

crew

Regeneration Wales
Adfywio Cymru

A Guide to Effective Community Engagement

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1

Introduction

In the last twenty years community engagement has become an essential component of policy design and implementation, project governance and delivery and monitoring and evaluation of a wide range of interventions. Community engagement practices can be found in health service provision, educational engagement strategies, housing services, local economic development, planning policy and review and, of course, is clearly a frequent requirement in regeneration strategies. Many funding streams and grants are dependent on submissions providing a clear community engagement strategy and even in solely private sector funded regeneration projects, it would be rare to find a scheme which did not engage with the public in some way.

The terminology that describes what we have generically referred to here as community engagement, has evolved constantly in the last two decades. The following terms and approaches have all described the overall objective of working with communities:

- Community development
- Community empowerment
- Community participation
- Community appraisal
- Community capacity development
- Participatory budgeting
- Citizen juries
- Double devolution
- Co-production

The latest of these, 'co-production', assumes a level of community engagement in which community members and organisations are actively involved in the common design, delivery and evaluation of any intervention that affects them. This represents a very high level of community involvement, which is rarely achieved in practice.

One of the consequences of this almost universal requirement to engage with communities is the need to ensure that a wide range of professions is equipped with the skills to deliver effective community engagement. When conducted professionally and effectively, community engagement can add to the success of a project or programme and assist the achievement of key outputs and outcomes. When not delivered at all or delivered badly, it can raise opposition to schemes and create a hostile local environment that can even challenge the successful completion of delivery. Consequently, an adequate understanding of how to achieve effective community engagement is a core skill for many practitioners working in a wide range of policy fields.

However, in CREW's research on skills in the professional services sector it is quite apparent that many practitioners feel there are major skills deficits in community related activities. In CREW (2010, <http://bit.ly/1hVMGUp>) we identified that 80% of respondents to our survey on low carbon skills for the professional services sector felt that the possession of these skills were either important or fairly important. Furthermore, 57% felt that they would become more important. Additionally, 59% felt that community facilitation skills should be a part of their personal or organisational skills set. Finally, 47% believed that community related skills were not evident in the range of partner organisations and individuals they worked with. The findings were confirmed in later work (CREW2012, <http://bit.ly/1m3xkjg>) which identified the importance of 'connective skills' (p37). This enables the cross-professional practice and stakeholder involvement that now underpins successful delivery. Community engagement was perceived by respondents as a key component of the connective skills set.

Consequently, in discussion with the Regeneration Skills Collective Wales, CREW has identified the need for an exercise to support the community-related skills of cross-professional practitioners. This guide to community engagement methods is the first stage in that process. The guide identifies some key engagement techniques that have stood the test of time and are recognised internationally as valuable approaches. It is intended as a signposting resource to enable practitioners to follow any interest in a specific technique and develop their knowledge further where required. The guide is not an exhaustive listing of available methods and you may be aware of or have used methods not described here. Inclusion in our guide is not an endorsement of a particular approach and you should always be confident of its applicability to the use you intend for it.



The evolution of community engagement

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Techniques of community engagement have been evolving since the earliest examples in Victorian philanthropic activities around poverty, health, education and sanitation. By the 1940s more formalised approaches to 'community development' had separately emerged in the UK and the USA. These varied from quite radical programmes of 'community organising' to more integrative practice that saw community-based approaches as a key element of effective social work.

Practice has generally developed along a trajectory of increasing community involvement towards very direct engagement, for example with tenant board members in Housing Associations or community membership of regeneration partnerships. This has seen engagement move from limited aspects of 'consultation' to more direct influence of community members over the interventions that take place in their communities.

The approach was at its most developed stage following the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office in 1997.

Community engagement as part of regeneration policy is a process which was initially developed during the 1980s by an array of private sector focused delivery vehicles. During the 1990s it evolved and became a more inclusive practice establishing itself within third sector engagement in programmes such as City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget. The approach was at its most developed following the election of the Labour Government in 1997 and the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office. Analysis revealed that examples of good progress being made in some of Britain's most deprived communities was due to the adoption of policies with a strong emphasis on social inclusion strategies. Consequently the development of a national Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and its major component 'New Deal for Communities' established a clear mechanism of community engagement as a core principle in the regeneration partnership.

Similarly, in Wales the Communities First programme established an initial 132 regeneration partnerships that had a requisite 'one third' membership drawn from community organisations and individuals from within the community. The pattern of community engagement established was supported by a programme of capacity development to enable community members to engage directly with statutory agencies to negotiate and agree service delivery patterns in their communities.

Subsequently, in England the focus has shifted to the concept of 'localism'. Enshrined in the Localism Act 2011, the Act allows communities the 'Right to Challenge', the 'Right to Buy' and the 'Right to Build'. All are very dependent on high levels of local engagement with the planning process and the activities of the local authority.

The Act provides the legislative framework which enables communities to play an active role in neighbourhood development and provides a range of mechanisms to give communities an influential voice as part of the development process.

European funding policy has also shifted focus to bottom-up community engagement. LEADER ("Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale", meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions') is a local development method which allows 'local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential.' (www.enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/leader)

The LEADER approach formed one of the four axes of Rural Development Policy during 2007–2013 and was funded from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). For the 2014–2020 period a broader application of the methodology is proposed with the option for LEADER Local Development Strategies to be supported by other EU funds in a multi-funded approach. In this multi-fund context, the LEADER approach will be referred to as "**Community-Led Local Development**" (CLLD). (www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/community_en.pdf)

In this brief review of the history of community engagement in public policy and particularly regeneration policy we can see that there has been a general trajectory toward increasing community involvement. However, this evolution has not been even and in some areas of professional practice the general model remains one of 'consultation'. This means that local residents are provided opportunity to comment on activities in their areas which are already pre-determined and which they are offered little effective influence over.

The range of activities between this limited model of consultation and the more developed practices of localism or co-production have been identified in what has become a classic model of types of community participation. American writer Sherry Arnstein (1969) developed the Ladder of Participation to delineate the different levels of community participation which were possible and to inform good practice. This avoids the more 'exploitative' approaches which provided only limited opportunity for community engagement.

ARNSTEIN'S' LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

In Arnstein's model the lower rungs of the ladder are seen as not providing genuine community engagement and participation. Rather, for example a public meeting might be held to 'manipulate' opinion perhaps by presenting disinformation. Alternatively, the perspective might be that the community will agree with this if only they can see the benefits. In this example, the purpose of the meeting is 'manipulation' rather than engagement. The further we move up the ladder the more participative the approaches are. Minimally, the 'partnership' level represents real engagement and the highest rungs would equate with co-production ambitions in current terminology.

The CREW Case Study of Glyncoch (<http://bit.ly/1duPB90>) demonstrates how a significant level of community engagement can impact the achievement of education, health and employment objectives within the work of the Communities First Programme and the regeneration objectives of the local regeneration partnership. It also demonstrates the willingness and ability of local people to become engaged if the approach is right and the engagement experiences are relevant and meaningful:

“As soon as people realise that they have something important to offer their family or community and that they can be an agent of change, they are; the realisation is a catalyst for accelerated personal growth as well as community regeneration (<http://bit.ly/1duPB90>)”

Similar conclusions were drawn in a study of eight Communities First partnerships for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Adamson and Bromiley, 2008). The study identified the willingness of community members to become engaged in regeneration related activities. However, to achieve and sustain this engagement the study established that the engagement had to be 'purposeful'. This points to a number of requirements of community engagement practice if it is to be recognised as ethically delivered and avoid the exploitative levels of participation identified in Arnstein's Ladder. These issues are further developed in the next section.

