



The Orkney Partnership

Community Consultation and Engagement Guide



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The Orkney Partnership



Working together for a better Orkney

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If you would like this report in a different language or format, please contact the Community Planning Business Manager
Telephone 01856 873535 extension 2153
Email corporateservices@orkney.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

In Orkney the main aim of community consultation and engagement is to enable the planning and delivery of services, strategies and policies that reflect the needs of communities across Orkney.

This guidance is for anyone undertaking consultation or engagement, and is intended to ensure that:

- Communities are placed at the heart of community planning.
- There is a co-ordinated approach to community engagement across the Orkney Partnership.
- Chosen methods of engagement are inclusive and appropriate for the purpose.
- Engagement activity follows best practice.
- Where possible, duplication and overlap are avoided.

A significant amount of community consultation and engagement work is currently undertaken by partner agencies across Orkney. Much of the engagement activity already follows good practice, therefore the purpose of this guidance puts forward some alternative suggestions and promotes options to better co-ordinate these activities, thereby avoiding overlap and duplication. The guide focuses on building capacity to work with, listen and respond to people and communities across Orkney.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) places a statutory obligation on agencies and local strategic partners to engage with communities about issues that affect them.

National Standards for Community Engagement were originally launched in 2005 and were designed as a tool to help improve community consultation and engagement practices. They were reviewed and updated during 2015/16 to reflect policy and legislation relating to community empowerment and then build on the growing range of practice. The updated National Standards are described in section 7.

The Orkney Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-16 put on record the Partnership's commitment to the National Standards of Community Engagement.

3. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

A simple and broadly accepted definition of a community is as follows:

“Usually refers to those living within a small, loosely defined geographical area. Yet any group of individuals who share interests may also be described as a community. Also sometimes used to describe a physical area rather than a group of people.”

communityplanning.net

COMMUNITY OF PLACE

A 'community of place' is an area with physical boundaries, for example an island, neighbourhood, parish, village or town. In Orkney the local Community Councils can be a useful contact for communities of place.

COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

A 'community of interest' can be defined by a shared interest, experience or demographic characteristic, for example young people, older people, people with disabilities, working population, ethnic minorities or gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgender (LGBT). People can belong to more than one community. 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 of interest'.

COMMUNITY IN A PHYSICAL AREA

This term can be used to describe a number of people who find themselves grouped together temporarily but may have little else in common, for example on a hospital ward. This is a favourite plot device for dramatists and reality TV.

Some groups or communities are more challenging than others to reach or engage with. It is important to ensure barriers are tackled so that these groups are able to engage and express their views. Local and national resources to assist with this are referenced in sections 8 and 9.

4. WHAT IS COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement covers a range of different activities designed to enable local communities to have a say in the design of services to make Orkney a better place. Consultation is a method of engagement in its own right.

