Engagement Toolkit

Lasted Updated September 2016

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Introduction

Shropshire Council recognises the need for **customers, stakeholders and businesses** to have greater opportunities and involvement in the democratic process and to provide an environment that **supports and encourages** social responsibility and action. Overall, we plan to develop a **'together we can'** attitude, supporting collective social action, with our Councillors as **active facilitators and enablers**, best placed to listen to, and advocate on behalf of, those harder to reach in their communities.

Engagement is broader and deeper than traditional consultation. It's about how we **communicate with, involve, listen to, respond to and understand local people and stakeholders**. How we help people by developing ongoing relationships with them to become active citizens who can discuss and influence the things that matter most to them.

The benefits of engagement include:

- ✓ **Well informed decisions** - different forms of knowledge – decisions based on well-rounded views
- ✓ **Lasting change** - when those closely connected to a project decide positive changes together they become motivated to ensure that the project delivers benefits that last
- ✓ **Ownership** - the process generates buy in and active support for implementation
- ✓ **Avoiding or managing conflicts** - by engaging the local community at an early stage, it is possible to identify potential or actual conflict and actively work towards resolution
- ✓ **Reduced costs** - running participation processes does cost money but over the longer term is can lead to speedier, smoother and more economical implementation
- ✓ **Changed relationship** - a good engagement process can build increased understanding and trust amongst participants
- ✓ **Improved reputation** -actively demonstrates the willingness to listen and make changes as a result, builds credibility and trust and helps establish a positive reputation
- ✓ **Learning** - the engagement process itself enables the different parties to learn about a wide range of things from financial and organisational requirements, to residents' values and perceptions

This Toolkit is supported by the **Feedback & Insight Team** within the Commissioning Support Unit of Shropshire Council. For information and advice with your engagement activity, please contact the team at:

email: commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk
phone: 01743 258519
post: Feedback & Insight Team, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY3 2ND

The **Feedback & Insight Team** also can provide an up-to-date list of consultation groups and stakeholders so you have good contact information when engaging with people and communities. Contact the Team to add or update your group to the list.

How to use this Toolkit

This Toolkit is designed as a **practical guide** to help you to deliver effective and meaningful engagement. It is easy-to-follow and is based around a 10-stage engagement flow chart that you can dip in and out of to help you plan and undertake your engagement.

If you think that there is anything we can do to improve the Toolkit, please let us know, **we value your feedback**.

Engagement 10-stage flow chart

1. Identify why you are engaging, what you need to know and what participants are able to influence.

2. Identify who you need to engage with and the needs that your participants may have.

3. Check what information already exists, that your activity doesn't duplicate or conflict with any other and if you can link up in partnership with others.

4. Identify the most appropriate method of engagement and your resources. Project plan the engagement activity and develop your project timetable.

5. Consider all relevant health and safety, safeguarding, data protection, equality and diversity, legal and ethical issues.

6. Produce clear and accessible information about your engagement activity and promote the engagement opportunities to your target audience.

7. Deliver your engagement activity in accordance with your project plan and timetable.

8. Analyse the feedback from your engagement activity, produce a report of the findings.

9. Feedback to and thank participants.

10. Evaluate your engagement process and identify the changes that it has made.

Stage 1: Identify why you are engaging, what you need to know and what participants are able to influence

Engagement is the process of involving people in decisions that affect them. You must have a clear, realistic and valid reason for your engagement activity.

It is important to let people know how much influence they'll have within an engagement process/activity. The results of engagement activities must always feed into the decision making processes.

If a decision has already been made, then engagement is inappropriate and your resources should be used to inform those affected or interested in the decision, the reasons behind it and the implications for them.

Things to consider

- ✓ What is the main purpose of the engagement activity, what do you want to achieve?
- ✓ What do you need or want to know from people?
- ✓ Decide why you are engaging people; do you want to build up a picture of behaviours, needs, service aspirations or satisfaction?

> **Tip!**
> Use the Engagement Project Plan to help document your work.

- ✓ Will your activity lead to improved services or strengthened communities?
- ✓ Are there real opportunities for local people to influence decisions?
- ✓ Is there research to suggest that the engagement activity is needed?
- ✓ Is it appropriate to involve customers in planning and/or delivering the activity?

Things to do

- ✓ Ask colleagues involved in the work for their views and ensure that managers express clear views about their expectations.
- ✓ Record the aims and objectives of your engagement activity in the Engagement Project Plan.
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice, information or support on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 2: Identify who you need to engage with and the needs that your participants may have

Engaging local people has many benefits; when people are engaged they are more likely to feel positive about local services, where they live and the communities they live in.

You need to speak to people who have a view on all or some of the questions that you have. If you will not be able to speak to everyone, try to make sure that the number of people you speak to is relative to the number of, and types (e.g. age, gender, working status, ethnicity) of, people who will be affected by the issue.

Your engagement activity should be fair, transparent and inclusive.

Things to consider

- ✓ Who do you want and need to talk to?
- ✓ The needs of your participants
- ✓ The diversity of Shropshire's communities
- ✓ The Equality Act 2010
- ✓ Completing an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)
- ✓ How are you going to monitor information regarding the 'make up' of the community that you are involved?

Tip!
Find out more about the Equality Act and ESIIAs online.

Things to Do

- ✓ As well as Shropshire Council Councillors, contact town and parish councils that may have an interest in your engagement activity. Agree with them how they wish to be involved and/or informed.
- ✓ Record who your target audience is and how you will reach them in the Engagement Project Plan
- ✓ Make your engagement accessible to all, including making special arrangements for those with special needs.
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 3: Check what information already exists, that your activity doesn't duplicate or conflict with any other and if you can link up in partnership with others.

Engagement is resource-intensive so working in partnership will help to share the costs, reduce duplication and ensure that more people benefit from the engagement process.

Undertaking consultation and engagement activities when the information that you require already exists is an obvious waste of time and resources for everyone.

Things to consider

- ✓ Is the information already available from previous research/consultation activities or any other community intelligence?
- ✓ Can desk-top research give you some information about similar studies elsewhere?
- ✓ Are there any planned engagement activities or surveys taking place that could provide you with information?
- ✓ Could you deliver your engagement activity alongside another service area or a partner organisation?