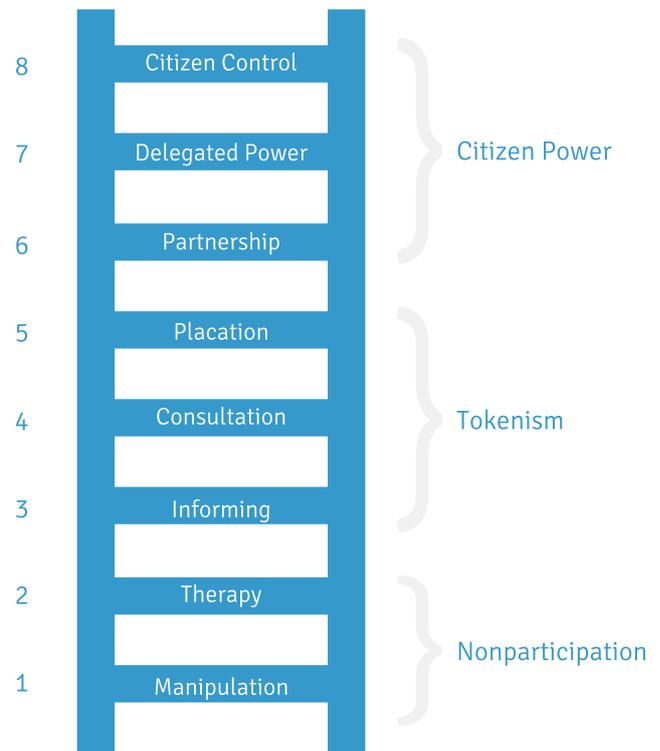


Figure 1. Reproduced from Arnstein (1969)

FURTHER READING

Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224. The original article is reproduced at <http://bit.ly/OU0jeE>

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Some key principles

This section identifies some key issues in developing engagement approaches to ensure that the community benefits from their engagement. The primary motivation should always be to genuinely engage with the community to derive better outcomes from possible interventions. It should never be implemented simply to 'tick the box' for a funding or planning requirement. Any community engagement should be 'purposeful' and meaningful to participants.

One way to ensure this, is to be guided by the general principles of good community development practice. These have been codified within the community development profession and other professions can benefit from the considerable historical experience embedded in the principles. They also create an ethical and moral structure around community-based practice which other professions can derive considerable benefit from in the way they approach community engagement. There are variations on these basic principles that have been developed by a wide range of organisations to reflect local conditions but all contain reference to the following core values and principles. These are reproduced from Community Development Cymru (CDC) but reflect a wider consensus around key requirements:

- **Social Justice:** Building an equal and fair society where all community and human rights are promoted and oppression in any form is challenged.
- **Self-determination:** Individuals and groups identifying shared issues and concerns to enable them to take collective action.
- **Working and Learning together:** Valuing, sharing and using the skills, knowledge, experience and diversity within communities to collectively bring about desired changes.
- **Sustainable Communities:** Supporting communities to develop their strengths, resources, and independence whilst making and maintaining links to the wider society.
- **Participation:** The right for all to be active participants in the processes that affect their communities and lives.
- **Reflective Practice:** People learning from their collective and individual experiences to inform their future action.

Clearly, it might be more difficult for other professions, e.g. architects or planners, to fully realise all these principles, but they can minimally inform good practice by ensuring that no community engagement approach acts against the general spirit they illustrate.

In addition to these specific principles there are some general observations that should inform good community engagement practice. The following paragraphs identify some of the issues that you should be aware of in planning a community engagement approach.



3.1 Avoid raising expectations

During any form of engagement it is very easy to raise the expectations of the community about the scale and speed of actions that might follow the engagement process. It is essential at all times to remain factual and realistic about the issues you are addressing in your engagement programme and to be focused about what you want to achieve from the engagement. The process should never involve a 'blank canvas', as this will result in undeliverable outcomes and unrealistic expectations. Sometimes there is a fine line between raising the aspiration, particularly of disadvantaged communities, and of creating false expectations that cannot be delivered. Where the latter happens, community disengagement usually results and in some cases can take years to overcome before engagement can be developed again.

3.2 Facilitate engagement

We often hear the phrase 'difficult to reach' communities or individuals. In reality, it is rare to find totally disengaged populations and it is usually the case that an engagement approach which has been sensitively designed to recognise the needs, interests and barriers to engagement within any population, will be successful. Critical elements of a strategy include:

Ensuring full publicity in accessible and visible forms:

People cannot participate if they do not know about an event or other opportunity to engage. Use of local information routes including newsletters, local press, local radio, social media and prominently displayed posters in key locations can all contribute to a more comprehensive pattern of engagement.

Provision of support for attendance: You might identify the need to provide transport from more remote parts of a community or childcare for those attending with young children. You might offer light refreshments on arrival or fuller provision for a day-long event. You may need to address any special needs identified in the community, for example a specific ethnic profile or a highly aging population. Working with local community organisations can often be the best way of establishing support needs and delivering them.

Ensure the right format of event/programme: Public meetings are generally doomed to failure and will attract only small audiences of the highly motivated. In many instances, that motivation might be in opposition to your intervention. The aim is to achieve a balanced group of participants. You can use meetings of existing organisations, piggy-back on other community events such as festivals or fetes, or organise bespoke community events which provide a range of experiences and opportunities for engagement. The majority of methods reviewed in the following pages adopt this latter approach.

Avoid exclusionary practices: It is very easy to establish a strategy which is unintentionally exclusionary. The holy grail of engagement is to reach the whole community in an inclusive approach which does not create barriers to participation. For example, young people may be inhibited by the use of local school premises. Faith members may not attend venues where alcohol or gambling might take place (including bingo). People with literacy issues cannot contribute to written surveys, poster sessions or 'sticky' note exercises. Evening only meetings exclude those with child and elder care responsibilities. Day time meetings exclude those in full time employment. All of these and other more local potential barriers need to be considered carefully and a strategy developed which addresses them. You do not want to only be talking to the 'usual suspects'.

Generally, to avoid some of the difficulties it is necessary to provide a range of engagement opportunities. The methods detailed below would generally sit within a more comprehensive range of these opportunities that enable the full population of a community to engage in a way that reflects specific needs and interests.



3.3 Develop partnership working

At times we should be ready to admit that our skills may not be best placed to deliver effective engagement. Working with more appropriately skilled and connected partners will often produce a more effective pattern of consultation and engagement. We often fear that not being in control of the consultation process may provide difficult results but in reality the more effective the engagement process, the more clearly issues are defined and consequently the more likely we are to respond effectively. Identifying existing community organisations and working with them to deliver engagement activities is often the best approach and assists with some of the difficulties of reaching the whole community. Obvious partners might include Communities First, local Development Trusts, community and civic organisations and more formal institutions such as schools. Sports clubs, faith groups, specialist interest organisations (e.g. pensioner groups) can all provide very effective partnership routes to consultation and engagement.



Working with more appropriately skilled and connected partners will often produce a more effective pattern of consultation and engagement.

4

Community Engagement Methods:

4.1 Open Space

Open Space is a meeting framework that allows large groups to have self-directed, but structured discussions around a particular theme.

Open Space workshops provide a highly democratic framework to enable a group of people to create their own programme of discussions on a subject without much

preparation. They are particularly useful for dealing with general policy issues, for generating enthusiasm and for dealing with urgent issues needing quick action. The technique was developed by Harrison Owen in the mid-1980's and is based upon anthropological evidence that meeting in a circle is the most productive for encouraging honest discussion. The open space refers to the space in the centre of the circle, which symbolises the non-prescriptive.

Events are based on a central theme and participants agree on issues that are important. These are prioritised to form workshops for the event according to the knowledge, experience and energy of those in the room. A theme, venue and time are determined and publicised by the organisers but the content and workshops are then managed by the participants themselves. Participants start by sitting in a circle and decide themselves on the issues to discuss, using a simple procedure usually guided by a facilitator. Workshop sessions are self-managed by the participants within a framework of simple principles. Each workshop session develops a list of actions required and is used to form a report back to participants, helping to translate detailed discussions into action plans. The Open Space framework provides an opportunity to bring together the knowledge of all participants and is attractive because the agenda is formed by the participants. Although it appears to be flexible and informal, there are strong reporting and recording structures in place. Events are normally one-off but can be run over a period of time.

