ENGAGEMENT METHODS, APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

APPENDIX 2 – PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
Appendix 3- Engagement methods, approaches and techniques

For most people working in the health and social care environment the common reasons for using an engagement method or technique is to obtain information, to consult on a preferred option or change, or to encourage participation. These techniques are found at the centre of the ‘spectrum of involvement’ (appendix *). The following describe a range of common engagement techniques that could be used to engage with people:

- **Opinion surveys / self-completed questionnaires**

  Questionnaires (qualitative and/or quantitative) are a structured set of questions on a form, which can be handed or mailed out to a number of people in order to collect statistical information about a particular topic.

  **Advantages**
  - A good method of obtaining reliable statistical information
  - Can be targeted accurately
  - Requires a low level of interaction
  - Relatively inexpensive and easy to conduct in large numbers
  - Standardised questions allow for benchmarking
  - Allows analysis of large samples quickly
  - You can track changes over time if you use the same questions
  - Good method of getting views of non-users if targeted

- **Story telling**

  Story telling is a person-centred approach that allows patients to tell their story or experience. The interview is recorded (video or audio) and a ‘mind map’ or experience map extracted. The patient is then asked to confirm what was heard. From this an action plan is drawn up and shared back with the person.

  **Advantages:**
  - Interviews are undertaken by other departments and should not be biased
  - Stories are recorded so that direct quotes can be taken
  - The service users’ agenda is followed and the interviewer listen to whatever they want to say

- **Shadowing**

  Shadowing allows for a new and different perspective to be gained of the service experience by accompanying a service user as they use the service. An agreed period of time is spent shadowing an individual and the lessons learnt are used to improve future services.
Advantages:
• Allows first-hand experience of a service from the service user’s perspective
• Allows a chance to see the culture and climate within which other individuals work
• Strongly supports understanding and rapport between service providers and service users

■ Experience diaries
Experience diaries are a useful way of encouraging and facilitating individual service user input into their experience of the service they receive. Service users follow a set of guide questions to keep a personal written record of their experience over time. People will sometimes give more detailed observations in writing than in face-to-face discussions.

Advantages:
• Allows people to reflect, explain, expand and suggest ideas and new solutions.
• Provides in-depth information of a qualitative nature, enables an understanding of different perspectives and provides a story of the person’s experience
• Can give an indication of how people feel about the way in which they are being treated
• Records events and feelings as and when they happen

■ Focus groups
Focus groups are an in-depth discussion of between six to twelve people, which is focused around a set of particular issues or topics. A trained specialist facilitates the discussion and the session's details are recorded, or noted by another person.

Advantages:
• Interaction between the participant’s makes people feel more comfortable and can lead to new ideas and perspectives
• Direct interaction with the group enables issues to be further probed and non-verbal responses can be noted
• Can be used to empower people by sharing views
• Effective place to explore and test new ideas

It is tempting to try to get a group to be ‘fully representative’ of your users or target audience. However, experience shows that the more similar the group is in terms of gender, age and social class the easier it is for them to communicate effectively. You may need to set up more than one group in order to investigate all relevant groups.

In order to run a successful focus group you need to have a level of understanding and knowledge about the subject matter to ensure you can respond to queries as they arise.
This requires a degree of confidence and good people management skills. Some people will find that managing a focus group is difficult and will therefore look for an experienced facilitator.

The facilitator will need to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and move the discussion along without imposing his or her own views onto the group. The facilitator also needs to probe and seek clarification of some responses.

■ Interviews

Interviews are a flexible method of gathering information about a particular issue or place. Interviews can be conducted face to face or by telephone. Interviews can be used to collect either quantitative or qualitative information. Three main formats can be used.

Structured using pre-set questions as prompts

• Semi-structured, which allows the interviewer to explore issues based on a loose set of questions
• Unstructured or in-depth interviews, where the interviewer is able to explore a theme without being restricted to a series of questions

1. Structured interviews

• Standardised format means that all the answers are comparable across your sample
• Good at collecting more factual information
• Not dependent on interviewer teasing-out answers, the questions have to be straight-forward and unambiguous

2. Semi-structured interviews

• This format is less rigid - it allows the skills of the interviewer to respond to the interview situation to follow relevant lines of enquiry
• Good at collecting more factual information

3. Unstructured / in-depth interviews

• Can get to the heart of the issue
• User led and so patient/user focused
• Can be empowering for those being interviewed.
• Interviewees perspectives are really valued
Interviewing people on a face-to-face basis can be an excellent way of gathering good qualitative information. Telephone interviews are usually only acceptable if pre-arranged with the participant. 'Cold Calling' should not be used. Face-to-face interviews are best used when:

- tackling a difficult or complicated subject matter that would benefit from more input from the interviewer
- when targeting a small sample group for in-depth views
- gathering specialist views such as from people whose first language is not English (through an interpreter); or
- exploring questions in more depth. Arranging and undertaking face-to-face interviews will therefore be time consuming

### Street interviews

Street Interviews uses the method known as Rapid Appraisal, a technique that was pioneered in third world countries by agencies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO often has to go into areas of high need and quickly assess the situation in order to provide a rapid response. They would approach community leaders, village elders, teachers, doctors etc. and members of the community where they gather.