Things to do

- ✓ Check with the services that you work with to see what consultation information and engagement feedback already exists or is planned.
- ✓ Check the Shropshire Council online consultation portal to see if anything similar has been done or is planned.
- ✓ Check with the **Feedback & Insight Team** to see if any previous relevant information has been gathered, or if any other relevant engagement activities are planned. Contact the team on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 4: Identify the most appropriate method of engagement and your resources. Project plan the engagement activity and develop your project timetable.

There are many methods that can be used to engage people. Ideally, a number of different engagement methods should be used providing a range of opportunities for people to have their say or get involved.

The final decision about which methods to use will depend on your thinking at Stages 1 and 2 in relation to the purpose of your engagement activity and the needs of your target audience.

You will need to plan your engagement activity in detail, including analysis and final feedback before any field work is undertaken.

A well-planned approach will increase the chances of you delivering the activity successfully and gleaning useful and timely input from the people involved.

Things to consider

Methods

- ✓ Which methods are fit-for-purpose? At the end of the activity, will you have the information that you need, what kind of information do you want to collect?
- ✓ Will your method be acceptable and suitable to your participants? Do you need to ask representatives of your target audience to find out?
- ✓ Should you pilot the method(s) and/or questions before 'going live'?

> **Tip!**
> Check out the methods list in Appendix E for pros and cons.

Resources

- ✓ What is the true cost of your engagement activity?
- ✓ What resources do you have available and what is your budget?
- ✓ Are the resources required for your chosen method available?
- ✓ Will you or a member of your team deliver the engagement activity or will you ask for support from another service. For example officers/advocates who work with adults with learning disabilities may be the best people to support you to engage with this group.
- ✓ Can the person delivering the engagement activity:
    - Provide participants with the information, advice and support that they need to develop their confidence, skills and knowledge?

- Provide practical support to individuals particularly those from vulnerable or seldom heard groups helping them to overcome any barriers that they may have to participation and engagement?
- Deliver high quality activities?
- Be given the time to deliver it thoroughly?

Engagement Plan (see Appendix A)

- ✓ Remember that your plan should be proportionate to the likely impact of the issue and the numbers of people affected.

Things to do
Methods ✓ Select method(s), ensuring that what you have selected is appropriate for your target audience and the reason why you are involving them. Resources ✓ Develop costs for the activity and identify resources. ✓ Ensure that you have the resources to involve everyone that you have identified. ✓ Include sufficient resources and time to properly feedback and evaluate your project. Project Plan ✓ Develop your engagement project plan (including information from all sections of the toolkit) and send it to the Feedback & Insight Team for a sense check. ✓ Develop a timetable for the activities with clear and realistic deadlines for responses. If you have a fixed ‘end’ date you will need to work backwards from then. ✓ Speak to the council’s communications team about your activity and develop a communication plan. ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice, information or support on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 5: Consider health and safety, safeguarding, data protection, equality and diversity, legal and ethical issues.

In order to ensure high standards, safeguards and statutory requirements, it is important that any engagement activity is undertaken in line with other government and organisational policies, procedures and standards.

Remember, at all times you are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all participants and for maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Things to consider

Child and vulnerable adult protection issues.

- ✓ Are your participants likely to disclose 'sensitive' information about themselves or others during your activity, how will you support them or pass on their concerns?
- ✓ How are you going to collate and store participants' personal information?
- ✓ Do you need to share participants' personal details with others?
- ✓ Will the information that participants give you be presented anonymously? Be careful about presenting information that can identify individuals.
- ✓ Are your participants entitled to any reimbursements, payments or incentives?
- ✓ When working with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults be clear what additional safeguards may be required (e.g. informed consent, DBS checks etc).

Tip!
Check out the Market Research Society guidelines for research with young people.

Things to do

- ✓ Check your health and safety policies if you are organising a public event.
- ✓ Check your child and vulnerable adult protection policies and discuss your engagement activity with your safeguarding lead.
- ✓ Discuss the consultation with your senior information standards officer and ensure you are meeting data protection standards.
- ✓ Agree with your participants the circumstances (if any) under which their personal details can be shared and complete consent forms where needed.
- ✓ Ensure that participants know who to contact if they would like further information.
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Section 6: Produce clear and accessible information about the engagement activity and promote the engagement opportunities to your target audience.

Providing clear, concise and accessible information to participants can be critical to their understanding of the issues and therefore their ability to comment and be engaged in an informed way.

Jargon-free information improves access and enhances understanding for everyone.

Participants need to understand why they are being engaged, what they can influence and how they can get involved.

Things to consider

Information

- ✓ What background information do you need to give to participants to allow them to be involved or to give an informed opinion or view?
- ✓ Do you need or want to involve your participants in a pre-engagement session to make them aware of the issue?
- ✓ What are the specific needs of the people that you are involving in relation to receiving information e.g. large print, translation, audio information?

Promotion

- ✓ How you will promote your engagement activity? Who can help you?
- ✓ Can you offer any incentives to participants?

Things to do

- ✓ Produce clear, concise and jargon-free information in plain language and make it available in alternative formats if necessary.
- ✓ Provide information about the benefits of taking part and any incentives that you are offering.
- ✓ Get advice from the communications team on producing a communication plan and then follow the actions in it.
- ✓ Brief local advocates / representatives if appropriate. Local Councillors appreciate early involvement.
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice, information or support on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 7: Deliver your engagement activity in accordance with your project plan and timetable.

Carrying out your engagement activity should be straight forward if you have completed all the stages in this toolkit.

Good luck!

Things to do
✓ Check your Engagement Project Plan ✓ Deliver your engagement activity in accordance with your project plan and timetable ✓ Monitor your engagement regularly to ensure that things are on track. ✓ If things are not working to plan, take the contingency actions that you have identified or decide what else you need to do. ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 8: Analyse the feedback from your engagement activity

Analyse the feedback received from the engagement activity as per your project plan.

Things to consider

Analysis

- ✓ What do the responses look like overall?
- ✓ What are the views of specific groups i.e. users/non users, rural/urban, older and younger people, gender, disability?
- ✓ What conclusions/recommendations can be reached about key messages/issues?
- ✓ Consider obtaining an independent/impartial view to check that the responses are being fairly interpreted

Report Writing

- ✓ Check what information the decision-makers need in the report.
- ✓ Data Protection Act – ensure anonymity and confidentiality – get advice from your Information Governance Officer.
- ✓ You may need to produce a summary of your report specifically for the community and participants.