The resources required include a facilitator, meeting space, refreshments and equipment such as flip charts, paper and pens. The largest amount of preparatory work should be on promoting the event so that the relevant people are there to allow all the differing views, data and knowledge to come together.

To organise an open space meeting you need to:

- Send an open invitation to your community, that explains the purpose of the meeting
- Arrange the meeting chairs into a circle and provide breakout spaces where participants can move freely between discussion/topic groups
- Provide a bulletin board for participants to raise issues and offer suggestions
- Agree on a reporting mechanism and key contact

The outcomes from the meeting can then be collated and fed back to the whole group.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Low cost and minimal resources and preparation mean OS events can be organised relatively quickly	Only likely to get a small percentage of the whole community to attend
Particularly effective at addressing difficult issues and/or where large numbers are involved.	Unlikely to attract people who traditionally avoid open meetings or formal settings
Breaks down traditional 'us and them' barriers due to high level of participant control	Because they are normally 'one off' events, potential participants may miss out
Participant control of agenda indicates greater ownership of process	The meeting can be viewed as an end to the issues - some community members may perceive that no further action will be taken on the discussed issues beyond the meeting.
Motivation, commitment can emerge in a way not usually available in traditional meetings	
May attract people that traditional public meetings would not due to more informal nature	

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Some members of the community may feel apprehensive about being involved in large public meetings and expressing their views in a public arena, especially if they do not have a great deal of experience in that style of meeting. 'Open Space' meetings should allow the participants to create their own agenda and discussions in a less formal setting than a public meeting. However, it should be recognised that public / open meetings rarely inspire great attendance and is likely to attract only a small percentage of the community. Open Space philosophy relies on the people with the most energy and commitment to attend and is therefore not an ideal tool for engaging those who are 'hard to reach'. It is also common for Open Space events to be 'one-off' events and therefore run the inevitable risk of missing potential participants.

WHO SHOULD USE AND WHEN TO USE

Open Space helps to translate detailed discussions into action plans and can be especially useful wherever complex issues need to be resolved or when it is necessary to motivate a group or organisation to action. It provides an opportunity to bring together the knowledge of all involved and is attractive because of the high level of participant control and 'ownership' generated. Open Space events are ideal for:

- Accommodating a wide range of themes or complex issues
- Accommodating a large number of people
- Quick identification of ideas or issues within a local area
- When a fast response is needed or where formal procedural methods have failed or are inappropriate

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Open Space World www.openspaceworld.org

Transition Culture (Archive). How to Run an Open Space Event. Owen, H. (2008)

<http://transitionculture.org/2008/03/21/12-tools-for-transition-no10-how-to-run-an-open-space-event/>

Owen Harrison (1997). 'Open Space Technology: A User's Guide' (3rd ed). USA. Berrett-Koehler

'Open Space' meetings should allow the participants to create their own agenda and discussions in a less formal setting than a public meeting.

4.2 Participatory Rapid Appraisal [PRA]

Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) is a way of using lots of different community engagement techniques to understand community views on a particular issue. The aim is to enable local people to assess the issue, and make their own plans to address it.

Participatory appraisal methods and tools can be used across all age groups and cultures and do not rely on literacy skills. Participation can be on an individual level or on a group basis. Methods are highly visual and comprise of a myriad of activities to elicit and triangulate the same information. Participatory Appraisal methods are employed for their adaptability and some of the non-traditional ways in which needs assessment is undertaken. It is most often used in developing countries to assess the needs of rural communities but can be equally applicable to communities of the UK.

Participatory Appraisal is a family of approaches and methods which enable communities to share, develop and analyse their own knowledge and is used frequently for developmental issues. PRA appeared in the late 1970's as an alternative and complementary method to existing traditional, more formal techniques. As the name suggests, it is usually done quickly and intensively – often over a two or three week period. A series of methods are applied during this time, including interviews, focus groups, mapping and events.

PRA is considered as an educational method for all individuals to discover, analyse and evaluate the challenges and opportunities involved in a project, action or programme. This method is characterised by flexibility, triple observation (data comes from various resources, sectors, experiences, tools and methods) and participation.

This is an intensive approach to community engagement. Whilst costs are usually minimal, it can be time and resource heavy. There is a need to commit to:

- Providing the resources that local people identify they need to undertake the appraisal
- Taking action to address the issues identified.

In order to correlate information from a variety of sources, a wide range of potential tools can be utilised in the PRA method. Potential tools could include:

- Semi-structured Interviewing
- Direct or participant observation
- Focus Group Discussions
- Case Studies
- Preference ranking
- Workshops
- Social mapping
- Voting

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Flexible and wide ranging approach that allows for engagement with a variety of sectors, partners and community members	Can be time consuming in preparation
Rapid, intensive engagement	Expectation management can be an issue if not addressed properly
Can be used in conjunction with formal method	Experience and knowledge of practitioners is critical
Low-cost	Danger of superficiality if done too quickly
Useful in long-term monitoring	Not suitable for sophisticated statistical analyses
Particularly suited to rural communities	
Triangulation of results ensure reliability of information	

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Although the potential applications of PRA are numerous and wide-ranging, certain considerations should be taken into account in deciding whether or not it is appropriate for a particular situation or project. Primarily:

- The availability of appropriate people with the necessary skills to conduct the events
- The degree to which project structure and decision-making are sufficiently flexible to make use of new information
- The intended use of findings

The flexibility of PRA can lead to it being constrained by circumstances, being rushed or inadequately thought through. Unless the PRA is conducted well, the appraisal may be counter-productive and the findings unreliable. Experience, teamwork and varied disciplinary perspectives are thought to be critical to the success of PRA.

Although PRA is relatively low cost to execute, exercises are time-consuming and much preparation is required. Ideally a number of practitioners and volunteers should be involved in carrying out the process. Training of those involved is essential; participatory appraisal does not rely on the tools themselves but the approach and behaviour of practitioners to maximise the quality and depth of information gathered. Accessing enough members of a community for results to be representative of the overall community viewpoint can be problematic here if resources are not forthcoming and collation of information can often be time consuming. Practitioners need to be aware of expectation management and transparency of purpose within the community.

WHO SHOULD USE AND WHEN TO USE

PRA is especially well suited for application in community development as it involves the professionals and community members in all aspects; the design of the research tools, the collection of information and the analysis of findings. Proper use of PRA raises people's self-awareness, suggests viable solutions and helps people analyse complex issues and problems. Whilst it is not suitable for sophisticated statistical analyses or especially complex urban settings, it is particularly suited to rural communities and has been found to be useful in assessing long-term change. When sophisticated statistical analysis is required, PRA methods cannot replace formal surveying techniques, although PRA techniques are frequently used simultaneously with traditional methods. The choice of methods required depends on the type of information gathered and the availability of resources. PRA is an appropriate tool if the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of community attitudes and general needs analysis.

It is recommended for its flexibility and ability to promote ownership of knowledge and ideas and is ideal for:

- Identification of populations within given geographical boundaries
- Identification of local knowledge and areas of change
- Sharing of local information and knowledge
- Empowerment of a community to promote 'ownership'
- Exploration of opportunities for dialogue with individuals, groups, services and organisations
- Dissemination of local knowledge

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Chambers, R. 1992. Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed, and Participatory. Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 311. Sussex: HELP : www.ids.ac.uk/files/Dp311.pdf

Theis, J. & Grady, H.M. 1991. Participatory rapid appraisal for community development. London, IIED

Field-Level Handbook, (Socio-Economic & Gender Analysis) SEAGA Programme, FAO, 2001: www.fao.org/docrep/012/ak214e/ak214e00.pdf

4.3 Design Charrettes

A design charrette is a collective planning and design exercise which can engage community members alongside professional designers to provide an opportunity for community based knowledge and interests to inform the design process

The word charrette originates from the word for 'cart' in French, 'le chariot', in reference to a push cart that travelled the streets of 19th century Paris collecting university student artwork and architectural illustrations. The term we associate with today came from the mid 1980's to describe 'interactive, multiday community planning sessions' (Lennertz and Lutzenhiser 2003).

