Public Meetings

**Objective:** Consultation / Involvement

**Purpose:** Structured and regular local meetings for members of the public and stakeholders, to consult about issues of local and town-wide importance. Used to provide information, seek views and develop / endorse local plans and strategies for the community or whole town.

**Local Examples:** Beat Surgeries

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Useful link between partner agencies and local people and businesses
- ✓ Can be used to seek committed involvement from local people
- ✓ Relatively cheap
- ✓ Addresses specific issues raised by the public and allows them to 'let off steam'
- ✓ Can be held at times and locations appropriate to target communities

**Disadvantages:**

- 7 Attendees are likely to be the 'usual suspects' and are therefore unlikely to represent the views of the whole community
- 7 Unless the issue is controversial or of significant local interest, turnout can be poor
- 7 Can be dominated by the 'most vocal'
- 7 Can be difficult to separate individual complaints from broader issues
- 7 Agenda can be taken over
- 7 Difficult to run and organise, particularly in areas where there are no defined communities (geographical or of interest)

## Advisory boards

**Objective:** Consultation, involvement

**Purpose:** A group whose role is to advise partner agencies on policy decisions and services. Group membership may consist of professionals and all key stakeholders including citizens, businesses and representatives from partner agencies.

**Local Examples:**

**Advantages:**

- ✓ Can use existing groups or organisations
- ✓ A permanent group who meet regularly
- ✓ Group will be familiar with the issues in question
- ✓ Group are able to give advice from a variety of perspectives
- ✓ Can offer an 'expert opinion'

- Disadvantages:**
- 7 May not be specific to communities
  - 7 May only be useful for looking at general issues
  - 7 People may become experts and therefore unrepresentative
  - 7 Can only involve limited number of participants
  - 7 Members may not be representative

## Seminars / Workshops

**Objective:** Information-giving, Consultation, Involvement

**Purpose:** A formally organised discussion group that aims to exchange and gather information. Can involve all key stakeholders. Usually in the format of presentations followed by small group discussions, ending in a large group discussion of key issues that have been raised.

**Local Examples:** Housing Strategy Seminar

- Advantages:**
- ✓ Opportunity for organisations to share large amounts of information
  - ✓ Large numbers of people can participate
  - ✓ Opportunity for dialogue between partner organisation, citizens and other key stakeholders group
  - ✓ Opportunity to engage in multi-disciplinary discussions if appropriate
  - ✓ Participants can ask questions and explore issues in detail
  - ✓ Encourages participants to 'network' and share experiences, knowledge and expertise

- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Requires skilled facilitators to ensure objectives are achieved within the given time-scale and to ensure that all participants are given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion
  - 7 Requires a great deal of organisation
  - 7 Can be costly and time consuming

## Futures Conferencing / Visioning Exercises

**Objective:** Involvement / Acting together

**Purpose:** Attempts to engage people in discussions about what their town or area means to them and what they hope to see in the future. Involves representatives of all stakeholders

**Local Examples:** Partnership Conference  
Community Futures Workshops (NDC, Better Govt. for Older People)

- Advantages:**
- ✓ Creates a real sense of involvement by using knowledge and understanding of local people
  - ✓ Can build consensus
  - ✓ Promotes community ownership of the results

- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Time-consuming
  - 7 Can raise unrealistic expectations

### **'Physical Planning'**

<b>Objective:</b>	Involvement
<b>Purpose:</b>	Structured consultation method that uses a 3D plan of the neighbourhood to ascertain what physical changes people want for their local area. There are national organisations that specialise in providing structured consultation exercises including the Neighbourhood Initiatives Forum (Planning for Real) and 'Placecheck'
<b>Local Examples</b>	Hemispherium Virtual Reality Centre
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Can be available as a tailored 'Planning for Real' or 'Placecheck' package, so easy to set up</li> <li>✓ Is entertaining and involves those who wouldn't normally participate</li> <li>✓ Makes it easy to obtain honest and wide-ranging opinions</li> <li>✓ Can deal with complex issues</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Difficult to ensure representativeness</li> <li>7 Can be a costly exercise</li> <li>7 Size of the model limits how many people can be involved</li> <li>7 Many models may be required if consultation is to be far reaching</li> </ul>

### **Citizens Juries**

<b>Objective:</b>	Involvement
<b>Purpose:</b>	Small sample of population (usually paid) who debate an issue in a quasi-judicial setting with witnesses. Aims to obtain informed and considered opinion or 'verdict' on a specific, often controversial issue
<b>Local Examples:</b>	None
<b>Advantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Can be used to address very complex and often controversial issues that decision-makers have struggled to resolve</li> <li>✓ Participants can be made fully aware of a situation but can still come to a decision from a 'lay' perspective</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Very small and usually representative sample</li> <li>7 Difficult to include all interest groups</li> <li>7 Can be time-consuming and resource intensive for both agencies and 'jurors'</li> <li>7 Limited numbers involved may reduce ownership of results</li> </ul>