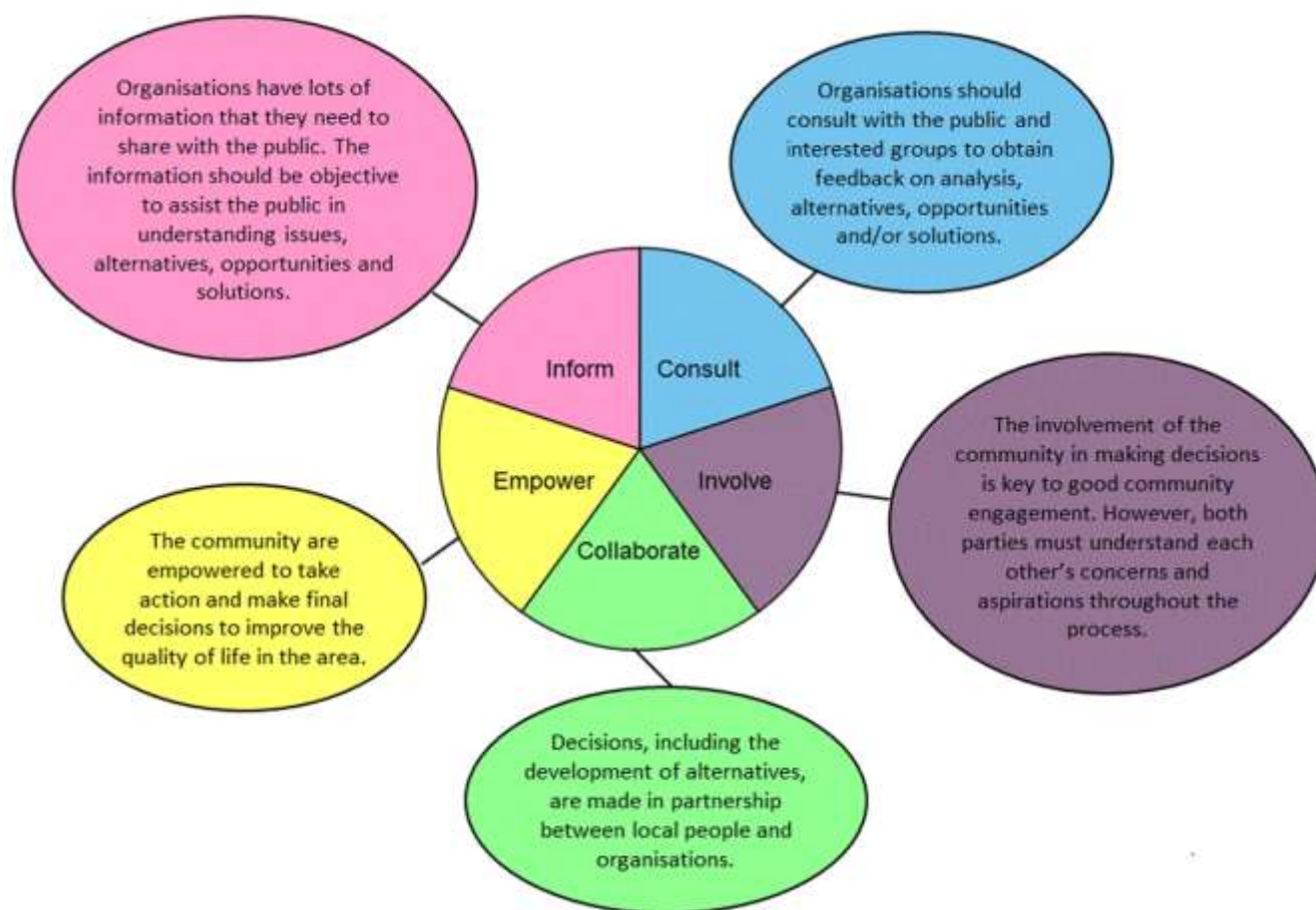
The National Standards for Community Engagement use the following definition:-

“Community engagement is a purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to help them to identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding between them and taking joint action to achieve positive change.”

5. LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

“Defining community engagement is challenging: it can mean different things in different circumstances ranging from simple provision of information and consultation through to delegated power and control to citizens (Amstein 1969). Without a clear and common understanding of what community engagement means in a given context, activities may be pitched at an inappropriate level of engagement and therefore be ineffective.”

Home Office Development – Practice Report 48 2007



6. METHODS OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The following table identifies some methods of consultation and engagement and their relationship to each of the levels of engagement. Many of these methods can be used for more than one level of consultation and engagement.

Relative cost indicates how resource-intensive each method can be. One-off events such as workshops and focus groups are relatively straightforward to budget for, but ongoing engagement with a longer-term panel needs a corresponding long-term commitment to its support.

Method	Inform	Consult	Involve/ collaborate/ empower	Relative cost
Media campaigns	✓	✓		£££
Exhibitions	✓	✓		££
Local media	✓	✓		££
Leaflets and newsletters	✓	✓		£
Circulating draft documents	✓	✓		£
Customer Comment or feedback cards		✓		£
Surveys		✓		££
Online consultation	✓	✓		£
Public meetings	✓	✓	✓	££
Conferences	✓	✓	✓	£££
Citizens' panels (such as Orkney Opinions)	✓	✓	✓	£££
Workshops	✓	✓	✓	££
Focus groups	✓	✓	✓	££
User panels	✓	✓	✓	£££

The following table lists some popular methods of consultation and engagement along with advantages and disadvantages for each.

