North Yorkshire County Council

Consultation Toolkit

2007 – 2009

If you would like this information in another language or format such as Braille, large print or audio please ask. Contact: Johanne Parker on Tel. 01609 533291 / johanne.parker@northyorks.gov.uk

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Toolkit provides **guidance and advice about how to plan, undertake and complete a consultation project**.

1.1.1 First of all, section 2.0, briefly summarises what the **'Consultation Project Database'** is and how it works. The 'Database' holds information about consultation activity at the County Council and is key to:

- Ensuring that consultation activity is recorded, monitored and used to inform / shape continuous improvement and service planning
- Communicating about consultations with citizens and communities.

1.1.2 Then, section 3.0, provides **advice and guidance about establishing consultation project objectives.** It helps you explore and identify why you are doing consultation work, with whom and how that relates to what your service, your Directorate and the Council does.

1.1.3 Section 4.0 outlines **how to plan and do a consultation project**, taking the reader through each of the essential steps to ensure that consultation is effective; equal and inclusive; and, appropriate and relevant. This section is divided into the following sub-sections of guidance / advice:

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Stakeholders
- Sampling
- What will you ask?
- Consultation methods
- Designing a questionnaire
- Planning and promoting consultation events
- Information management and technology
- Consents and agreements
- Resources

1.1.4 Following this, section 5.0 focuses on **how to complete a consultation project**: i.e. how to turn objectives into reality. It is made up of the following sub-sections of guidance:

- Collating and organising consultation findings
- Evaluating consultation findings
- Pursuing additional information
- Analysing consultation findings

1.1.5 Section 6.0 then considers **how to communicate your consultation project findings**, both within the Council and outside of it. This section focuses particularly on reporting on your consultation project, thanking stakeholders and keeping them informed.

1.1.6 Section 7.0 details **how a consultation project can be used to improve service performance** and outcomes.

1.1.7 Finally, at the Appendices, the Toolkit also provides a **pre- and post-consultation pro forma**: one of each should be completed for each consultation project. A copy of the **County Council's standard 'Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form'** is also provided here.

2.0 THE CONSULTATION PROJECT DATABASE

2.1 WHAT IT DOES AND WHY WE HAVE IT

The Consultation Project Database holds information about all planned, underway and completed consultation projects. It allows us to know, at any one time, what consultation work is being done, planned and complete, across each Directorate, with which communities and citizens, at what cost, how and why.

The Project Database makes it possible to help ensure that we undertake consultation that is:

- Effective
- Equal and inclusive
- Appropriate and Relevant

2.2 HOW IT WORKS

The Corporate Performance and Research Team manage the Consultation Project Database and each Directorate is responsible for inputting data to the Project Database. Directorate consultation leads ensure that their services input to the Project Database, using the template available from Directorate consultation leads or from the Corporate Performance and Research Team.

Directorate leads for consultation are as follows.

Chief Executive's Group	Johanne Parker	Ext. 3291
Finance and Central Services	Karen Scott	Ext. 2340
Business and Environmental Services	Emma Hubert	Ext. 2494 / 3191
Children and Young People's Service	Kathy Peacock / Jaime Hume	Ext. 2107 / 3078
Adult and Community Services	Shanna Carrell / David Glansford	Ext. 2992 / 2539

Information provided by Directorates is inputted to the Database by the Corporate Performance and Research Team. The Team then uses that information to produce quarterly reports for the Corporate Performance Management and Communications Officer Groups. Management Board, Executive and all other Members and Officers can access the same reports via the 'Performance Matters' intranet site.

3.0 ESTABLISHING WHAT YOUR CONSULTATION PROJECT WILL DO

3.1 CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

An objective is a statement of a desired outcome. Objectives can be very general and help set the context for the project, for example:

- Consult with citizens and communities on an annual basis.

Alternatively, objectives may be very specific, helping to assess whether the more general objective is being met for example:

- Explore levels of satisfaction with the service;
- Make people aware of constraints and opportunities surrounding changes to the service; and,
- Identify how citizens and communities feel a service could be improved.