Community members are often frustrated at the lack of information presented to them during the planning phase of small or large scale developments that are likely to affect their community. Equally, professionals can become impatient when met with local opposition to plans, and the endless rounds of public meetings can often prove unproductive and sometimes

confrontational. It is for this reason design charrettes have been adopted and implemented, in order to tackle problematic issues in a workshop-style environment, with the local community and professionals.

A charrette is a popular collaborative technique for engaging with stakeholders and is a method which typically involves a full day or several days of discussion workshops and planning. It is usually conducted in the early stages of a project, in an attempt to address particular challenges and desires of the members. Charrettes encourage participation of all members of the group in order to ensure qualitative input and creative thought. They are also often considered to be a form of group workshop and often include some intensive brainstorming sessions. Project sponsors will introduce the topic, and groups consisting of professionals and the public will look at a particular issue. It is sometimes useful to set up groups that can discuss issues with a relevant professional.

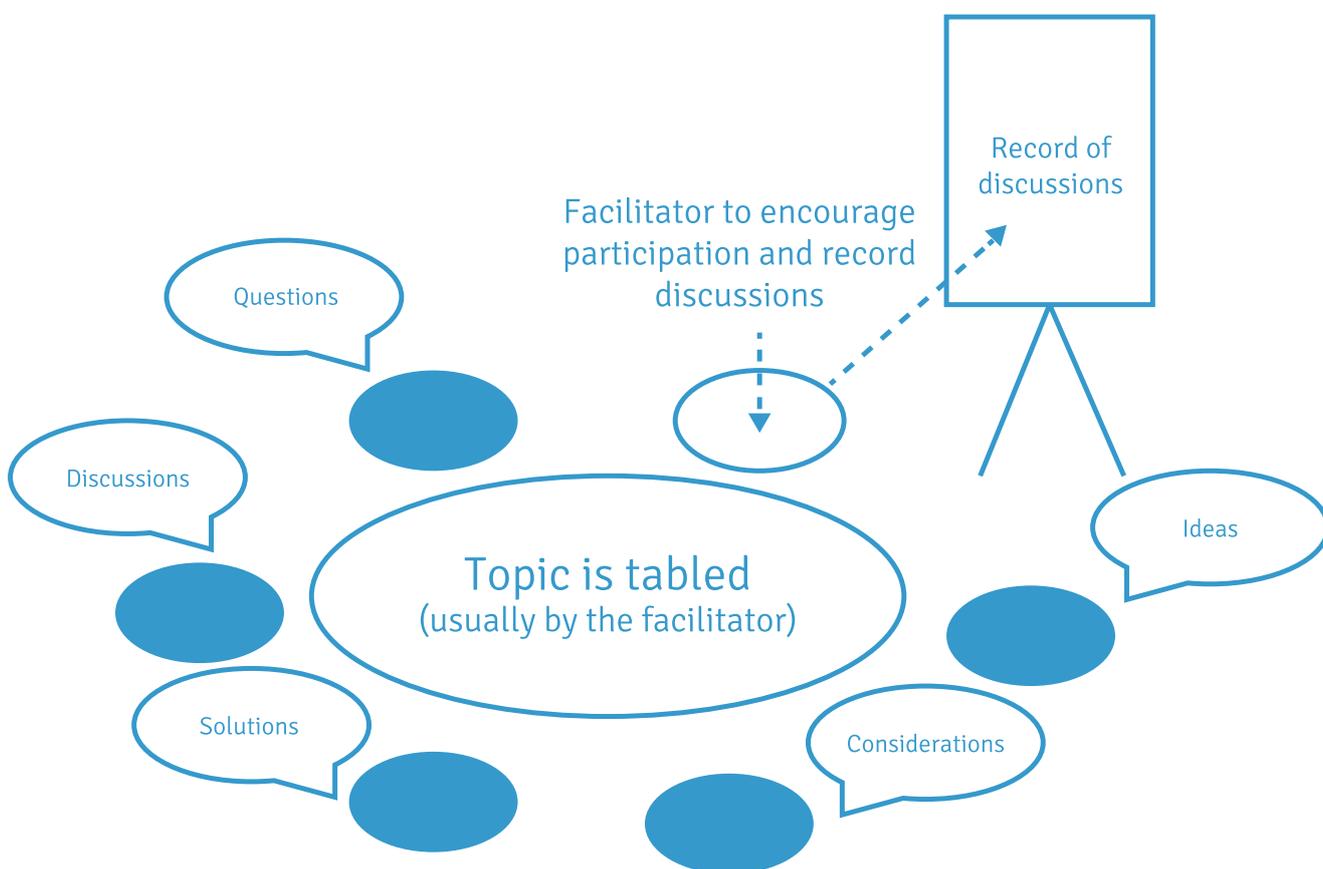


Figure 2. A typical format for a Design Charrette . Multiple groupings are often established within a charrette.

WHO SHOULD USE AND WHEN TO USE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Charrette will generally consist of;

1. Project sponsor (eg. Planner or developer)
2. Team of professionals from specialist areas (eg. Architects, Traffic Engineers, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects etc.)
3. The local community and interested parties from all sectors.

A design charrette can vary in the length of time required. This depends on the complexity of the subject. In most cases the lead-in and preparation time can be lengthy and good pre-planning will ensure a worthwhile exercise and robust qualitative data.

A project sponsor will often employ the services of a third party facilitator to broker a relationship with the stakeholders. A facilitator should be there to ensure fluidity to the process, encourage debate and tease out questions from stakeholders. The facilitator should also have a good understanding of local issues and the place itself, as well as being able to understand and coordinate the range of professional representatives available on the day.

During a neighbourhood planning process, the community can feel empowered and involved in an activity which is often seen as far removed. This method of collaborative planning can be a very engaging and rewarding experience for the stakeholder. Organisers will need to make sure that you have adequate resources and staff to help on the day for facilitation. The use of visual aids generally works well, and flipcharts, images and maps are often helpful for the debriefing and evaluation stage of the process. Many design charrettes encourage stakeholders to draw and scribble ideas on worksheets and maps. As much 'hands-on' participation as possible should be encouraged. The professional practitioner and/or facilitator should take the opportunity to 'bottom out' issues with stakeholders around the table where time will allow for this to take place.



ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Flexible and wide ranging approach that allows for engagement with a variety of sectors, partners and community members	Can be time consuming in preparation
Potential for locally relevant design-lead solutions due to setting for engagement	Resource heavy before, during and after events
More effective and less formal than public meetings allowing far-reaching involvement	Effectiveness largely dependent on strength and experience of facilitator
An excellent method for theme focussed resolutions	Effectiveness also dependent upon event attendance by relevant stakeholders

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Design Charrettes require a great deal of pre-planning and organising. This can also be a resource heavy process but is seen as a crucial element in achieving a successful session with meaningful results. The process is often seen as an intensive method of public engagement, and avoids the requirement for more formal public meetings.

Design Charrettes are generally adopted and organised by forward thinking organisations, and people looking for a less traditional and more proactive way of engaging with the community. A political appetite for this form of engagement often helps provide a good foundation to the process, especially if recommendations are to be adopted as local government policies.

Arranging a multi stakeholder charrette can be very challenging. Experience in event organising is particularly useful.



LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

More information on design charrettes can be found at these locations:

Planning a Visioning Charrette:

www.artscapediy.org/Creative-Placemaking-Toolbox/Who-Are-My-Stakeholders-and-How-Do-I-Engage-Them/Planning-a-Visioning-Charrette.aspx

Design Charrette: A vehicle for collaboration or consultation? Nicola Dawn Smith. 2012. Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia. Available: www.academia.edu/1277880/Design_charrette_A_vehicle_for_consultation_or_collaboration

A Handbook for Planning and Conducting Charrettes for High Performing Projects. Lindsey et al. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. Washington, US. Available: www.nrel.gov/sustainable_nrel/pdfs/44051.pdf

Charrette Institute:

www.charretteinstitute.org/resources.html

Bill Lannertz, Aarin Lutzenhiser & Tamara Failor. (2008). An Introduction to Charettes. Planning Commissioners Journal. 71 (1), 1-3. Available: www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes_pcj_article.pdf

Eg. Charrettes in practice

Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI)

- Mainstreaming Charrettes Programme in support of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan and Local Development Plans.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/AandP/Projects/SSCI/Mainstreaming

4.4 The Princes Foundation: Enquiry By Design

Enquiry By Design is a contemporary application of the Design Charrette approach and has been developed by the Princes Foundation in the UK to move beyond the simple design function to also illustrate local issues and factors that need to be considered in a development process.

Enquiry By Design is a way of engaging with local communities about issues affecting where they live. It is an event based and organised way of connecting with large numbers of people in the community to hear what they think about their place and extracting local views, feelings, thoughts, aspirations and hopes which are then combined with a facilitator's expertise in place making and developing solutions. A two or three day workshop forms the core of this process which is preceded by a one day scoping workshop and followed by the production of a written report that can be used in a number of ways depending on the client. This might be a local community forum, a local authority, a developer or a land owner. Mounting an Enquiry By Design event can be expensive both in terms of the time it takes and the financial resources required, so it tends to be funded from a number of stakeholders via a collaborative venture. The process can include the production of a physical and indicative master-plan particularly where a pro- growth project is being contemplated. One of the key features is the engagement of community leaders and local authorities via an invitation process in the lead up to the event, and the arranging of appropriate key technical presentations at the opening of the event.

Enquiry By Design is what has been described in the past as 'action planning', and which has common features in relation to a process of discussion, consultation, and engagement such as the following:

- Facilitating intensive work sessions.
- Ensuring community participation.
- Establishing a broad mission and taking a holistic view.
- Applying multi-disciplinary work processes via input from planners, surveyors, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, economists, engineers, sociologists etc.
- Using independent facilitators.
- Maximising the public profile of the process/an event.
- Taking a very flexible approach designed to accommodate the particular needs of local communities.

HISTORY OF THE PROCESS:

The genesis of Enquiry By Design lies in the French 'Charrette' which was a term instigated in the USA to describe working intensively right up to a deadline in relation to mounting a discussion/ consultation event. This is what normally happens, as most workshops conclude with a public session where the work produced during the event is put on display in order to 'play- back' to the community what they have been contributing throughout. This can help considerably with fostering consensus building and the securing of a broad agreement to a future course of action or to a particular project or scheme. The Prince's Foundation has popularised the term Enquiry By Design which is now widely recognised by the industry in the UK and abroad. The Prince's Foundation's association with the EbD is a critical factor in this choice of stakeholder engagement. The independent influence that can be effected within the context of often complex local politics, can be considered an advantage. However the model is now being adopted by a range of experienced practitioners with the same skills required to run successful EbD's much like the Charette.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

The advantages and disadvantages of the process from a generic perspective are broadly as follows:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
A creation of shared visions.	Can be costly to manage
Acting as a catalyst for action.	Can be difficult to achieve right balance of experts in the process
Resolving complex problems.	Can take time
Revitalising local networks.	Engagement with developers and/or planning authorities can be hard
Promotion of urban design and architectural capability.	
Heightening public awareness.	
Boosting local morale.	

The fundamental philosophy has been to recognise that planning can usefully be undertaken not just within the statutory planning process, but also outside it, and better environments can be created if local communities take the initiative. But a fundamental difference between the standard development of a project or scheme within the context of the statutory planning process is one of being ‘sequentially reactive’, as compared with Enquiry By Design which is ‘simultaneously interactive’.

The essential disadvantage of Enquiry By Design as mentioned above is that it can be costly at the outset to initiate and stage manage the process and particularly to achieve the right level of multi-disciplinary expert contribution, but in the long term it can save considerably on time and costly planning appeals.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

The barriers to implementation and in addition to cost are about self-protective attitudes in local politics, silo working within planning authorities and disinterest in collaborative working by the development industry. In this regard a culture of change is needed in many places, and the Enquiry By Design process can be an ideal way to facilitate this change.

WHO SHOULD USE IT AND WHEN:

Local planners- when they are seeking to establish a vision for a community, which can then be used to inform a development framework, strategic plans or design guidance.

Developers-when they genuinely want to engage with the community and local authorities in order to make the planning application process smoother, and more certain for themselves.

Landowners- who have an interest in delivering sustainable development, and who want to employ and facilitate local goodwill. Particularly if they have had an historic long term interest in the area, as a former major employer.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

The Princes Foundation:

www.princes-foundation.org/content/enquiry-design-neighbourhood-planning

The Princes Foundation EbD Process:

www.princes-foundation.org/sites/default/files/enquiry_by_design_ebd_pdf.pdf

Wates, N (1996). Action Planning. The Prince of Wales’s Institute of Architecture

4.5 Planning for Real®

Planning for Real® is a methodology for engaging communities in a wide range of activities associated with planning, community development, housing renewal, and regeneration. At its heart is a consultation process which has historically utilised a 3D model of the community as a focus for soliciting comment.

The Planning for Real® agency works with communities to train and support them in the conduct of a planning for real exercise. This will usually begin with a provisional meeting where the scope and range of the exercise will be determined with residents playing a key role at that early stage. This will be followed by training and support for the subsequent stages of the exercise. The programme is developed through several stages leading to the holding of the Planning for Real® event or series of events. Prior to the actual event, project planning activities identify stakeholders and maps who needs to be involved, looks for appropriate venues and importantly scopes the range of 'suggestion cards' which will be used in creating commentary based on the 3D Model. The suggestion cards are grouped into key themes and colour coded to facilitate later stages of collation and prioritisation of inputs and identified issues.

The 3D model that lies at the heart of the process is usually created in partnership with a local school and the exercise is itself a research element identifying provisional issues during its development. The model is the core requirement of the actual PFR event or series of events and is used to generate commentary and record opinion through the placement of the pre-identified suggestion cards. Blank cards are also provided on the day to ensure that all opinions are able to be recorded even when they were not anticipated in the original scoping activities.

The final stage of the process is the collation of all the assembled information and the identification of the key issues. A process of prioritisation and action planning completes the process. This is often conducted with the range of agencies who provide services in the locality and often possess the key levers of change.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Highly participative	Copyrighted process
Highly empowering	Requires a funding source and support
Local skills training can be used in the future	Can be time consuming
Engages young people and families	Resource intensive
'Thorough' engagement process	Completed over several months

The approach provides a comprehensive method for engaging with community members to identify critical local issues and to follow this through to a prioritisation and action planning stage. The model is very change orientated and is highly participative. The training of local people for involvement is empowering and provides a reservoir of local skills for future community action. It also engages with school-age participants, which is often lacking in many community engagement techniques and this assists the targeting of comprehensive community coverage through parental engagement with the school based activity.

There are inevitable cost implications to consider when procuring the service of Planning For Real®, whilst different levels of support are available at differential costs, this is inevitably a barrier, especially for unfunded or unconstituted community groups.

The process is also relatively time consuming and resource intensive and is usually completed over several months.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

The different stages of planning and delivery can also be resource intensive and require a strong volunteer base to ensure that they can be supported. Securing support from a local school for the model building exercise has proved difficult in some communities where head teachers have been reluctant to provide the physical space, room in the curriculum and staff resources required. Finally, the method, as with others examined here, is dependent on securing good turnout to an event or series of events and the suggestions made in Section 3 will very much apply here.