This technique has been used in the West, predominantly in regeneration areas where quick responses are often needed.

**Stage one** - Workers will go into a small geographical area (such as an estate, town, village) and speak to community leaders, workers, key people such as faith leaders and so on asking people what the main issues are facing the area or concentrating on a particular subject (for example, facilities, young people, activities etc.). From this, a picture will start to emerge about the area, the needs and some solutions.

**Stage two** - use the key issues that have emerged to put together a more structured survey. Take these questions out onto the street and to places where people in the community already meet – for example, school gates at end of school time, community centre, church or other faith meetings such as coffee mornings, pensioners groups or sheltered accommodation, post office queues, bus stops, hairdressers. Anywhere people may gather is a good location. Remember if you are going onto someone’s premises, (for example, the post office or library) always ask permission to be there.

It is a good idea to have formal identification on you with your photograph and contact details so that people can check up on you if needed.

Approaching people - first make sure your I. D. is showing, and approach people by saying who you and your organisation are and emphasise that you are not selling anything! Show people your survey; if you have kept it short then this may not put them off answering your questions. Explain what will happen to their views and where the information is going. Ask if people want to receive feedback about the survey, if they do take their name and address on a separate sheet from their responses (to ensure confidentiality).
Discovery interviews

This interview technique used by health or social services tries to discover people’s experiences of a service, an intervention or a life-event. This technique is led by the client rather than interviewer led – the interviewer may have some key prompts to cover in the interview but essentially the client leads the conversation and discusses issues or concerns from their own perspective.

The technique can be used in several different ways – for instance

• To follow-up on people after a long term intervention, for example surgery or in-patient treatment. The interview will gather information from the patient’s perspective about their experience, what went well, what could have made their stay better, any issues or problems that arose, the patient’s views of how these could have been overcome

• To follow-up relatives or carers after a family member has been into hospital or care home, uses the same approach as above, but from the relative or carer’s perspective

• To follow-up after a complaint has been made – this ensures that the person’s concerns have been dealt with appropriately and also helps ensure a user-friendly service

• To get the views of people with dementia, either in their own home or in a care setting. The discovery interview technique allows people to explore things in their own time, at their own pace and without the restraints of a structured questionnaire

Discovery Interviews could be used in any setting where qualitative views are sought – for example, the experience of carers seeking advice on benefits.

Public meetings

A meeting for which there has been an open invitation. There may be a set agenda or the discussion may focus on issues raised at the meeting. In the past, public meetings have tended to be the ‘default position’ for formal consultation activities. However, unless conducted carefully they can be unproductive and produce unsatisfactory results.

Advantages:

• Opportunity for a wide range of people to comment or raise issues and, importantly, directly challenge issues

• Opportunity for the service or organisation to put their side of the story

• Offers opportunity for public to challenge issues directly which increases accountability

• Provides an indicator of problem areas and local issues that may not have emerged previously. May provide a good indicator of where to focus attention in the future

• The attendance at a public meeting often is an indicator of how strongly the community feel on a topic
Open space

Open space is a meeting framework that allows large groups to have self-directed, but structured discussions around a particular theme. The start of the meeting has no agenda but the group works together to shape the discussion's format according to the knowledge, experience and energy of those in the room.

Open space (sometimes called open space technology) is a technique developed by Harrison Owen in the mid-1980s. The technique is based upon anthropological evidence that meeting in a circle is the most productive for encouraging honest and frank discussion. The open space refers to the space in the centre of the circle.

Advantages:

• Effective at bringing together diverse groups with potentially complex and conflicting points of view about a topic
• Effective at dealing with large groups
• Good at dealing with situations where people are willing to admit they don't know the answer but think they might generate something useful by working together, more creatively

World café

World café is a different kind of meeting format designed to bring people together in an informal setting to have conversations about questions that matter. The underpinning assumption is that people feel more comfortable and creative in a less formal environment and, as its name suggests, this engagement technique recreates a café environment and behaviours to stimulate conversations.

Café conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discovering new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community.