Things to do
Analysis ✓ Collate the responses from the activity to accordance with the Data Protection Act ✓ Analyse the results. Report Writing ✓ Avoid vague recommendations; be specific about what can be influenced or what needs to change. ✓ Include a summary of who responded, including numbers of respondents. ✓ Once you have submitted your report, work with the decision makers until an action plan is fully developed. ✓ Record your plans for analysing feedback and reporting, including any resource gaps and support you will need, in the Engagement Project Plan ✓ Email your report to the **Feedback & Insight Team** at commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 9: Feedback to and thank participants

Feedback to participants is critical in maintaining public confidence. Some participants will appreciate brief notes but others may wish to have more detailed information.

It is crucial that everyone involved in the engagement activity and the general public are fully informed about what happened to the results of their engagement, and the impact that they had.

It is important to feedback whatever the result, even if nothing happens. If people feel listened to or understand why something has not/could not happen they will be more likely to take part in future engagement.

Feedback methods and thank you options

Different **feedback methods** will be suitable for different audiences.

Please remember to contact the communications team to discuss any media releases.

- Use the local media e.g. Shropshire Star, Shrewsbury Chronicle, Bridgnorth Journal, North Shropshire Chronicle and local radio/television.
- Use existing community resources e.g. existing community newsletters.
- Produce summary feedback posters or literature to send to participants and to display in community venues.
- Organise a fun day where people can take part in activities and gain feedback or join in with an event that is already pre-arranged.
- Run a feedback event that involves people in deciding how to move forward as a result of the engagement activity/consultation.
- Verbal presentations to groups, post feedback on the council's website, provide copies of your final report, or have a feedback stand at community events and in community centres.

Thank you options

- Provide a certificate or record of achievement for participants
- Send out individual thank you letters.
- Acknowledge participants in your final report
- Give prizes, gifts or vouchers.

Things to consider

✓ Public sector organisations are often bad at feeding back to participants.

✓ Different feedback and thank-you methods will be suitable for different audiences.

✓ What will you feedback?

- ✓ Who will you feedback to and what are their needs?
- ✓ How and when will you feedback? Ensure that what you provide anticipates participants' interests and provides sufficient information.
- ✓ Are there any local/regional or national award ceremonies that your participants could be nominated for?
- ✓ Participants and members of the community should be given the right to challenge the results of any consultation/engagement activity and the right to challenge decisions made as a result of information gleaned.

Things to do

- ✓ Thank participants
- ✓ Tailor your feedback to participants and to the people who will be affected by the results of the consultation/activity. Keep it simple and include details of how to obtain more detailed information if desired.
- ✓ Be clear and specific about what you found out and how the feedback has influenced policies and decisions.
- ✓ Keep feeding back on the progress of any improvements.
- ✓ Record how you intend to provide feedback in the Engagement Project Plan
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** if you require additional advice on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Stage 10: Evaluate your engagement process and the changes that it has made.

Evaluating your engagement activity is a vital part of the process, it should ensure continuous improvement in your engagement practice.

As with all elements of engagement, your participants can be fully involved by giving their views on the process and agreeing the lessons to be learnt.

Things to consider

- ✓ Who needs to evaluate your activity? Think about all of the people who have participated.
- ✓ How will you evaluate your activity?
- ✓ Have your original objectives been met?
- ✓ Was your project plan and timetable useful?
- ✓ What would you change about the activity or process?
- ✓ Were you able to reach a good cross section of your intended audience? If not, what were the barriers?
- ✓ What has changed as a result of your engagement activity?
- ✓ Could your engagement activity or process be shared as an example of good practice?
- ✓ Was this Engagement Toolkit useful?

Things to do

- ✓ Build evaluation questions into your engagement method.
- ✓ Complete a mini evaluation report for yourself to help you to reflect on and learn the lessons from your activity.
- ✓ Record how you will evaluate your engagement activity in the Engagement Project Plan
- ✓ Complete and submit the 'So What's Changed' form.
- ✓ Complete and submit the Engagement Toolkit evaluation form.
- ✓ Contact the **Feedback & Insight Team** on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk to share your activity or process as an example of good practice.

Engagement Toolkit Evaluation Form

We hope that the Toolkit has been helpful in supporting your engagement activities.

The **Feedback & Insight Team** would like to learn from your experience of using the Toolkit and would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to fill out this short evaluation and email it to commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk Thank you.

Date:

Your details: (optional)

Name:

Organisation/Service area:

Contact details:

Did you find the toolkit?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Useful and relevant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Easy to navigate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please write any comments or suggestions for improvement

Appendix A: Engagement Project Plan

Service area/team:

Engagement theme/title:

Contact details of person leading the activity

Name	Position	Phone number	Email

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Purpose

Why are you engaging, what key questions will you be asking and what can participants influence?

Timescales

When will your engagement activity begin and end?

Participants

Who are you engaging, which geographical areas or particular groups of people are being targeted and how many people will you be involving?

Methods

Which engagement method(s) are you intending to use?

Information and promotion

What information are you providing for participants and how are you publicising your engagement activity? Who can help support you (locally elected members, partners, community leads)

Analysis

How will you analyse the feedback from your activity? Do different communities (demographic or geographic) have different views?

Feedback

How will you feedback to participants?

Evaluation

How will you evaluate your engagement activity?

In order to populate the engagement/consultation library please remember to email this document to the **Feedback & Insight Team** at commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Appendix B: Engagement 'So What's Changed?' Log

Service area/team:

Engagement theme/title:

Contact details of person leading the activity

name	position	location	phone number	email

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Who was involved in your activity?
What was delivered?
What difference did the findings of the consultation make to service delivery or planning?

Please remember to email this document to the **Feedback & Insight Team** at commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk for their records.

Appendix C: Our commitment and standards for engagement

By fulfilling our Commitment and working to our Standards we will see real progress towards improving communication and engagement in Shropshire.