WHO SHOULD USE IT AND WHEN:

The method has been deployed by a wide range of agencies, including community groups, town and parish councils, local authorities, planning agencies and private developers. It is ideally designed to maximise community engagement around a specific community and often in relation to a proposed change process such as housing renewal, development activities and regeneration initiatives.

In reality many community-based processes similar to Planning For Real are conducted without reference to the copyrighted method and are self-organised around a similar community event. Themed discussion tables, poster walls, Google Earth photographs or large-scale Ordinance Survey Maps have all been deployed in a substitution for the model. However, in such programmes the terminology of Planning for Real® should not be used.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Planning for Real® www.planningforreal.org.uk

4.6 The use of Digital Storytelling in Community Engagement

Digital storytelling combines the tradition of storytelling with digital technology. Anyone with a computer and camera can create a digital story, which can be shared with others online, on CD or DVD. A digital story is generally between 2 and 5 minutes long and can be as complex or simple as the creator likes. Audio, imagery and/or video are all that is required for editing to convey a particular narrative.

Digital Storytelling as a tool for community engagement is increasing in popularity. This is primarily due to less restrictive technology being widely available, and the explosion in online video websites, such as Youtube or Vimeo, as well as many others. Local community radio stations and TV are also often looking for interesting content, and digital stories are often broadcast to a large audience through these channels. Digital storytelling methods have demonstrated success in achieving meaningful community engagement, and provide a more interesting way of recording thoughts of individuals or groups of people.

Digital Storytelling
as a tool for
community
engagement is
increasing in
popularity.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Can achieve high level of qualitative information	Can be difficult to assess quantitative information
More engaging process for viewers	Can be off-putting for some
Use of technology makes it appeal to younger audience	Information transcribing can be time consuming and requires some skill
Can have multiple applications	Some level of technical knowledge required

This method of community consultation can achieve qualitative information, particularly through one-on-one interviews and story circles (Ganley, Barbara 2011). However, it can be difficult to record a broad range of quantitative information, which is sometimes a requirement for research and planning.

The recorded content is often more engaging for the viewer or listener than the traditional written text, but some participants might find the whole process a bit alien and off putting. The key is to make participants feels relaxed and comfortable with the whole process.

Written text can often relate poorly to the audience it intends to engage with. Digital media has the potential to overcome this barrier. Incorporating the information derived from storytelling, for the purposes of including in a report or as evidence to back up particular recommendations can be difficult and requires a skilful transcriber.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Digital media capturing requires some technical knowledge to edit and manipulate content, however capturing content can be achieved through affordable cameras and sound recording equipment, and even mobile phones have the capability to record good digital media. Editing material can be challenging, but there is a range of accessible software available to make it easier. Further information can be found on the links page at the end of this section.

This method of communication can be very engaging, and work particularly well with the younger generation. The use of recording equipment can however be off putting for some participants, which could affect how a sample of the community is represented. In all cases, editorial guidelines relating to informed consent should be adopted and followed, in particular relating to the wider publication of the recorded content.

Further information and a practical guide can be found here: www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidance-consent-summary

This link provides information on all other editorial guidelines adopted by the BBC, which may be relevant to a particular project: www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines

WHO SHOULD USE IT AND WHEN:

Anyone can consider telling a digital story, but for the purposes of community engagement, and to seek the views of local residents on particular issues, they are often created by community groups. It can also be a convenient way of recording a conversation or meeting, which can be made easily accessible through digital and local media channels. It has been seen to have particular value in local town planning and history projects and can be especially valuable in an exercise associated with historical characterisation and sense of place development within regeneration projects.

Land use planning, as one example, can be a very divisive topic for many, and often the community and those whose views are crucial, can be forgotten or neglected. Barbara Ganley from the Orton Family Foundation illustrates the benefits and value of “storytelling at the heart and soul of healthy communities” in her essay ‘Re-Weaving the Community, Creating the Future’.

It is common for external consultants to be involved in community and neighbourhood planning, and an increasing number are adopting the digital story telling engagement tool as part of preliminary research. Young people are often enthused by this type of engagement, and contact with the local schools should be considered as a way of starting the process.

The effort put in to producing a digital story is generally considered worthwhile, especially as the method can work well in capturing the views of hard to reach groups. It requires proactive engagement and good communication with residents and groups. Trust is also a big part of the process, and people undertaking this type of work may have to build up good relationships with the respondents.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Ganley, B. Re-Weaving the Community, Creating the Future - Storytelling at the Heart and Soul of Healthy Communities. 2010. Orton family Foundation. Available: www.orton.org/sites/default/files/resource/1611/Storytelling_Whitepaper_hotlinked.pdf

BBC Capture wales. (2008). A Guide to Digital Story Telling. Available: www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/yourvideo/pdf/aguidetodigitalstorytelling-bbc.pdf (A Practical Guide to Digital Storytelling)

Orton Family Foundation: www.orton.org

Examples:

BBC Wales Arts. (2014). Your video. Available: www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/category_index.shtml

Community Expressions. (2010). Storytelling: Written, Audio, Visual, Digital Storytelling. Available: www.digitalexploration.org/resources/storytelling

Curiosity Creative - The North East Digital Story Centre: www.curiositycreative.org.uk

Technical Guides:

Video editing:

www.techradar.com/news/software/applications/best-free-video-editing-software-9-top-programs-you-should-download-1136264

Audio editing:

www.techradar.com/news/software/applications/best-free-audio-editing-software-9-programs-we-recommend-1136943

4.7 Placecheck

‘Placecheck’ is a method for members of a community to take the first steps in deciding how to improve an area. Due to its ease of application, Placechecks are often able to precipitate change in a way that might not otherwise be possible as it’s very simply about looking, understanding, talking and thinking about a place.

Devised in 1998, Placecheck was developed by the Urban Design Alliance (a federation of built environment professional bodies). A Placecheck will often involve the local authority, but the initiative can come from anyone, in any organisation or sector. Some Placechecks have been carried out by small groups of individuals as the first step in becoming involved in looking after their local area. A Placecheck can be carried out for a place as small as a neighbourhood or town centre, or as large as a city or county. The setting might be urban, suburban, town, village, housing or even industrial estate.

HOW TO UNDERTAKE A PLACECHECK

The Placecheck method is very well supported by the Placecheck web site (www.placecheck.info) which provides a range of free resources to support you in completing a Placecheck exercise.

Walkabouts

A Placecheck consists of one or more walkabouts, followed by discussion of the information gathered and opinions provoked, and some serious thinking about the next steps and who needs to be involved. It is generally useful to pre-plan the event ahead in order to identify a series of prompts and questions which will help identify the key local issues. The Placecheck web site offers a range of potential prompts and an extensive bank of relevant questions which can inform a very detailed review of a locality. However, in some cases three basic questions are all that is required to get the process going. These are:

1. What do we like about this place?
2. What do we dislike about it?
3. What do we need to work on?

The Placecheck approach offers a very ‘bottom up’ methodology and participants can themselves determine the number and nature of questions that are addressed during the walkabout.

One of the key issues in the methodology is to identify who the key participants are. The Placecheck website provides the following list of candidate participants:

Local people

- Residents
- Residents’ and tenants’ associations
- Schools and youth groups
- Local community and special interest groups (such as clubs and societies)

Local organisations

- Access/disability groups
- Community leaders
- Faith organisations
- Planning, architecture and design centres
- Partnership organisations
- Sustainable development organisations
- Training agencies
- Universities and colleges

Local government and statutory agencies

- Development agencies
- Housing associations
- Local authority officers (concerned with such matters as housing, planning, conservation, economic development, neighbourhood renewal, education, community development, highways, transport, waste management and environmental health)
- Local councillors
- Transport operators
- Town centre management initiatives
- Police

Local business

- Businesses
- Developers
- Landowners
- Local media
- Professional practices
- Traders

FOLLOW UP WORK

Logging/mapping of information gained on walkabouts and from the question prompts is essential and can take the form of photographs placed on plans of the area in question with accompanying explanatory notes. Follow up sessions after the walkabout are organised to agree themes and discuss/gain consensus for further stages of the Placecheck process. The follow up activities would usually engage the original participants but may also widen the exercise to include agencies and service providers who are responsible for some of the issues identified in the initial stage.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Simple, low cost, locally led with minimal resources and preparation mean process can be organised relatively quickly	Only likely to get a small percentage of the whole community to attend
Placecheck can assist the initial stages of a community planning exercise by identifying local issues and community ambitions for change	Quality and robustness of outcomes limited and varied dependent on skills of organisers
	Stage one only – other techniques needed to build upon

Recent changes in legislation to promote ‘localism’ in England have given local people a greater say in how their areas develop, including new powers for neighbourhood planning. The Wales Planning Bill, currently completing the consultation phase also has similar potential in the development of Place Plans.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

As this is a self-driven, community led-process, finding someone with time and inclination to organise (and represent further the findings/outcomes) is probably the main barrier to implementation.