As a process, world café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people’s capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims

Advantages:

• Requires minimal preparation except for ensuring you get the right stakeholder balance in the room
• Connects people with diverse styles and perspectives
• Encourages contributions from everyone because of the naturalistic setting
• Useful for generating debate and new ideas about 'messy' problems

E-engagement

E-engagement uses information technology (IT) to facilitate the process of engagement. This might be in the form of a focus group chat room, a blog, an on-line survey or for the delivery of information.
Advantages:
• At its simplest this can be a quick and cheap way of obtaining views
• If the groups you are seeking to consult are IT literate, it is a very flexible way of delivering information and letting people participate.
• As long as you have IT access, it doesn’t matter where or when you are able to respond during a consultation period
• It is possible to use alternative formats (for example language, audio, graphics) to engage with seldom heard groups, including people with disabilities, young people and people who work during the day
• The lack of face to face contact might make it an appropriate technique to deal with sensitive issues

**Arts-based engagement**

Arts-based engagement refers to a cluster of techniques using drama, music, dance and performance, creative writing, poetry and storytelling, music and the visual arts (drawing, painting, collage, photography, video and three-dimensional arts), as a vehicle for engaging people about an issue.

Advantages:
• Using creative processes to engage about issues can lead to solutions that are more creative.
• Arts-based engagement can succeed in reaching traditionally seldom heard groups, including those who have limited language skills
• The process and products are often high profile and media friendly
• The process itself can stimulate communities and get people from different backgrounds and ages working together towards common purpose
• The process can also deliver individual benefits such as skills development, confidence-building, fun, personal expression and widening horizons

**Future Search**

Future search is a highly structured planning meeting that ideally lasts for approximately three days. The aim is to attempt to get the ‘whole system’ in the room. The event focuses on the future and common ground rather than conflicts and problems and stresses the importance and validity of different kinds of knowledge that are brought by stakeholders.

Future search is a planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. The meeting is task-focused and brings together 60 to 80 people in one room or hundreds in parallel rooms across three days. People tell stories about their past, present and desired future. Through dialogue they discover their common ground. Only then do they make concrete action plans.
Advantages:

• The group begins to understand the perspectives of others by hearing what the group thinks and feels about the issue

• If the stakeholder balance is managed correctly a rich mixture of information is brought to bear on the issues being discussed

• A future search leaves a legacy after the event because it encourages self-management and personal responsibility for action during and after the conference

Deliberative mapping

Deliberative Mapping involves both specialists and members of the public. It combines varied approaches to assess how participants rate different policy options against a set of defined criteria.

The citizen and expert participants are divided into panels (often according to gender and socio-economic background to ensure that people are comfortable voicing their views).

The members of the public and the experts consider the issue both separately from one another and at a joint workshop. This allows both groups to learn from each other without the experts dominating. The emphasis of the process is not on integrating expert and public voices, but understanding the different perspectives each offer to a policy process.

The groups themselves determine which criteria they will use to score the options against, thereby limiting any structural bias. Deliberative Mapping incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods and participants work both individually and as a group.

A sample of the public (around 40 people) from varied backgrounds are recruited onto citizens’ panels.

The experts (around 20) are selected to reflect the full spectrum of specialist knowledge in an area

Deliberative mapping can deliver greater legitimacy for decisions, information about public preferences towards policy option and information on the different aspects of an issue and the considerations around them.

Advantages:

• Specialists contribute to the process without dominating

• Combination of different approaches creates a deep and comprehensible understanding of public priorities

• Assists in mapping out the range of values and priorities held by public and ‘expert’ individuals towards a particular controversy or series of policy options

• Creates a good understanding of which options different groups in general would prefer if they had the chance to learn more about the issue
Events

Events are usually one-off occasions that can either be directly related to the issue being explored in consultation (for example a men's health awareness day) or used to build community capacity (for example a family fun day).

Advantages:

• Events can be flexible different venues, different times etc.
• Provides good ad-hoc feedback suggestions and comments
• An open day can give an opportunity for users to become familiar with your premises and services
• Good opportunity to contact users and potential users

Open day or listening events

Should be a relatively informal occasion where local people or service users have the chance to meet staff and volunteers.

Format

• Set up an exhibition of your project, scheme or ideas in a public place (could be a church hall, community centre, library, or in a shopping area) for a whole day
• Have people at the stall who are there to engage with local people about the subject, these are your ‘listeners’. These can be staff, local people, ‘experts’ etc.
• Have a system of recording people’s comments, suggestions or complaints so that this can be analysed at the end of the event
• Think about giving an incentive for participation – for example, a free draw for a prize (ask local stores for gifts), free balloon for children.
• If you are thinking of having an open day it is probably best to hold this on your own premises so users and potential users can see your services for themselves
• For a listening day it will be more appropriate to choose an accessible venue that lots of people already use or close to where people are

Practicalities:

• Publicise the event well to get good attendance. Use organised groups in the community, community and voluntary leaders, key workers and so on. Posters and flyers can help
• If you want to attract a particular group you will need to target them. The personal touch is often best and helps to develop ongoing relationships
• You will probably need to set up stands, equipment and so on beforehand so give yourselves plenty of time
• Think about refreshments (for participants and staff/volunteers)
• Make sure health and safety figures in your planning early on - at the very least you need to think about insurance, risk assessment and an evacuation plan
• Make sure your venue is fully accessible and appropriate
• Do not expect a representative sample of views, those attending will be largely self-selecting or have special interests

■ Citizen / Community panels

Citizens / Community panels are a standing pool of people recruited for their views on an ongoing basis. It can be used to build a picture of local people’s views of services, strategies and issues.