Council Staff and Councillors (the Council) commit to:

- ensuring all communication and engagement activity has clarity of purpose, and is clear about what local people are able to influence.
- integrity in all communication and engagement activities, ensuring a consistent, open and honest dialogue, and that information is accurate, timely and supports the Council’s brand.
- ensuring communication and engagement is accessible and tailored to individuals and communities’ needs, and where appropriate targets specific audiences.
- planning communication and engagement activity carefully, ensuring a balance in relation to what that activity seeks to achieve and the resources available and ensuring it supports the delivery of the Council’s priorities.
- improving co-ordination between all services and with partners, to ensure more effective planning and implementation of communication and engagement activities which takes into account local knowledge and intelligence and avoids duplication.
- treating participants with respect and ensuring the safety and well being of participants by taking account of existing safeguarding frameworks, confidentiality and data protection guidelines - get advice from your Information Governance Officer.
- providing individuals and communities with the information, advice and support they need to develop their confidence, skills, knowledge and ability to participate in engagement activities.
- working to ensure that staff responsible for communication and delivering engagement activities have the skills and capacity to deliver high quality activities, that are creative and build upon best practice
- using the results of engagement activities to inform our policies, plans and services
- providing feedback to local people about the engagement activity and how the community’s input contributed to the decision making process.
- monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of communication and engagement activities and using this information to inform our future activity.

Appendix D: Engagement methods

There is a wide range of potential tools which can be used for deeper engagement but, cost-effectively, surveys, focus groups and workshops are the most valuable.

A selection of methods are outlined below but more can easily be found online by.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Postal surveys	• Easy to administer and analyse. • If designed and administered correctly results should be statistically robust. • Results are easy to report back. Can compare the results with previous surveys. • Quick way of consulting and getting swift results. • Can be used to target groups that do not often take part in consultations. • Enables consultation with large numbers of people.	• Can only gather a small amount of information. • Potential low response rates. • Limited length and complexity of questions. • Easy to misinterpret questions. • Cannot control who answers the questions. • People with low literacy skills may find it difficult to respond. • Does not allow you to enter into a two way conversation with respondents. • Sampling can be complex. • Is not useful in addressing issues about which respondents are not well informed. • Can be a time consuming process (including postal times, fieldwork, data inputting). • May be high cost due to printing, stationery and postage fees.
Online surveys	• Large numbers of people can be contacted at low cost. • Relatively easy to conduct in-house. • Response timescales are quicker. • No postal, stationery or inputting costs.	• Not everyone has access to the internet • People can find on line forms daunting. • Little control over who fills out the survey. • Difficult to control multiple responses • Must publicise the survey widely.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Telephone surveys	• Relatively easy and quick to conduct in-house. • More complex issues can be tackled. • Easy to reschedule interviews to more convenient times.	• Often high refusal rates and cold calling can annoy respondents. • Moderately expensive due to staff hours and cost of calls.
Face-to-face surveys	• Longer and more flexible than questionnaires. • Questions can be more probing and complex. • More sensitive or difficult subjects can be explored. • Can ensure that you interview the right person. • Can use visual aids. • High response rates. • Better quality data.	• Expensive due to staff hours. • Time consuming, labour intensive. • May require trained interviewers. • Lengthy time scales for completing and analysing the interviews.
Focus groups Small groups of people are brought together for a one to one and a half hour session to explore, discuss and give their views on specific topics under the guidance of a facilitator.	• Specific interest groups can be targeted. • Some people feel more confident in groups and discussion can stimulate thinking and spark ideas. • Good for getting a better understanding of people's attitudes, behaviours, and experiences.	• May need an experienced facilitator to keep the conversation flowing, to cover all issues in the time available, and to try to involve all members of the group. • Analysis of the information can be complex and time consuming. • More dominant and vocal members of the group may inhibit the participation of others.
Workshops Larger groups of people are brought together to discuss issues of shared concern, and brain storm ideas for action, typically over a half or full day. The workshop has three main stages, specialist presentations, round table discussions and reporting back from groups.	• More fruitful in getting feedback than some other methods. • Can identify issues and actions which may not have been thought of. • Mixing groups of people can help each to better understand others' points of view.	• Depending on the issue participants may need to be briefed in advance. • Analysing the discussion feedback can be time consuming. • Workshop facilitators will need to be skilled.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Open house events Based around an exhibition of proposals that is open to all. People can drop in at any time, read displays and offer comments. Staff would be available to discuss issues and there is space to form discussion groups.	• Can be used well in conjunction with other consultation techniques. • Information can be presented and gathered in flexible ways. • Promotes good relations and provides quick feedback. • Exhibitions can be set up in accessible and familiar locations for the target audience. • Can be used in parallel with other consultation techniques.	• People who attend may not be particularly representative of the wider population. • Care needs to be taken around choice of venue, location, facilities and timing. • Can be expensive as it needs to be run by a range of staff.
Listening days A service 'opens' up for the day to current and potential users. Offering an opportunity to meet and listen to people in an informal setting.	• A good opportunity to open up a service to users and potential users.	
Mystery customers Members of the community are trained to act as mystery customers or users of a service. They observe and report on what they find.	• Precise and detailed feedback can be given. • Mystery customers can be trained to evaluate a number of specific issues within services. • Can obtain valuable bench marking results to evaluate performance.	• Staff in the services being visited can be suspicious. • Only gives feedback on isolated visits and often only small samples are realistic. • Regular 'mystery customers' can get too experienced or stale if they are used too often.
Consultation documents This is the most basic form of consultation. Often combinations of detailed reports and shorter leaflets are produced to promote discussion on a specific issue or theme and requesting comments from interested people. Qualitative and/or	• Useful to show draft documents to people who were involved in giving their views during the development stage. • Can provide people with detailed and comprehensive information. • Can be produced in paper form or online to ensure that everyone has a chance to have their say.	• On their own the impact of consultation documents on engagement is fairly limited. • Often only those with knowledge or interest in the issue are inclined to respond. • Asking people to comment on draft strategies, policies and documents when they haven't been involved in their development can be difficult and tokenistic.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
quantitative responses can be gathered.	• Consultation documents provide the basic background information on which other participatory techniques can build.	• Care needs to be taken to ensure that the information that you provide is jargon free and accessible. • Commitment to ensuring that people's views truly feed into the process needs to be sought early.
Public meetings Typically open forums where people are invited to hear proposals and are given the opportunity to respond and ask questions.	• Provides an opportunity for people to comment on matters that directly or indirectly affect them. • Clearly demonstrates public consultation. • Relatively cheap and easy to organise.	• People may find it difficult to contribute through lack of knowledge. • The management can be complex and responses unpredictable. • Can be intimidating to some people or hijacked by interest groups or vocal individuals so requires a strong chairperson to ensure views are fairly heard. • It can be tempting to just provide information rather than offering people time and space to have their say.
Creative consultation A range of techniques can be used such as drama, visual art, video, music, rap, sculpture, puppetry, photography or story-telling. Artists are often commissioned to develop distinctive tailor made consultation and engagement processes.	• Can engage communities and individuals who are reluctant to respond to traditional consultation techniques. • Often used with children and young people who enjoy activities that are different, colourful and fun.	• Specific budget will need to be identified if artists are being commissioned. • Creative processes can be more time consuming.
Action research Local people carry out their own research into the needs and experiences of their community.	• Local people often have good links with the community and can encourage higher rates of participation.	• Local people will need support and possible training. • Process can be time consuming and possibly more expensive.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Community conferences Community conferences bring local people together to receive information and give feedback on issues of shared interest.	• Provide an opportunity to inform local people of and receive feedback on plans, service developments or strategies.	
Video Box Opportunities for the public to leave messages or directly contact services by recording a video message.	• Can overcome barriers in relation to low literacy skills. • Gives respondents high levels of ownership over the information that they give.	• Specific equipment may need to be purchased and maintained. • Can be difficult to analyse because of the often personal nature of the messages.
Citizens' juries 12-14 people who meet over a short period of time (2-7 days) to be informed about a specific issue or topic and to debate the issue in order to come to conclusions, make recommendations or identify solutions. Format is similar to a court case. The 'jury' is presented with evidence and can question and discuss it with those 'witnesses' presenting verbal evidence.	• Useful for exploring very complex issues. • Participants are given the time and space to deliberate and will become very aware of the topic. • Allows a high level of feedback. • Opportunity to introduce new perspectives and challenge existing ones. • Very useful where there is a specific and significant question to answer.	• Can be expensive and time consuming. • Limited numbers of people will be directly involved. • Need to randomly recruit neutral and representative people. • There must be a firm commitment to action the jury's recommendations.
World cafés Set in a café style room, participants are seated around small tables with paper tablecloths and tea/coffee. Pens are provided and conversation is record on the tablecloths to capture free flowing ideas as they emerge.	• Offer a place for people to talk openly about public issues and learn from and reflect on the views of others. • Typically an informal, relaxed atmosphere for participants • Works with small or large numbers of people	• Conversation cafes do not focus on action. • Requires clear and appealing questions.
Online discussion forums Open or closed forums allow people to discuss issues on	• Secure closed sites can be useful for sensitive policy issues.	• Those without access to a computer will be unable to take part.