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey/ questionnaire face to face (e.g. door to door)	When statistics are required for trends and benchmarks. When qualitative information is required to capture views. When issues are already known but need to be quantified.	Statistically sound – control of respondents means it will be representative of the “population” as a whole. Results easy to report. Can compare with other surveys (both internal and external), previous findings and future benchmark.	Respondent cannot “interact” if questionnaire is too rigidly structured. Little time for respondents to consider responses/deliberate or add their own thoughts.
Survey/ questionnaire telephone	When quick consultation process needed.	Quick form of consultation. Can target hard to reach groups.	Can seem distant from respondents. Tightly structured questionnaires may constrain consultees' responses. Unsuitable for people with speech difficulties.
Survey/ questionnaire electronic (e.g. Smart Survey)	When quantitative or qualitative information is required. When little budget available. For treatment of certain sensitive subjects.	Quick form of consultation Can target hard to reach groups. Cost effective. Good for certain groups who are interested enough to respond to a questionnaire; also for sensitive/confidential subjects. Can be used to target hard to reach groups. Able to consult with a large group.	Can produce scant or token responses. Can seem distant from respondents.
Survey/ questionnaire postal	When little budget available. For treatment of certain sensitive subjects. Where high level of interest required.	Cost effective. Good for certain groups who are interested enough to respond to a Questionnaire; also for sensitive/confidential subjects. Can be used to target hard to reach groups. Able to consult with a large group.	Can be unrepresentative depending on groups who respond. Possible poor response rates. Can produce scant or token responses.

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Group discussions (groups of 6-10, focus groups, stakeholder meetings)	For diagnostic research. When you need to understand (reasons for attitudes/behaviour) and generate new ideas. Can be used before a quantitative survey, to identify the issues to quantify or; after a quantitative survey, to investigate any results that are unclear.	Enables people to express the reasons for their views. In groups, respondents can use each other as springboards to generate new ideas. Useful for evaluating communications materials. Useful for in-depth analysis of how a service is perceived. Can aid inclusion of hard to reach groups. May be useful for complex issues.	Because of the small numbers of people in the group, findings may not be representative of the population. Group may become dominated by a minority who are more confident than others in expressing their opinions.
In-depth interviews (one to one)	Getting a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Initial research for sensitive subjects.	In-depth response. Good for sensitive subjects where people may not respond to a structured. questionnaire/ group discussion.	One person's views may not be representative or typical of others.
Written word – letter/ leaflet/ press release	To reach a wide audience whilst also ensuring that the information is clearly and consistently communicated.	Cost effective. Suitable for reaching a large number of people.	Responses cannot be controlled or queried.
Public meeting Orkney wide	Where the issue requires widespread interest. To explain the issue and encourage debate. To provide residents with the opportunity to have a say.	Anyone can attend. Forum for explanation and discussion. Can attract publicity to the issue. Can generate new ideas. Provides opportunity for residents to have their say. Demonstrates openness and transparency. Provides opportunities for Councillors to publicly share their views.	May mainly attract those affected by the issue or who have particularly strong views, therefore balanced opinions not achieved. Those used to public speaking may dominate discussion. Requires skilled chairing.

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Public meeting Community level	When the issue requires community involvement.	Involves, informs and empowers the local community. Good indicator of local feeling. May humanise organisations in public eyes. May provide new information and local knowledge concerning issue.	May be dominated by the most vocal contributions. May stray onto other issues – facilitators need to be prepared for this.
Exhibition	When responses to visual display materials required. When there are specific options to present.	Displays/options can be clearly presented. Feedback forms/questionnaires can be completed quickly at the venue.	Responses may be shaped by presentation of a limited range of options. People who are unable to attend (due to timing or inaccessibility of the venue) will be excluded.
Planning for real (where a 3 dimensional model is constructed and participants place cards on it indicating what they would like to see happen, for example playground)	When physical planning issues are to be explored. When the involvement of the whole community is needed. When the decision will be actioned.	Encourages ownership to respondents. Plans can be clearly presented. Large numbers can take part. Accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds. Catches the interest of those involved.	Requires careful planning, and can become expensive.
Recycling results (from a previous consultation)	When quick data is required. When you want to base your research on others' approaches.	Can be quick and cost effective. If already used, data has 'credibility' attached to it.	The original questions asked may not generate exactly the information you require this time.
Media (e.g. press release, radio interview, internet)	When publicity and promotion required.	Quick and responsive. Useful when you need to 'broadcast' information and give a large number of people an opportunity to respond.	Only goes to established audience – not universal/representative. Responses are usually poor. Reporter may edit your press release/ interview without consulting you.