WHO SHOULD USE IT AND WHEN:

Local community leaders - when they are seeking to establish a vision for a community, which can then be used to inform a development framework, strategic plans or design guidance.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

PlaceCheck Website: www.placecheck.info

4.8 Tenant Participation

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

Tenant Participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, conditions and related services. All Registered Social Landlords must demonstrate that they have a strong focus on the needs and aspirations of tenants and service users, demonstrated through tenant participation.

The right to participate comes from a reasonable expectation on the part of tenants that housing services and policies should meet their needs and preferences, as far as possible within available resources. Effective participation leads to better and more responsive management and this will help inform decisions, improve service delivery and provide value for money. However the benefits of tenant participation and improvements in service delivery will not happen overnight and will evolve over time as effective information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

MODELS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION

TPAS Cymru has developed a participation model 'The Pyramid of Participation' which demonstrates a range of important aspects of participation. According to TPAS, a healthy structure of participation has to be like a pyramid – with a wide base of different people involved in many different activities through which people become better informed, confident and experienced, so feeding up to the higher skill demands and levels of influence at the apex of the pyramid.

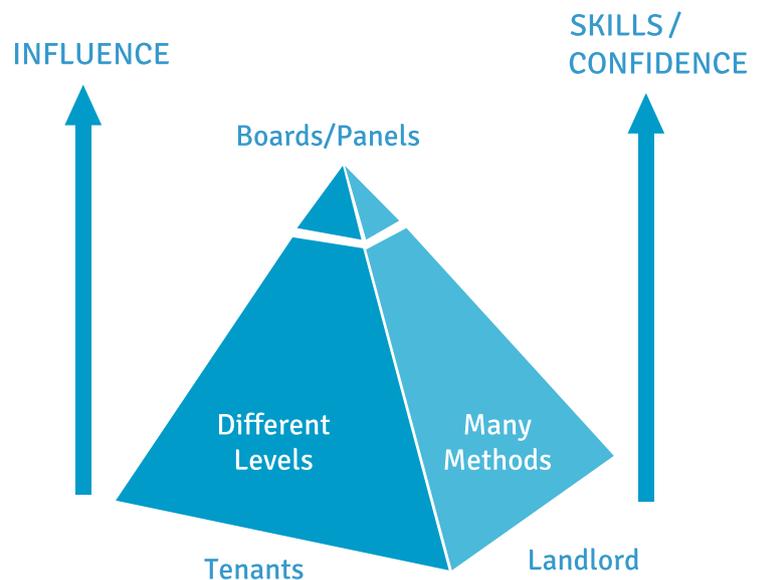


Figure 3. The Pyramid of Participation' Sourced from www.tpascymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Participation-next-generation-final-E.pdf

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Provides an opportunity for a wide base of different people to be involved	It can be difficult to evaluate tenant participation
Provides an opportunity for tenants to inform service standards and delivery	Multiple viewpoints can be difficult to accommodate
Often a relatively informal setting for tenants to feel comfortable in expressing their views	One or more tenants may dominate the discussions
Offering an opportunity for tenants to participate builds trust between the landlord and tenant	Difficulty in ensuring that those tenants participating are a cross section representative of the whole community
Tenant participation removes the real and perceived barriers that discourage, limit and prevent tenant involvement by traditionally excluded groups	Considerable preparation is needed to attract tenants to a participatory session and to ensure effective participation
Providing feedback allows tenants to see how their contributions have influenced decisions	Can be seen by tenants as a tokenistic gesture from the landlord.
Provides an opportunity for the landlord to assess tenant satisfaction	

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Barriers to participation often arise because of the way the process is carried out, such as:

- Issues being too landlord focused.
- Methods chosen for administrative convenience rather than maximum contact.
- Timescales for consultation being too short.
- Poor communication in language, style and length.
- Inadequate resources provided to enable large numbers of people to be involved.

In order to avoid and overcome these barriers, the National Tenant Participation Service for Wales recommends that effective participation should accommodate:

- Statutory/regulatory rights to access/receive information
- Mechanisms to enable tenants to access information e.g. plain language tenancy agreements, handbooks, newsletters, summary strategies/policies, annual reports
- The different formats that information will be provided in to meet identified need e.g. large print, Braille, audio tape and local minority ethnic languages
- Welsh Language Act provisions
- A quality control mechanism to ensure information is accurate, relevant, in plain language, clearly presented and appealing.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The evaluation of tenant participation can be complex, as many of the outcomes cannot be measured simply in terms of numbers or financial figures. In evaluating tenant participation, local performance indicators should be developed and examined under the following categories: inputs (e.g. resources), outputs (e.g. success of engagement method) and outcomes (e.g. processes influenced).

Giving tenants' feedback is one of the most important areas in the participation process. By keeping tenants informed of how their contribution has influenced an issue, they may be more willing to continue being involved. Tenants should decide how they want to receive feedback.

WHO SHOULD USE AND WHEN TO USE

Most Landlords now encourage their tenants to get involved with them through a range of methods. The majority of landlords in Wales have a Tenant Participation Officer and it is part of their role to make sure that tenants are involved in the organisation. To cater for the scope of participation activity to meet the range of tenants and their needs, landlords develop, in conjunction with tenants, a range of formal and informal participation mechanisms which are relevant to local circumstances.

Examples of tenant participation might include: registered tenant organisations; tenants and residents associations; focus groups and policy review groups; tenant conferences; questionnaires and surveys; estate walkabouts and road shows; tenant-led inspections; mystery shopping; newsletters and information leaflets; digital communication and official complaints and compliments procedures.

Effective consultation is not just a one-off process. It encompasses a wide range of methods so tenants can become fully involved if and when they choose. Consultation methods need to be reviewed regularly to make sure that they are working and that they meet the needs of all groups of people.

Successful tenant participation depends upon landlords being committed and open to influence, and tenants having the information, support and confidence to get involved. It is essential that commitment to tenant participation is driven throughout a landlord organisation from the top.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Local Tenant Participation Strategies, TPAS Cymru (2014) www.tpascymru.org.uk/policy-information/local-tenant-participation-strategies

Support for Tenant Participation, Welsh Government. (2014) www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/support-tenant-participation/?lang=en

4.9 Learning, Evaluation and Planning Model (LEAP)

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

The Learning, Evaluation and Planning model toolkit, also known as LEAP, is an outcome focused approach to community engagement. It is used to set outcomes, indicators and action plans to address identified need and evaluate impact. It can be applied to relatively simple or highly complex activities, including local projects, whole programmes or policy development.

LEAP adopts a needs-led approach, stressing that it is essential to be clear what the issues are that any proposed activity is intended to address. Community engagement is likely to be a feature of this process to know that the problems to be tackled are recognised to be important and the difference that it is intended to make is agreed.

