

INVOLVING EVERYBODY

MEETING THE STANDARDS

Who needs to be involved?

A key principle of community engagement is to involve everyone who has a right or an interest in being involved.

A series of questions can help to identify potential participants such as

- Who is or will be affected by what you are doing or proposing to do?
- Are there people and organisations who have to be involved either by law or by virtue of the position they hold?
- Are there groups who have a special interest or expertise in the topic? e.g. shopkeepers in the local retail situation or conservationists who understand local environmental issues.
- Are there any groups for whom you need to make extra efforts? e.g. special needs groups.

Being Inclusive - supporting people to become involved

When planning a consultation, some thought needs to go into including people who may find it harder than others to participate. If we don't take into account the different needs that people have, we effectively exclude them from the consultation process.

Equality is not about treating everyone the same way, but about recognising that people have different needs and removing barriers so that all individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation can fully participate.

Individuals have specific needs. Rather than assume what may be required it is appropriate to ask people directly what assistance you can provide to enable them to participate. Not all consultations will require all of the measures outlined below, but they should all be given consideration prior to consultation.

Including People with Disabilities

- Ensuring that people with disabilities can be included in consultation usually only requires a little extra thought at the start of the process. The measures you put in place to ensure accessibility will have benefits for all.
- One of the main barriers when consulting people with physical disabilities is access. Choose your venue carefully to eliminate potential barriers to access.
- Many of the barriers which people with disabilities face are reinforced by small details of language and behaviour. These may seem insignificant, but they often re-affirm inaccurate assumptions and create a mental barrier between people. Disability groups have campaigned long and hard to make others aware of the importance of language, such as using the terms "People with disabilities".



- Some people prefer to use an advocate to put forward their point of view in a consultation exercise. Advocates spend a lot of time understanding their client's perspective and are trained to suspend their own opinions and speak on behalf of their client.

Including people who are blind or visually impaired

- In Britain nearly one million people are blind or visually impaired - almost one person in sixty.
- RNIB's research suggests that 60% of all blind and visually impaired people in the UK regard themselves as print readers, and can read print if it is large and clear enough. The single most effective step you can take is to ensure your printed material is size 16, and black printed on white.
- For significant numbers of blind and visually impaired people, print is not the answer. To meet this need, other formats are required – such as Braille or interviews. Flexibility is the key.
- Do not forget the option of telephone consultation. Telephone is also good for people who have difficulty reading.

Including people who are deaf or hard of hearing

- You will need to check with the individual what their needs are. Many people who are born deaf have BSL (British Sign Language) as their first language and prefer to use a trained BSL interpreter. Most people who have become deaf or who are hard of hearing cannot or do not use sign language.
- At a meeting consider the layout of the room. If everyone is facing in the same direction, this makes it very difficult for people who are hard of hearing or those who lip-read to follow contributions from the audience. You could consider an open or circular arrangement, and/or providing a loop induction system.
- Provide visual information if possible.
- Anyone speaking through an interpreter should look at their listeners and not the interpreter.

Including people whose first language is not English

- Some consultees will need interpreting or translating support in order to involve themselves fully in a consultation.
- Always check the interpreting needs with the individual. Some people who speak English as a second language can cope with everyday situations but not official meetings. It could be embarrassing for everyone if you book an interpreter for someone who doesn't need one. Equally, you need to be sure that you don't exclude anyone by ignoring their need for an interpreter.
- Always try to use trained interpreters rather than asking a family member, friend or a community representative to interpret. If they offer this option, then you could try to discuss the issues with them and come to a mutual agreement.
- Allow time for the interpreting – the meeting can take twice as long.

Social exclusion and lack of confidence

There are many types of poverty including financial, educational and digital, all of which can be barriers to involvement. It is important to choose your method of consultation carefully and ensure that participants are both comfortable with your method and confident about expressing their views in this way.

For individuals with limited resources, involvement in community engagement can represent a significant investment, for example bus fares to public meetings or childcare costs. Providing appropriate resources will enable participation but it is important to build trust with participants, to provide them a sense of empowerment so that individuals feel that their involvement is worthwhile and that their participation will make a difference.

Listen Hear – The right to be heard, provides further information and is available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1861347804.pdf>

