

consultation guidelines community engagement framework

SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

This guide is part of a library of documents that support the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership's Community Engagement Framework.

It is important that a conscious effort is made to consult with people in the Borders and that the views of all communities are gathered, listened to and understood. Consultation is one way in which the Community Planning

Partnership, and individual partners, engage with communities. The value to both the organisation and the community of good consultation should not be overlooked. This guide will help when planning consultation and should be used in connection with the Community Engagement Framework and Community Engagement Toolkit also produced by Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership.

WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

Consultation is just one type of community engagement but a very important one. It should be used when seeking public opinion on draft proposals or deciding between different options. Consultation should not be used when a decision has already been made or there is no scope for the options to be changed.

WHEN SHOULD WE CONSULT?

Consultation may sometimes be a legal requirement but that should not be the only reason for consulting. Public consultation should be undertaken on plans that are likely to have an impact on communities. Effective consultation will help to plan services and provide what the community need.

Consultation can be used alongside other levels of community engagement, e.g. a service review may be carried out using co-production approach, the results of which are then consulted on with the wider community.

WHO SHOULD WE CONSULT WITH?

At the start of any consultation process it is important to identify who may be affected. Steps should be taken to make sure they know about the consultation and are encouraged to take part.

People across the Borders should be actively consulted with. It should be recognised that a variety of approaches may be required. No-one should be excluded from giving their views and consultations should be available for everyone to take part in.

METHODS OF CONSULTATION

There are a wide variety of methods that can be used to consult. For each consultation the most appropriate consultation methods should be used. Using several methods will help to engage with more people.

There are a number of methods that can be used when consulting. It is best to use a mix in order to make sure that everyone who wants to take part is able to. The Forestry Commission and Scottish Health Council both produce comprehensive lists of, and guides to, consultation methods. These are available on line at **www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox** and **www.scottishhealthcouncil.org**.

All written information should be clear and avoid use of jargon. Where this can't be avoided an explanation should be given of what you mean.

Possible barriers should be identified and steps taken to remove these wherever possible barriers may be physical, financial, cultural, language etc.

- Consultations should be available in different formats as requested, this may include easy read, on audio CD or in a different language.
- Public events should be held in accessible venues.
- Consultations should not discriminate against anyone in any way and no-one should be prevented from taking part.

Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership has produced a list of organisations and individuals, who can advise on ways to engage with specific groups of people e.g. young people, people with a learning disability. This document, and other Community Planning Partnership community engagement guides, is available at www.scotborders.gov.uk/communityplanning.

FEEDING BACK

It is important to feedback to people and let them know the results of a consultation and how they will be used. Sometimes it may be a while before there is agreement on what is going to be done, when this is the case the community should be told and given an indication on when more detailed feedback will be available.

The detail of feedback given will depend on the consultation. The very straight forward “We asked, you said, we did” format can be used for many different types of community engagement, not just consultation.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Some organisations are legally required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments, while for others it is good practice.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a method or tool for assessing possible effects or impacts of a policy or function on meeting the public sector equality duties to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between those who have an equality characteristic and those who do not.

This means that public sector organisations should carry out an Equality Impact Assessment when:

- planning a new service
- reviewing an existing service
- developing a policy

The general rule is that if what is being proposed will affect the community then an Equality Impact Assessment should be carried out.

Undertaking a stage one Equalities Impact Assessment will help to identify which groups may be impacted. Further information about Equality Impact Assessment can be found at www.scotborders.gov.uk/equality.

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2. PLANNING A CONSULTATION

Before starting any consultation a plan should be written. This will help make sure that the consultation runs smoothly. Planning the consultation can be done using the Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE) tool. This is operated by the Scottish Community Development Centre and is free to use, it is available at www.voicescotland.org.uk.

The following pages present a series of questions relating to the consultation, answering each of these will help to build the plan. Information is included to help develop the response to each question.

WHY IS THE CONSULTATION BEING CARRIED OUT?

What is the main reason for wanting to consult? Is it due to a legal requirement? What do we expect to achieve from the consultation?

Identifying this will help to select the consultation methods that will be used.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

This is very different from what we would like to know. A consultation should only gather information that can make a difference to the result. When planning a consultation we should check the information that we already have, we do not need to gather it again.

Identifying this will help to plan consultation questions.

WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Who will be affected by what is being planned? Who do you think needs to take part in the consultation? Remember that it may not just be service users that may be affected, for example local residents would be affected if a new school was being built in their area, not just those with children.

WHICH CONSULTATION METHODS ARE GOING TO BE USED?

You should choose methods that best suit the communities being consulted. In most cases a variety of methods will need to be used. Just publishing information on a website, social media and in the local press will not be enough.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

You may need financial and/or staff resources for what you are proposing to do. Any budget that you need should be identified before work is started. The choice of consultation methods will be affected by the availability of a budget. If you are holding a community drop in will refreshments be provided?

ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS (OR HURDLES) THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED?

What barriers might affect anyone that should be involved? What steps can be taken before the consultation starts to overcome any identified barriers? Will any additional resources be required to overcome these barriers? Things may happen during the consultation that hadn't been considered so it is important to be able to make changes throughout the process.

ARE THERE ANY TIMESCALES THAT NEED TO BE MET?

The consultation plan should identify when different stages of the work should be carried out in order to meet any deadlines. Will the consultation results be included in a report that has to be submitted by a certain date? Has enough time been left for them to be analysed first?

Where possible try to build in extra time to allow for the unexpected.

HOW WILL CONSULTATION RESPONSES BE USED?

How will the responses received be acted on?

Identifying what can and cannot be changed when planning a consultation will help to make clear what people are being asked to comment on and identify any consultation questions you may wish to use.

HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION BE EVALUATED?

Evaluation should be carried out throughout the consultation process, e.g. are the expected groups responding to the consultation, are people able to access the information being provided, is the expected level of response being achieved? If the proposals will affect people of a certain age, but very few people in that age group have responded, extra steps may be needed in order to increase responses from that particular group.

Identifying any gaps in responses during the consultation will allow for changes to be made, rather than waiting to the end of the process when it may be too late.

HOW WILL FEEDBACK BE MADE?

Identify how the results of the consultation will be fed back to those that have taken part, along with the wider community. It is important that the community know their comments have been considered and where changes have been made as a result. It is just as important that they are aware why comments have not been acted on.

DID THE CONSULTATION WORK?

Identifying what worked and what didn't and how things could be done differently will help when planning the next consultation. Sharing the results of this with others in the organisation and help develop a set of local good practice guidelines.

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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