LEAP FRAMEWORK

The LEAP framework is designed to support a partnership approach to achieving change and improvement in the quality of community life. The framework is based on the understanding that to improve the quality of life experienced by communities, our actions should be guided by certain values and principles;

- Need-led
- Change/outcome focussed
- Build capacity and develop assets
- Participatory and concerned with building partnerships
- Concerned with learning and continuous improvement

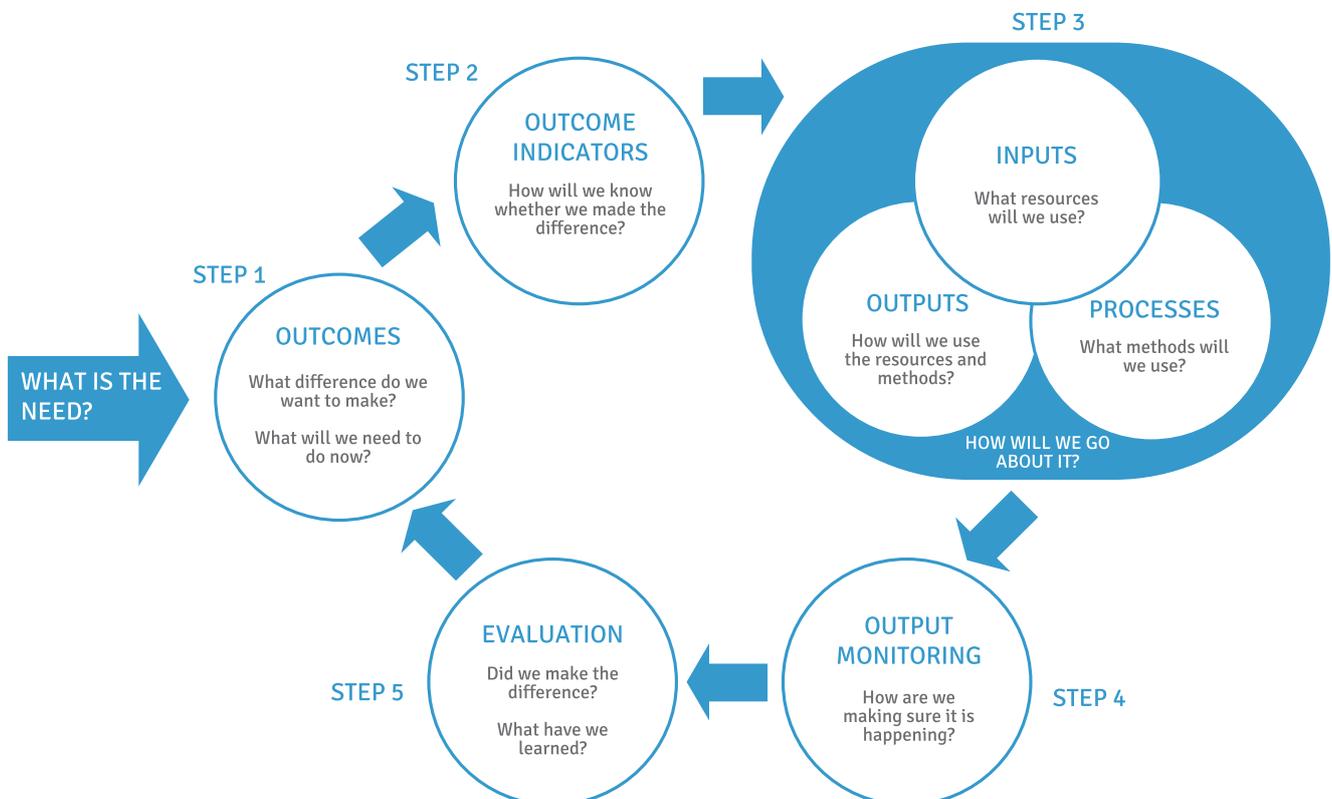


Figure 4. 'LEAP five-step planning and evaluation cycle' Sourced from: www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/205982/0054748.pdf

The following five step planning and evaluation cycle is used to implement the LEAP approach:

Step 1 – Once the needs and/or problems have been identified, the first step is to decide what needs to be changed. It involves answering the simple question: what difference should our actions make?

Step 2 – enables those involved in the engagement to agree outcome indicators which should reflect what is important to all those involved. Once outcomes have been agreed a baseline study should be conducted.

Step 3 – This stage involved working out a plan of action that will bring about the outcomes. Those involved should identify the resources to be used (inputs), the means and methods to be used (processes), and specifying the actions that each stakeholder will take (outputs).

Step 4 – enables those involved to address the manner in which actions will be monitored and the progress of the action plan.

Step 5 – is about evaluation, learning and planning ahead. Evaluation involves assessing progress to determine whether or not the outcomes were achieved. Using the indicators agreed in Step 2, evidence should have been collected throughout the process. This evidence is the basis for assessing how far the inputs, processes and outputs (Step 3) led to the achievement of outcomes. It is also important to consider how the roles played by the various stakeholders had an impact on what happened and how it happened.

Once the needs and/or problems have been identified, the first step is to decide what needs to be changed.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE METHOD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Ready-made framework which focusses on outcomes	LEAP focuses less so on the quality and process of engagement
LEAP can be applied to an existing community engagement initiative	All projects using LEAP will use a different set of indicators therefore resulting in difficulties in comparing
LEAP can be used to evaluate the degree to which the community achieves outcomes	LEAP can only be considered to be used successfully if a range of partners are involved in the process
Can lead to improvements in service quality and delivery	
It can be applied to simple or complex activities	
Provides an opportunity for those engaged to agree on outcomes indicators	
LEAP supports a partnership approach	
LEAP ensures a well-designed participatory approach to the planning and evaluation	

WHO SHOULD USE AND WHEN TO USE?

The following provides an example of how LEAP could be used to deliver outputs for a community:

A community organisation and stakeholders identified poor quality play provision as the need, and agreed that the outcome that they were looking for was the specific upgrading of particular local facilities. The indicators that this had been achieved included direct evidence of improvement of the facilities as well as greater expressed satisfaction among children and parents. In turn they identified further outcomes relating to child health and development.

LINKS AND REFERENCES TO USEFUL RESOURCES

LEAP: A Manual for Learning Evaluation and Planning in Community Learning and Development. Scottish Government. (2007) www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/05101807/0
(Developed by Scottish Community Development Centre, this manual revises the original “Learning, Evaluation and Planning” (LEAP) published in 1999, and sets LEAP in the context of current policy and practice. The manual is published by the Scottish Government.)

LEAP Step by Step. An introductory guide to the LEAP framework. Second edition. Alan Barr and Jane Dailly. (2006) www.scdc.org.uk/media/resources/documents/LEAP%20Step-By-Step.pdf

Plan and evaluate www.planandevaluate.com (2014)

5

Conclusion

Community engagement has become an essential component of policy design and implementation, project governance and delivery, monitoring and evaluation of a wide range of interventions. It is often an essential requirement of social and economic strategies and project delivery in the private as well as public sector. Funding and grant conditions are often dependent on an element of community engagement. The terminology and practices of community engagement have evolved over the years to encompass a variety of techniques and methods which are employed to deliver on a variety of outcomes. The application of effective community engagement has been proven to deliver positive benefits in a wide range of sectors, many good examples can be found in some of the Communities First Programmes, LEADER Groups and local Development Trust activities in recent years. However, badly delivered 'engagement' can lead to adverse effects, increased

opposition and local hostility, even 'turning off' the community to any future engagement attempts. Therefore, understanding how to undertake effective engagement is a crucial skill for practitioners in a wide range of fields. CREW's research has shown that there is a significant skills deficit in this area, despite it being viewed as a critically important activity for cross-professional practitioners.

As well as the inclusion of the guiding principles for good practice engagement, this guide has identified some key engagement methods that are recognised internationally as valuable approaches; it is not an exhaustive listing and does not necessarily signify endorsement of any particular application. Practitioners should always be aware of their ability to deliver and the intended outcome of the engagement process and apply the most suitable method accordingly.



Understanding how to undertake effective engagement is a crucial skill for practitioners in a wide range of fields.

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