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Conferences	When a specific defined audience is to be consulted.	Reaches out to specific interest groups. Captive audience. Can get feedback through cost effective self completion questionnaire and/or work/discussion groups.	Responses to this method tend to be poor without incentives. Requires careful planning and expert facilitation.
Social media	When other methods are already being used and wish to publicise further.	Free. Can reach a large audience quickly.	Can require policing of comments. Not everyone uses social media.
Citizens' panel (e.g. Orkney Opinions)	When statistics are required for trends and benchmarks. When qualitative information is required to capture views. When issues are already known but need to be quantified.	People agree to be on panel so increases response rates. Provides ready-made sample of individuals to consult with. May allow for some measurement of changes over time. Composition of panels can be made representative of local population.	A turnover of the panel may reduce validity of tracking over time. People on panel become more knowledgeable and therefore less representative of the public over time.

7. NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) demonstrate best practice guidance for engagement between communities and public agencies.



The National Standards for **Community Engagement**

8. LOCAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

Advice regarding the planning, design and implementation of community consultation exercises or engagement activity is available to The Orkney Partnership partners from the Strategy Manager and/or the Community Planning Business Manager at [Orkney Islands Council](#). Email anna.whelan@orkney.gov.uk initially, or telephone 01856 873535 x 2160.

[Voluntary Action Orkney](#) offers advice and information on good practice and techniques for consultation and engagement free of charge to third sector organisations. VAO will undertake commissions to plan and deliver consultation programmes on behalf of third sector and other organisations.

Specialist advice on equality and access issues is available to Partners from the Equalities Officer at the Council. Email emma.chattington@orkney.gov.uk or telephone 01856 873535 x 2155.

A number of agencies have sites on Orkneycommunities.co.uk which they use in order to inform and alert interested parties of their plans and activities. Most sites now feature a feedback form or a blog which enables those visiting the site to share their opinions and views on relevant subjects.

Voluntary Action Orkney maintains the online [Orkney Community Directory](#) and, working in partnership with Orkney Health and Care, gathered information to produce an [Orkney-wide Care Directory](#) with services and activities that are available to older members of our communities.

In 2008 the Orkney Community Planning Partnership, as it was then known, commissioned research into consultation with hard to reach groups in Orkney. The research report, [Towards a strategy for consulting with minority & equalities groups and individuals in Orkney](#) (L C Littlejohn, June 2008) identified local examples of good practice and made a number of recommendations. While some of the information in the report is now out of date, it is useful background reading.

9. NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

In addition to the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#), the Scottish Government maintains lists of its own current, forthcoming, closed and archived consultation exercises online on its [Consultation hub](#). Responses received to Scottish Government consultations, and sometimes an analysis of the responses, are published on their [Publications](#) pages.

The Scottish Government has issued guidance to assist NHS Boards, [Informing, engaging and consulting people in developing health and community care services](#).

The guidance:

- Sets out the relevant legislative and policy frameworks for involving the public in the delivery of services.
- Provides a step-by-step guide through the process of informing, engaging and consulting the public in service change proposals.
- Explains the decision making process with regard to major service change and the potential for independent scrutiny.
- Clarifies the role of the Scottish Health Council.

The Scottish Government has published an information and self-assessment tool for public authorities, [Principles of Inclusive Communication](#). Inclusive communication is

about recognising that a person might have communication support needs and to consider the best way to communicate to help them as an individual. People have communication support needs if they need support with understanding, expressing themselves or interacting with others, all of which are a pre-requisite for effective consultation and engagement. .This document aims to help by:

- Improving awareness, knowledge and understanding of communication support needs.
- Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours, and the importance of showing a willingness to change communication practices to make them more inclusive.

[VOiCE](#) is an online toolkit published by the Scottish Government and freely available to organisations working in Scotland as part of its support for the National Standards for Community Engagement. VOiCE comprises planning and recording software that assists individuals, organisations and partnerships to design and deliver effective community engagement. It enables all users to employ a common system for analysing, planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording their community engagement. In relation to particular community engagement initiatives, VOiCE aims to support you to:

- Reflect on what you are trying to achieve.
- Develop plans that relate to your purpose.
- Monitor progress in implementing your plan.
- Evaluate the process and outcomes.
- Learn lessons for future activity.

Information on [Community Led Planning](#) is available online from Community First, the Rural Community Council for Wiltshire. This includes comprehensive guidance materials on Consulting your Community.