## Community Needs Analysis

- Objective:** Involvement
- Purpose:** Framework for detailed overview of small area. Involves a range of stakeholders to determine actions following research on complex issues
- Local Examples:** One Voice analysis for European ERDF objective 4
- Advantages:**
- ✓ Provides very detailed analysis of issues thus ensuring decisions are evidence-based
- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Expensive and time consuming
  - 7 Possibly leads to over expectation
  - 7 Needs to be managed effectively

## Virtual Consultation / E-government (Internet / E-mail / video-conferencing)

- Objective:** Information giving / Consultation / Involvement / Acting together / Supporting
- Purpose** Consulting and proving information using web technology
- Middlesbrough Examples:** Voiceover Citizens Panel Electronic questionnaire, MBD Website
- Advantages:**
- ✓ Very cheap and quick way of obtaining views
  - ✓ Background information can be made readily available
  - ✓ Good response rate
  - ✓ Potentially wide-reaching and likely to be used extensively in the future
  - ✓ Can be used to engage with some 'hard-to-reach groups' (language, audio etc)
  - ✓ Useful for panel surveys
  - ✓ Can be used to address complex issues (chat rooms for focus groups)
- Disadvantages:**
- 7 Only accessible to people who are IT literate and have access to appropriate equipment
  - 7 Some groups are less likely to use PC'S and particularly the Internet therefore unlikely to be able to obtain completely representative views (eg elderly, low income)

## APPENDIX (ii)

# ENGAGING WITH HARD TO REACH GROUPS

'Hard-to-reach groups' is a widely recognised term that is used to describe those groups or communities who experience social exclusion and are generally perceived by agencies as being difficult to access and are thus 'disempowered.' However, it is important to note that many of these communities are not actually that 'hard-to-reach' and do not consider themselves as such. It is simply that organisations have not put enough effort into seeking their views.

### Defining Hard-to-reach groups

It is essential that when formulating your engagement strategy, that particular consideration is given to engaging with 'locally appropriate hard to reach groups.'

A hard-to-reach group is any group or section of the community who it is difficult to access for any reason such as:

- ◆ Physical inaccessibility (eg disability, older or frail people)
- ◆ Language (eg first generation immigrants to the UK)
- ◆ Cultural perceptions and traditions (eg disadvantaged young people)
- ◆ Social expectations (e.g. children and young people who are often not considered as appropriate to be engaged with and who themselves often do not expect to be taken seriously)

Thus, 'hard-to-reach' groups could include:

- ◆ Asylum Seekers
- ◆ Children and Young People
- ◆ Drug users
- ◆ Faith communities
- ◆ Gay, lesbian and bisexual men and women, transsexual and transgendered people
- ◆ Homeless people
- ◆ Minority ethnic communities (particular sections of)
- ◆ Offenders / Ex-offenders
- ◆ Older people (especially frail and/or isolated older people)
- ◆ People with disabilities
- ◆ People with learning difficulties
- ◆ People with mental health problems

- ◆ People who travel or commute into the area
- ◆ Rural Communities
- ◆ Single Parents
- ◆ Small businesses
- ◆ Travellers
- ◆ Tourists
- ◆ Victims of domestic abuse
- ◆ Young men of working age

However, what is important to note is that defining all sectors of the above categories as 'hard-to-reach' is both simplistic and misleading. Consideration needs to be given to the particular characteristics of population sub-groups.

For example in many areas, minority ethnic communities be generally well integrated into society and therefore are not difficult to access. However there may be specific sectors, such as first generation Muslim women, who are not so well integrated and whose views and experiences are not catered for in existing engagement mechanisms. This sector must therefore be considered as your hard-to-reach group. Therefore when identifying your 'hard-to-reach' groups, it is first necessary to break down the local population into specific sectors.

### How to identify 'hard-to-reach' sectors

The Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit may be able to assist in providing demographic profiles of the areas or communities under consideration. However, data may not be available at a level that allows you to identify these 'hard-to-reach' sectors. If this is the case, you may need talk to intermediary community groups who will be able to provide a different, localised perspective on who are the hard-to-reach groups within your target community.

### Typical 'characteristics' of hard-to-reach groups

A home office study of accessing hard-to-reach groups has identified several defining characteristics of 'hard-to-reach groups.'