Quantitative methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
line with each other, council officers and Members.		• People may be reluctant to take part if not anonymous. • May be resource intensive and require moderating, frequent updates and responses to comments.
Citizen involvement in formal meetings Members of the community act as members of decision making boards.	• Community representatives often have fresh ideas that can have a positive influence on the process of decision making in formal meetings. • Allows decision making boards to consider community perspectives. • Over time meeting agendas may become clearer and more focussed.	• Care needs to be taken when deciding how to select people to sit on the board. • Community representatives are often politically active individuals who may not represent the wider views of the community. • Formal meetings are often dominated by the services and organisations present and their format and content can be hard for others to access. • Community representatives often have little opportunity to set the agenda and can be marginalised in the decision making process. • Community representatives will need ongoing support. • The group chair will need to develop specific engagement skills.

The **Feedback & Insight Team** can provide an up-to-date list of consultation groups and stakeholders so that you have good contact information when engaging with people and communities. If you require additional advice and information call the **Feedback & Insight Team** on 01743 258519 or email commissioning.support@shropshire.gov.uk

Appendix E: Useful links and resources

- Lots of resources on the Involve website, such as ‘Participation Nation', see: http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Participation-Nation.pdf

- Community Planning Toolkit
  http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/community-engagement

- Engaging young people
  http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/26571732

- Case studies from the ParticipationCompass website:
  http://participationcompass.org/article/index/study

- Customer Insight tools, data and techniques
  http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9004734

- People & Participation Planner – a checklist for deciding which methods of participation to use:
  http://participationcompass.org/planning/index#-

- Participation methods – descriptions of participation methods:
  http://participationcompass.org/article/index/method#-

- Making a difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government:
  http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation-guide/

- Shropshire Council Information on Equality and social inclusion impact assessments
  https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/equality,-diversity-and-social-inclusion/equality-and-social-inclusion-impact-assessments-(esiia)/

Appendix F: Guide To Planning A Focus Group or Workshop

In order for you to run a focus group or workshop, there are a number of practical aspects for you to consider but first a note on “representativeness”:

Focus groups and workshops are qualitative in method –this is because the number of people attending each group is quite small and the task of assuring a statistically representative sample is impossible.

Their main purpose is to get deeper insights into what lies behind certain ideas and perceptions. It might be, for example, that a perception may, or may not, be held by a majority of the population but tools like focus groups permit you to probe them and to understand why they are held.

Focus groups and workshops should be broadly representative of the precise audience you wish to understand and you might decide to hold more than one to talk to specific groups of people who may hold different views or whose availability may be limited, for example, older people, young people, females, the business community.

Things to consider

- ✓ Recruitment

Who can participate? Anyone for whom the topic is relevant is an appropriate participant. You need to be able to persuade people to take part. In public-sector engagements this is normally achieved by making participants feel that taking part will be a good experience for themselves and by making them feel that their involvement will be worthwhile to the wider community.

Prepare a short recruitment briefing document consisting of three main elements each conveying a different essential piece of information:

1. Who you are and who you represent
2. What you are doing (in a way which stimulates their interest)
3. How he or she has been selected

The selection of the people for the focus groups and workshops is also critical. Firstly, the attendees must be fairly representative of the precise audience (for example, if your intended audience is young people aged 16-25, you should aim to recruit people with a spread of ages within that range, and a good balance by gender and ethnic origin). Secondly, you will need to consider who might have the time and convenience to attend and whether these, alone, will provide you with reliable insights. Working people find it almost impossible to attend daytime groups, for example, and young people and the elderly might not wish to attend evening events.

Focus groups can comprise a range of ages, a mix of the elderly and business-people, different attendees from different areas or regions, etc. – but you will need to consider carefully whether such a mix will actually provide useable information in the time available.

And finally, consider how a group can be motivated not only to agree to attend but to actually turn up on the day or evening – incentives, such as a cash or vouchers work well, to cover things like travel and other expenses – as does a reminder phone call, the day before the event to the group invitees to ensure they can still attend and to recruit replacements if not.