A representative selection of local people is recruited through random selection and sizes can vary from 300 to 3500 people depending on the size of local population. Surveys are sent out on a regular basis, often four times a year and usually cover a range of subjects.

Advantages:
• Adds credibility to any consultation process
• Helps you concentrate on issues from a user perspective
• Good way to ask larger numbers of people about a range of issues
• Can track changes in views over time as it creates ongoing dialogue with users
• Panel can (and should) reflect the whole population
• Can be used to examine any differences between people living in different areas
• Can be a useful sounding board on which to test-out ideas and plans
• Can give feedback relatively quickly

■ Service user panels/reference groups

A service user panel is made up of a small group of service users along with one or two senior managers (who can affect change and are decision makers). Where a focus group usually only meets once, a user panel will meet on a regular basis over a longer period.

Advantages:
• A user panel can act as an ‘early warning’ system for problems or issues that may arise and help form a collective view of possible solutions.
• User panels draw on the expertise of service users to help develop services
• User panels can also be used to test out plans or changes to services before they go live

■ Participatory appraisal

Participatory Appraisal (PA) is an approach to learning about communities that places equal value on the knowledge and experience of local people and their capacity to come up with solutions to problems affecting them.

PA is a growing collection of methods, tools and techniques for interacting with people in a way that enables everyone to share and contribute their skills and experience and knowledge of life.
This creative learning process involves a team of local people, people from local groups, services and organisations all with different backgrounds and experience working together.

PA usually uses a combination of methods to collect information, for example street interviews alongside informal focus groups, organised events and questionnaires. It rarely relies on one method of consultation.

An essential part of PA research is the verification process, which enables participants to verify and extend upon the initial findings. Verification not only seeks to inform local people about any proposals, it also helps validate findings by ensuring triangulation (cross checking) of the information gathered between all groups involved.

**Advantages:**

- The ethos underlying PA leads to shared ownership of research projects
- It encourages community based analysis of problems
- The method is orientated towards community action
- It can lead to community involvement in the decision making processes
- It can build community capacity in an area because of the training that this method requires and so develops longer-term sustainability
Useful resources and contacts

Vibrant Communities East Ayrshire Council

Vibrant Communities are focused on empowering local people to have their say in how things are run and supporting communities to play a part in managing local facilities and services.

The Vibrant Communities team delivers a range of services focused on developing sustainable communities and reducing inequalities, by providing prevention and early intervention.


Vibrant Communities
Telephone: 01563 576705
Telephone alt: 01563 578104
Email: vibrantcommunities@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/eavibrantcommunities

Third Sector Interface- CVO (East Ayrshire)

CVO is a core partner with Volunteer Centre in the Third Sector Interface in East Ayrshire, together the organisations support the growth of a diverse third sector, from small voluntary groups to large social enterprises. There are a range of training, capacity building and development support available.

http://www.cvoea.co.uk/

Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)

SCDC are a company and registered charity that supports best practice in community development. SCDC provide training and consultancy support in all aspects of community development to all organisations and partnerships that work in and with communities. SCDC work across sectors and with a wide range of professions to support community engagement and community capacity building in any context and at strategic and practice level.

SCDC was the delivery organisation for the National Standards for Community Engagement Support Programme 2005/2007. A copy can be downloaded from SCDC website at this link http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/

VOiCE is planning and recording software that assists individuals, organisations and partnerships to design and deliver effective community engagement. VOiCE is published by the Scottish Government as part of its support for implementation of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

http://www.scdc.org.uk/
Scottish Health Council

The Scottish Health Council promotes Patient Focus and Public Involvement in the NHS in Scotland. A key aspect of our role is to support NHS Boards and monitor how they carry out their statutory duty to involve patients and the public in the planning and delivery of NHS services.

The Scottish Health Council has several core functions:

- Community Engagement and Improvement Support – providing proactive and tailored support for NHS Boards
- Participation Review – reviewing and evaluating NHS Boards’ approaches to involvement through the Participation Standard
- Service Change – supporting NHS Boards to meet the requirement to involve people when planning or changing local services
- Participation Network – a centre for the exchange of knowledge, support, development and ideas.

There are a number of resources available including the Participation Toolkit which can be accessed at the link below;


http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/home.aspx