There are a number of online survey tools. When designing an online questionnaire, choose options to suit your stakeholders. For example, if you deny multiple responses from the same computer (to avoid duplication), then it will not allow respondents to exit and return to edit and complete the survey (preferable for agencies which need to consult internally on draft responses). It will also not allow multiple users of one computer to respond. You may need different versions of your survey for different stakeholder groups, or to provide the survey in other formats on request.

The [Scottish Accessible Information Forum](#) (SAIF) acts as an advisory body to the Scottish Government on issues relating to people with disabilities and their carers and their right to accessible information. It produces good practice guides and offers training, consultation and advice to help organisations, and others, improve the accessibility of their information.

The [Consultation Institute](#) is a not-for-profit organisation which seeks to promote the highest standards of public, stakeholder and employee consultation by initiating research, publications and specialist events in order to disseminate best practice and improve subsequent decision-making. The Institute aims to disseminate best practice

and encourage innovation whilst providing an opportunity for professional networking. It publishes a range of [briefing papers](#) which are available online to non-members.

The UK-based [Local Government Association](#) hosts [KnowledgeHub](#), a public sector professional social network which helps people in local government connect and share online in a secure environment. KnowledgeHub maintains 1,500 online groups including a [Consultation and Engagement Community](#).

In November 2013, the UK Government published new, and brief, [Consultation Principles](#) for use by Government departments and other public bodies. These replace the 2008 Code of Practice and are more flexible, in particular lifting the requirement for formal consultation exercises to offer a 12 week window for responses.

In addition to those described above, the following Scottish organisations may be able to assist agencies seeking to consult and engage with their communities of interest. However, it should be borne in mind that some of them operate on a small scale and have limited capacity:

[Equality Network](#)

[LGBT Youth Scotland](#)

[Scottish Transgender Alliance](#)

[Age Scotland](#)

[Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights](#)

[Capability Scotland](#)

[Enable Scotland](#)

[RNIB Scotland](#)

[Action on Hearing Loss Scotland](#)

10. CHECKLISTS FOR CARRYING OUT CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

GETTING STARTED

1. Is the consultation or engagement really necessary? If a decision has already been made, consultation on the matter may be redundant.
2. Is there material available from other consultations? Review any previous consultation and research activity on this topic.
3. Is a [Strategic Environmental Assessment](#) required? The SEA screening process will determine whether you need to initiate a structured SEA consultation.
4. Is an equality impact assessment required?
5. What are you trying to achieve? Specify clear objectives for the exercise.
6. Who should be involved? Gather a team with the necessary skills to conduct the consultation.
7. Seek advice from internal and external experts at the earliest opportunity.
8. Who should you consult? Define the stakeholders for your consultation and consider how to involve them.

PLANNING YOUR CONSULTATION

1. Be clear about your target audience – you may have more than one.
2. Equality mainstreaming: consider how you will encourage greater access to the matter under consultation, and the consultation/engagement process.
3. Identify any existing forums and representative groups that should be included in the consultation/engagement.
4. Identify any groups and/or individuals at risk of exclusion from your consultation or engagement, and take steps to remedy this.
5. Establish appropriate consultation or engagement method(s) based on your objectives and audience(s). For face-to-face events, use techniques which encourage interaction and participation.
6. Consider and budget for alternative formats and community languages.
7. Identify the outputs you will need for policy development and feedback to your audiences.
8. Ensure that you set realistic timescales for planning and conducting your consultation or engagement. Response timescales should be proportionate to the scale or impact of the change. Take account of any statutory timescales and whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is to be undertaken.
9. Determine your distribution channels, including any relevant websites.
10. Ensure that the resources you will require are in place before you start (both staff time and additional budget costs). There may be benefit in using an external contactor for some or all of the exercise.
11. Advertise your forthcoming consultation and alert key stakeholders.
12. Make arrangements to receive and process responses.
13. Plan your evaluation, and feedback to consultees, in advance, so that you can amend your consultation materials if required.