✓ Grouping people

For larger workshops, there should be a mix of different types of working: plenary and small group working sessions. For example:

Plenary sessions are when **everyone stays together in one large group.** They are used when everyone needs to hear the same thing

- Background information and presentations
- Questions of clarification
- How the day/half day will work
- Instructions for tasks
- To hear feedback from other groups
- For the final round-up

Working in one large group is good for briefing everyone but isn't so good for general discussion (depending on the numbers attending). In a facilitated workshop, the majority of the time will be spent in small groups. Small groups should be used in the following circumstances:

- When the group is too large for everyone to have their say (people should be divided in small groups of between 4-8 people)
- When in-depth discussion is needed on certain topics and time would not permit everything to be covered by the full workshop
- To allow people who are less confident to have the opportunity to speak up
- To build more trust and understanding – people are more likely to risk saying something sensitive in smaller groups than in a larger gathering
- When different tasks can usefully be done simultaneously

✓ Planning the event

To aim is to plan an event which makes the best use of everyone's time **while not trying to fit too much in**. The event could be a small group discussion, a larger meeting, or a full stakeholder workshop.

Step one – What questions to ask

How you phrase your questions during the group discussion is of critical importance. A good question is one that is clear, concise and easy to understand. Care must be taken to ensure that questions are open-ended in format to ensure explanation is given rather than simple 'yes' and 'no' answers.

Probing questions (crosschecks) are also important to establish the depth of feeling and the validity of the statements. This should be done by exploring answers. For example, 'you mentioned that.... do you mean....', or 'could you tell me more about....'

Reframing is a useful technique that can be used to defuse something that may have been said in a contentious way in order to regain a positive focus. There are three basic steps:

- Acknowledge what has been said by reframing what the person has said but in a less contentious manner.
- Ask an open question that seeks to get to the heart of the problem.
- Involve other participants in solving the problem.

Step two – length of the event

The length of the event includes how long the meeting should be, as well as precisely when it should be held. ***Consider*** how much time is required to achieve the purpose and answer the questions. Also, consider how much time the participants are able and willing to give. The result will always be a compromise.

You need also to work out the best time to run the event. There is no perfect time to suit everyone. For resident consultations the best time is usually an evening during the middle of the week. For business people the best time is usually an early breakfast-meeting, or an early-evening meeting (say, between about 5.30pm and 7.30pm).

Step three - start and finish times

Consider the best start/finish times, taking into account the following:

- Your own and participants' travel distances and transport requirements
- Availability of the venue
- Amount of setting-up that needs to be done. Setting up for a workshop can take a surprising amount of time. It's worth finding out if you can get into the venue on the evening before or a couple of hours early, to set up, or alternatively ask the venue of they will do some of it for you.

It's also worth taking into account the fact that many attendees will want to carry on discussing interesting issues after your official end time. Whether you make use of these informal discussions and their outcomes is a matter for thought but experience shows that much very useful input can be gained from these informal discussions.

Step four - blocking out fixed time

Block out fixed times in the event, including breaks, starting and finishing activities, and presentations (and, if a workshop, times for break-out discussions by sub-groups).

Once you have a start and finish time, you can plan the break times, including meal times (if appropriate) and tea and coffee breaks. Do not underestimate how long breaks take. This will depend on how many people are there and the facilities available. For this reason always tell people that the breaks are at least five minutes shorter than you have planned in your event timetable. It can take up to 10 minutes to get a group settled and for discussions to recommence.

At the start of the event, time is needed for the following:

- Explaining the fire alarm system and fire exits, where to gather following such an exit, and the location of toilets and other facilities
- Introducing the team of facilitators
- Outlining the agenda for the day, in particular break times
- Explaining that the day is interactive and facilitated
- Agreeing the ground rules and effective ways of working
- Explaining the "parking place" for subjects that are not relevant to the discussion or which have taken up too much time in the schedule
- Participant introductions. This can take a great deal of time so should only take place if numbers are small such as a focus group. In larger workshops, get people to introduce themselves in the small groups and always use nametags or place cards on which the participant writes their name in large letters.

At the end of the event there will be some finishing activities including:

- Summing up and feeding back the main things discussed
- Seeing which issues have been parked and dealing with them in an agreed manner
- Agreeing if people want to see outputs and collating their contact details (if this is likely time can be saved by having a pre-prepared form which can be passed around early in the session and into which attendees can write their names and contact details)
- Agreeing the next steps

- Closing words/thanking participants for coming.

Presentations – it is likely that are some point during the event there will be a need for one or more presentations. These can be used to:

- Give background briefing
- Update on activities so far
- Presenting context for the discussion and providing key information
- Feedback from group sessions.

The numbers and length of presentations will depend on the event itself. The aim is to keep these short and to the point. Presenters should be advised how long they have. Advise them to keep overhead slides simple with complex slides provided as handouts.

NB: Prior to the event – preferably when it is booked – you should ensure that facilities will be available for laptops to be hooked into the mains and for screens and projectors to be likewise set up.

An exemplar outline of a half-day event is shown below. It shows how the fixed times have been blocked out and the time allocated to sessions.

Start time	Activity	Time (Hrs:Mins)
9:30	Informal start and registration - Registration and collection of delegate packs - Networking	0:15
9:45	Introduction and welcome - A warm welcome - Safety issues - Introduction to the team - What the day will be about - Context	0:10
9:55	Presentation and Q&A session	0:25
10:20	Session 1 - Break out groups for larger workshop	0:50
11:10	Break (tea and coffee)	0:15

11:25	Session 2 - Break out groups for larger workshop	1:05
12:30	Closing session - Feedback from group work - Round up	0:15
12:45	Close	

Outline of a focus group discussion agenda:

Start time	Activity	Time (Hrs:Mins)
18:15	Informal start and registration (tea and coffee on arrival)	0:15
18:30	Introduction and context	0:05
18:35	Participant introductions	0:10
18:45	Session 1 – e.g. prioritising services	0:20
19:05	Session 2 – e.g. active communities and delivering services	0:20
19:25	Session 3 – e.g. making savings	0:20
19:45	Summary and most important issues	0:15
20:00	Close	

Step five – Allocating session time

To help clarify this, ***please consider*** the purpose of the event/session from the following :