- ◆ **Numerical size and concentration**  
It is more difficult to engage with groups who are relatively small in number, and are widely dispersed. However, individual sectors of the community should not be neglected simply because they represent a small population of an area.
- ◆ **Internal Organisation**  
Regardless of size, groups may be hard-to-reach if they are not well-organised in terms of having an established network of community organisations or agencies that can be approached to assist in engaging with the target groups. However what is important to note is that although a 'community' may appear well-organised, the community leaders are likely to be the most vocal members and therefore may not be representative. This may lead to some elements of the community remaining 'hard-to-reach'.

◆ **Socio-economic deprivation**

Groups who are experiencing acute social and economic deprivation may be considered as being 'hard-to-reach.' For example 'disaffected' young white men living in highly deprived estates are typically considered as being 'hard-to-reach.'

◆ **Social Invisibility**

A number of communities are considered to be socially invisible. One such example is the population of men and women who consider themselves to be gay, lesbian or bisexual but do not lead openly 'gay' lives. Other relatively invisible minorities include Jewish or Irish people,

◆ **Cultural and ideological barriers**

Cultural expectations or social restrictions may make engagement with any organisations or individuals outside of the family unit difficult. For example, in some Muslim Asian groups there are social restrictions upon women, who may be expected to refrain from social interaction, particularly with men from outside the immediate family.

◆ **Distinctive service needs**

Many hard-to-reach communities and groups have very specific problems and needs. These may include people with disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health problems.

### Accessing hard-to-reach groups

Once you have identified your 'hard-to-reach' groups, you need to identify ways of accessing the groups.

You should have already audited work that has already been undertaken in your area of interest. This may have highlighted any hard-to-reach groups that you will need to engage with, as well as having paved the way for gaining access to the groups.

If however, the audit does not help you, you may need to think logically and creatively of ways to access these groups. This could be via informal networks, social venues, or local organisations who work with these groups. Appendix iii provides a list of contacts who would be useful starting points when planning how you are going to access different groups.

### Enabling hard-to-reach groups to participate

Once you have identified and accessed your hard-to-reach groups, it is necessary to take measures that will help to overcome the barriers that prevented them from participating in the first place. This may involve using interpreters, using visual aides, adapting facilities for disabled people, providing care for dependants' etc

You should also try to be flexible over the timing, location and transport issues, and also endeavour to use neutral or 'safe' buildings for exercises. For example it would not be appropriate to use a police station to explore issues around youth offending!

## APPENDIX (iii)

# CONTACTS FOR HARD-TO-REACH GROUPS

The following is a directory of people and organisations in Middlesbrough who will be able to provide advice and guidance on accessing hard-to-reach groups.

## Ethnic Minorities

Contact	Specific group / issue
<b>Yasmin Khan</b> Development worker Race Equality Development Initiative New Exchange Buildings, Queen Square (01642) 211165	Racial Harassment
<b>Suriya Hussain</b> Middlesbrough Council Social Services Department Civic Centre Middlesbrough. 01642 262879	Translation and Interpretation
<b>Tasnim Niaz</b> International Centre 7 Abingdon Road Middlesbrough. (01642) 245967	
<b>Nusrat Hussain</b> Stockton International Family Centre 66 Dovecot Road Stockton. 01642 612400	
Pete Widlinski <b>North of England Refugee Service</b> 308 Linthorpe Road Middlesbrough. 01642 211117	Refugees
Shabnam Dar <b>Black and Minority Education/Youth Service</b> 169 Victoria Road Middlesbrough. (01642) 244227	Young people

## People with Physical Disabilities

Contact	Specific group / issue
Jane Mason <b>Disability Information Centre</b> Middlesbrough General Hospital Middlesbrough. (01642) 827471	
Lynne Barr <b>Westpoint</b> 2 Cambridge Road Middlesbrough (01642) 815076	Service Users
Chris Walker <b>Social Services</b> PO Box 234 Civic centre Middlesbrough TS1 2XH (01642) 262883	Carers

## People with Learning Disabilities

Contact	Specific group / issue
User Participation Officer <b>Westpoint</b> 2 Cambridge Road Middlesbrough (01642) 815076	Service Users
Chris Walker <b>Social Services</b>	Carers

## Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual

Contact	Specific group / issue
Stephen Armstrong <b>MESMAC NE</b> 01642 804400	
<b>Lesbian and Gay Switchboard</b> 020 783 77324	

## Homeless People

Contact	Specific group / issue
<b>Teesside Homeless Action Group</b> 49 Grange Road Middlesbrough TS1 5AU (01642) 801070	
<b>English Churches Housing Group</b> Letitia House Letitia Street Middlesbrough TS5 4BE (01642) 242534  Wellington Street (01642) 242534  01642 254544	Direct Access Hostels        Cleveland Housing Advice Centre