WRITTEN CONSULTATIONS

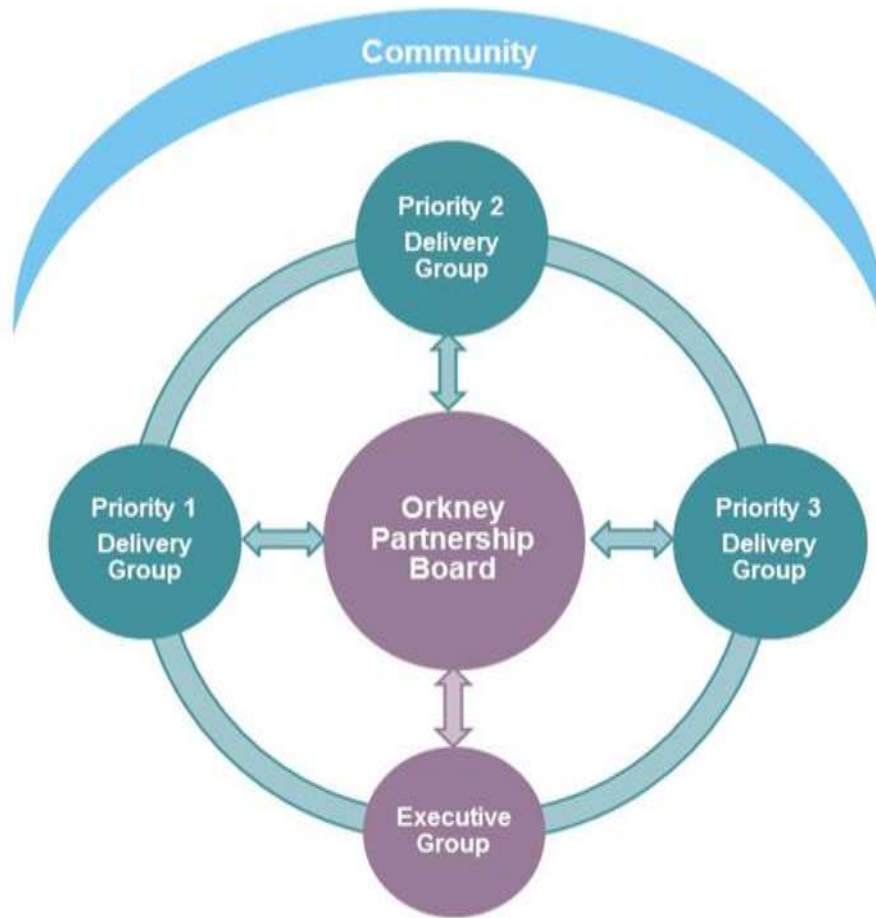
1. Be clear about your audience and objectives when writing a consultation paper.
2. Ensure your paper is concise, clearly laid out and written in plain English. Spell out any acronyms and avoid jargon.
3. Write a clear and concise covering letter/email.
4. Ensure your documentation includes the following:
 - Summary.
 - Any necessary background information.
 - Discussion of the issues.
 - Outline of options; relevant views and information.
 - Assessment of impact on different groups (including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010).
 - Proposed timetable.
 - Statement regarding availability of paper in alternative formats.
 - How to respond and what methods are acceptable.
 - List of those being consulted.
 - Explanation of how responses will be used and feedback given.
5. Ask questions that will elicit the views and information you require. If you plan to use the responses quantitatively (e.g. to generate statistics or indicators) the questions must be designed in such a way that the answers will be given in a consistent format.
6. If designing an online questionnaire, choose options to suit your stakeholders.
7. Test your consultation paper on a few colleagues and contacts. Respondents may not do what you expect.
8. Ensure that your consultation is made available on relevant websites.

OUTPUT, FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

1. Acknowledge all responses, organise responses and prepare what can be made available to the public.
2. Screen responses for defamation and remove personal details prior to using the data in any form of report.
3. Make arrangements for analysing responses.
4. Produce a consultation report and publish it online, in full and/or in summary as appropriate. Provide hard copies on request.
5. Provide feedback as soon as possible to all respondents and other stakeholders, using the same method of communication as they used to respond.
6. Evaluate the success of your consultation exercise, referring back to your original objectives. Share the findings and lessons learned.
7. Ensure that any policy, plan etc. informed by your consultation is clear about the extent to which the results have been taken into account in formulating the policy. A decision by policy makers to go against the wishes of consultees must be made explicit and justified.
8. Update your stakeholder information for future use.

APPENDIX

COMMUNITY PLANNING FRAMEWORK



Strategic priorities and Delivery Groups at 19 March 2018:

- Living Well
- Strong Communities
- Vibrant Economy