- **Information giving** - to provide people with information they need to participate effectivity
- **Information gathering** - to scope the issues; to understand different perspectives; and to gather known facts and figures
- **Problem solving** - to generate ideas and options; and to consider possibilities and uncertainties

- **Trouble shooting -** to consider problem and difficulties, challenges and issues
- **Benefit finding -** to consider what is valued now or likely positive effects of possible change
- **Evaluating** - to find out how people feel about issues or new proposals
- **Finding agreement -** to find common ground; to agree the most important issues to consider; to agree the solutions worth exploring; and to find a way forward that participants are comfortable with
- **Deciding -** to finalise proposal and to firm up action plans

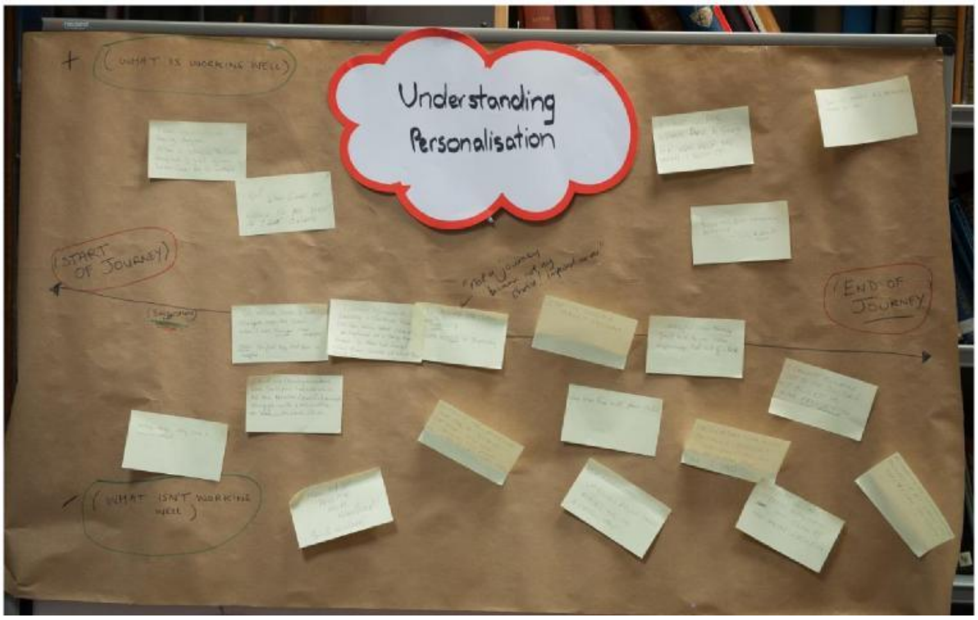
Different session objectives require different amounts of time.

✓ Choosing techniques

When choosing techniques for the focus groups and workshops – and particularly the latter **-** variety is important. It is also worth selecting the most straightforward way to get the task complete. We provide below some ideas on techniques that can be used**:**

- A **metaplan** (as shown below), is when you take a large sheet of paper and cover it in post-it notes and group them in a way that works for the participants. The steps are as follows:

    - Cover a large area of wall with paper
    - Start with an open question
    - Give each participant 3-4 post-it notes
    - Ask then to write a separate thought on each
    - Ask people to put their responses along with other similar ones
    - Move them around until everyone is happy with the grouping
    - Invite people to clarify any that could not be understood



- **Listing -** otherwise known as brainstorming, is when the group works through a sequence of questions and list their knowledge. This is useful when trying to capture lots of information and is good for working through responses to a logical sequence of questions.

Discussion often starts wide and gathers lots of information as it progresses. Gradually people need to begin to narrow down and identify key priorities, key information needs, or the most important action.

Short listing and prioritisation techniques can be used to **make choices**. The technique should be set up as follows:

- Draw up a sheet with headings and a space to include sticky dots
- Write in the different options, e.g. services
- Number each item of the list
- Give each person sticky dots
- Ask people to put dots next to their priorities
- Start a discussion about the results

Weighing pros and cons is another technique that can be used to evaluate a proposal (see below).

Proposal

Pros	Cons	Needs further discussion

As the whole point of the dialogue is to agree upon actions that will lead to a positive change, it is good practice to include an agreed action list. The simplest way is to set out an **action list** of what has to happen and who is responsible for it, and when it needs to be done by (see below).

What	Who	When

✓ The facilitation team

The key objective of the facilitation team is to keep the momentum going and create a positive working atmosphere.

Running a larger-scale workshop requires a team of facilitators; for focus groups usually only a lead facilitator is required. The job of the facilitator is to listen, ask good questions, encourage quiet people to have a say, manage strong characters, keep things focused and on track, and create a positive working atmosphere. The facilitator will need the ability to intervene effectively and reframe what is said (if the statement is ambiguous or contentious) without changing the meaning. The facilitator needs to remain neutral in discussions to prevent bias and will need to manage the time effectively to ensure all questions are covered sufficiently.

The four main roles in a well-run workshop include:

- **Lead facilitator** -to make sure it all works smoothly on the day. Often the lead facilitator is the process designer. The lead facilitator will foster good communication and keep control of the process

- **A process designer and manager** -designing the overall process and each event, identifying who to involve, overseeing the practical preparation
- **An assistant facilitator** - On the day, they observe what is going on and try to anticipate what needs doing. The assistant will help with plenary sessions and facilitate small group work.
- **Small-group facilitator** -at least one extra small group facilitator for every extra 8-10 people) will undertake the role of maximising the effectiveness of dialogue in small groups. (These facilitators can be attendees who volunteer to act in this way for small groups).

✓ Recording skills

It is essential that focus group and workshop discussions be recorded in some way. Most commonly, group discussions are recorded using comprehensive notes or by audio-recording the session. Audio recording allows the facilitator to focus on the discussion and the attendees. Data recorded on tape will be detailed, so it is worth remembering that its analysis will be time consuming.

For workshops, flip charts are commonly used to record what is said. The key objective is to ***create a concise record of the dialogue, clear, easy to read and easy for the participants to follow***.

Listening and recording skills:

- Listen and summarise – but try to use the words used by the attendees. Listen for the essence of what is being said and do not try to write down every word
- Listen for words that may need clarification – if you are unsure ask
- Sometimes the pace is faster than you can keep up with - capture key points
- Label each sheet with a session number and page number
- Write the question at the top of the sheet to help people focus
- When the session ends, gather up all the sheets and use a bulldog clip to keep them together.