## Young People

Contact	Specific group / issue
Christine Davidson <b>Safe in Tees Valley</b> Southlands Centre Middlesbrough (01642) 327351	Socially excluded young people
<b>Middlesbrough Youth Offending Team</b>  Sue Little <b>Social Services</b> PO Box 234 Civic centre Middlesbrough TS1 2XH (01642) 262882	Young Offenders  Children & Parents in Need (ie looked after, disables etc)
Shabnam Dar <b>Black and Minority Education/Youth            Service</b> 169 Victoria Road Middlesbrough. (01642) 244227	Black and Minority young people

## Older People

Contact	Specific group / issue
Peter Thomas <b>Social Services</b> PO Box 234 Civic centre Middlesbrough TS1 2XH (01642) 262193	
Elizabeth Briggs <b>Age Concern Teesside</b> 190 Borough Road	

## Drug Users

Contact	Specific group / issue
63 Kings Road North Ormesby (01642) 242550	Addictive Behaviour Service
3 Albert Terrace Middlesbrough (01642) 221484	Albert Centre

## Businesses

Contact	Specific group / issue
<b>John Wright</b> (01642) 313211	<b>Federation of Small Businesses</b>
<b>Claire Warren</b> Tees Valley Local Office Commerce House, Exchange Square Middlesbrough (01642) 655500	<b>North East Chamber of Commerce</b>
<b>Karen Shields</b> 11 <sup>th</sup> Floor Centre North East 73 – 75 Albert Road Middlesbrough TS1 2RU (01642) 226622	<b>Town Centre Company</b>

**APPENDIX (iv)**

**EXISTING MECHANISMS FOR ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Voiceover Citizens Panel	General	<b>Joanne Cornfield</b> (01642) 263727 <a href="mailto:Joanne_Cornfield@Middlesbrough.gov.uk">Joanne_Cornfield@Middlesbrough.gov.uk</a>
Community Councils	General	<b>Community Managers:</b>  Central - <b>Mark Matthews</b> (01642) 829934  East – <b>Fiona Williams</b> (01642 213351  Town - <b>Liz Hughes</b> (01642) 802891  South – <b>Abdul Khan</b> (01642) 597028
Residents & Tenants Associations	Housing & Community	<b>Neil O'Brien</b> (01642) 263938
Middlesbrough Youth Parliament	General	<b>Sean Harte / Lee Toogood</b> (01642) 851567
Health Action Link	Health	<b>Anne Botterill</b> (01642) 352378

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## Partnership organisations

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Middlesbrough Council: Middlesbrough Council Tenant participation Compact 2000 – 2001

Middlesbrough Social Services: User and Carer Involvement: Policy and Strategy 2000 and Beyond (November 1999)

Middlesbrough Council (1999): Community Engagement Framework for Middlesbrough Council

Cleveland Police (April 2000): Middlesbrough Police Consultation Protocol

Middlesbrough and Eston Primary Care Group (2000): Community Involvement Strategy 2000/2001

Connexions Tees Valley (?): Consultation Strategy

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## National publications:

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DETR (2000): Preparing Community Strategies – Government guidance to local authorities

DETR (1999): Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation

Audit Commission: Listen up! Effective Community Consultation

Cabinet Office (2000): Code of Practice on Written Consultation

House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee report: Public Participation: Issues and Innovations

LGA (2000): Enhancing research capacity – the importance of research in modern local government. Summary or research report 7

Home Office: Police Research Series Paper 138, 'Widening Access: Improving police relations with hard-to-reach groups

Department of Health (September 2001): Involving Patients and the Public in Healthcare – A Discussion Document

NHS : Primary Care Groups Public Engagement Toolkit

LGA (?): Hear by Right. Setting standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy

LGA (2001) Involving young people in decision-making –a survey of local authorities. Research briefing 10

Children and Young Peoples Unit (2001) Tomorrows Future – Building a Strategy for Children and Young People

LgiU (2001): Making it Real: Young People in Democratic Structures

Home Office (?): Listen up – a dialogue with young people

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### **Other organisations**

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North Tyneside Council (99/00): Consultation Strategy 99/00

Leeds City Council (August 2000): A Corporate Community Engagement Framework for Leeds (Draft, August 2000)

Stockton on Tees Borough Council (?): Consultation Strategy

City of York Council (?): Consultation - definition of terms. Report of the Chief Executive

North Tees Community Health Council and North Tees Primary Care Group (1999): Working with the Community; A Strategy for Public Engagement

Hartlepool Borough Council (?): Consultation Strategy

City of Sunderland Council (2000) Corporate Community Consultation Framework (Draft)