Readability and clarity:

- Black pens are easiest to read. Red is fine for headings or lines
- Lower case is easier to read and quicker to write
- Use water-based ink
- Try to avoid turning your back on the group for too much of the time

- Order text so that if a point comes up that relates to an earlier point you can link them with a number.

The workshop and focus group engagement check list

Activities	Tick when complete ( )
Have you decided the main purpose of the event and the questions that you want to address?	
Have you prepared a briefing document to outline the purpose to the potential attendees?	
Have you decided how many people you can cater for?	
Have you decided the start and finish times?	
Have you identified and booked a venue?	
Have you recruited the attendees?	
Have you sent confirmations about dates and times?	
Have you decided how to group people for the discussions (if applicable)?	
Have you blocked out fixed times, e.g. presentations?	
Have you allocated the session times?	
Have you decided on the techniques you will use?	
Have you prepared the materials you will need for the sessions (including paper, pens, flipcharts, post-it notes, and so on?	
Have you chosen the roles of your facilitation team?	

Workshop template

Name of Lead Facilitator:

Workshop Name: Venue:

Day/Time: Duration:

<table>
<tr><th>Room set up:</th><th>Reception:</th><th>Participants pack:</th><th>Displays:</th><th>Working areas:</th><th>Sheets prepared:</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seating best fit
• Overhead/laptop set up
• Screen
• Extension cables
• Reception desk</td>
<td>• Attendees list

Signing in desk
• Name labels to wear
• Information packs
• Draft agenda
• Ensure facilitator knows safety/fire arrangements</td>
<td>• Agenda
• Project info
• Name label
• Group / table numbers</td>
<td>• Information displays set up
• Example documents for reference</td>
<td>If using walls
• Paper the walls
• Double where necessary
• Paper bank for each area
Kit
• Small box for kit under each stand– set of pens, blutac, post-it pads, paper clips, bulldog clips, other
• Pens working?
If using flipchart
• Flipcharts standards checked - can be wobbly. Ensure best height for facilitator
• Blutac/masking tape prepared in small amounts</td>
<td>Sheets to do on day
• Parking place sheet
• Agenda
Pre done sheets
• Ground rules
Other possible sheets
• Room layouts map</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">List of additional flipchart sheets/ materials that need preparing in advance:</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Start time</th><th>Total mins</th><th>Within task change times</th><th>Activity</th><th>Technique</th><th>Kit and room set up</th><th>Who</th><th>Notes</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Arrive early for room set up
Brief team the night before too</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Check room - final briefing for facilitators Tea and coffee on arrival</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Reception
• Tick people on list and give them their participants number by writing it on their agenda or name badge
• Provide them with a name badge</td><td></td><td>Registration sheet
Pens
Name labels</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Get everyone settled: Introductions to the day/process
• Introduce self and team
• Welcome participants - Explain how the day will work i.e. will be facilitated throughout and participatory
• Time keeping - vital especially getting back from lunch
• Status of outputs – e.g. is it knowledge sharing, information for decision-makers, advice to decision-makers or decisions
• Outputs of the day - a working group will need to look at outputs and agree way forward
• Agenda for day
• Useful words, acronyms sheet
• Parking place
• Ways of working together (Ground rules)
• Use white Cards for questions – if they want</td><td>Plenary</td><td>Ground rules Parking place What does this mean sheet</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>A brief explanation about the project
Questions - get people to write on cards</td><td></td><td>Power Point Question cards</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Start time	Total mins	Within task change times	Activity	Technique	Kit and room set up	Who	Notes
	Say 10 mins Anticipate 15		COFFEE BREAK Back sooner if				
	1		LUNCH Note: There will be quite a bit of taking down and setting up at lunch time			All	
			COFFEE BREAK				
	10		**Summing up** What happens next				

Start time	Total mins	Within task change times	Activity	Technique	Kit and room set up	Who	Notes
	15		**Car park** - Look at issues **Last Things** - Duty list action/ who / when - What happens next	Plenary Lead facilitate +1 record			May not need this much time
			Tidy up room, ask for help from participants				
			Debrief facilitators/team • Have we achieved what we hoped we would? • Have we learnt what we hoped we would? • Thanks			All tea m	
			Post-event: facilitators to write up notes				

Signing In Sheet

Workshop Name:

Day/Time:

No.	Name	Email	Organisation(If appropriate)	Special Requirements
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				

Appendix G: Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative methods produce a large amount of words that need to be summarised, described and analysed. The choice on your analysis approach will be based on many different factors, but mainly on what is the focus and purpose of your consultation. This is why it is so important to thoroughly plan in advance the whole of your consultation, including how you intend to analyse the data.

The below following pointers may be helpful:

Do

- **Create themes.** Make sure you have all responses that say similar things grouped together e.g. if you have several responses to a question relating to finance, budget restrictions or cost, theme these together. One very useful way to do this, if time allows, is in the actual focus group session with the participants.
- **Involve others in your analysis.** The point above is an example of how you can do this. A common criticism of consultation is that people see only what they are looking for so it is important to check interpretations/perceptions out with participants and other colleagues.
- **Pay particular attention to information that is very specific.** Comments that are specific and that provide detail can be very valuable, look out for these and how they can inform your understanding
- **Pay particular attention to any comments that are made with emotion.** Comments that are made with enthusiasm, anger or any intensity may well be more valuable and worth considering carefully.
- **Acknowledge any limitations to the study.**

Build into your consultation plans analysis time and plan your audit trail with data protection requirements in mind e.g. anonymise data and provide codes for particular interviews and/or code names or numbers for participants.

Don't

- **Generalise.** The goal of any consultation method including focus groups and interviews is to understand the individuals own meaning.
- **Assume that what is said most frequently is most important.** The most insightful point may be made only once.
- **Confuse frequency and extensiveness.** The difference between the two is how many people said something. Many of us have been to focus groups in which one person kept returning to the same theme and while records will show this theme was mentioned a fair amount, it was brought up by only one person. If the same point was raised by several people, or the point was met with wide agreement, note it as an extensive point and pay attention to it.

Appendix H: Legal Aspects to Consultation

This toolkit provides information and resources to support general engagement. But there will be times when formal consultation is required. Advice should be sought from your legal department before embarking on formal consultation.