Objectives can also be 'quantifiable'. For example, extending the above example:

- Consult with 50% of citizens and communities, per annum

Finally, a note of warning in this regard, unless you are consulting about a specific option or issue, it is best practice to avoid specifying solutions within the objectives. This is recommended since doing so can lead to biased results which are not representative of what people really think about the subject. For instance, extending the above example, if you are consulting to identify with support for a particular change to a service, you may specify the following objective:

- Consult with 50% of citizens and communities, per annum
  - Identify how citizens and communities feel about a proposed change to the service, in particular exploring their support for:
    - a 50% reduction in the number of bus services to location X
    - a 25% reduction in the number of bus services to location X and a 25% reduction in the number of bus services to location Y

Otherwise, avoid referencing a solution, for example:

- Identify how citizens and communities feel the service could be improved

3.2 STRATEGIC FIT

When establishing consultation project objectives, you should consider the higher level priorities that the Council seeks to achieve. By doing so, you will help ensure that the consultation project is appropriate and relevant.

Our priorities are published annually in the Council Plan; Directorate priorities may be published in individual Directorate Service Plans; and, individual service objectives are set out in individual Service Performance Plans. Please consider these when establishing your consultation objectives.

4.0 HOW TO PLAN AND DO A CONSULTATION PROJECT

4.1 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is necessary to monitor and evaluate the progress of the project on an ongoing basis to ensure that project objectives are achieved. This helps ensure that consultation is effective.

Detailed below are some ideas about how this may be done:

1. Identify, meet with and name each member of the project team.
2. Identify and name the project team leader.
3. Identify and define individual tasks within the project and allocate tasks to each member of the project team.
4. Define the project timetable and establish deadlines for individual elements of the project. For example: questionnaire design; public meetings; data analysis; etc.; etc.
5. Establish how the team will communicate with itself and how frequently. For example, each team member may and should contact any other team member via e-mail or telephone at any time if they have any queries / need support or advice; the entire team meets once per fortnight to discuss progress until the project is underway; once the project is underway, the entire team meets once per month to discuss progress; at any time throughout the project, team members with particular tasks will be expected to meet deadlines and report to the project leader on progress with achieving those tasks; etc.; etc.
6. Project team leader is responsible for ensuring that:
    a. Ensuring that each team member is communicated with and able to communicate with other team members on an ongoing basis.
    b. Progress is in line with project objectives and decides when the project must be stopped or amended to help ensure that objectives are met.
    c. Resource use remains within the limits established at the start of the project, including ensuring that appropriate opportunities to share resources or work with partners are used wherever possible.
    d. Etc.

4.2 STAKEHOLDERS

To ensure that the consultation project is appropriate and relevant, as well as equal and inclusive, you will need to identify who you will consult with, i.e. who your stakeholders are, and plan to consult them all appropriately[1].

[1] That is, with consideration of viability given the time and resource available to you.

You can start this process by recalling your consultation objective(s). This should help you identify what County Council priority the project relates to; what Directorate and service objective(s) it relates to; and, what issue, challenge or opportunity the project relates to. Once you have done this, you can use the checklist below to think more about who your stakeholders are. This process is also sometimes called 'stakeholder mapping'.

Stakeholder Checklist

Key Customers

- Citizens
- Communities
- Service users
- Internal customers (e.g. elected Members and other officers)

Non-Users

- People who are unaware of the service
- Those who may use the service, but who choose not to
- Dissatisfied or ex-customers
- People who might need the service at a later date

Others

- People we enforce against or who are regulated (e.g. businesses)
- Citizens and local communities
- Interested agencies from the voluntary, private and public sectors
- People affected by policies or development (e.g. planning)
- Local Councillors, LSPs, Parish Councils, Carers or Advocates, local businesses, MPs

'Seldom Heard Groups' (please see specific guidance at section 4.3 below)

- Disabled people
- Older people
- Young people
- BME people
- Faith groups
- Gender specific
- Sexual orientation
- Geographically isolated

Finally in this regard, please note the following warnings:

- Take a step by step approach – who will you listen to first?
- Experiment as you work - learn and improve as you go
- Keep a record of who you are going to consult with and why – this may be of particular relevance to Equality Impact Assessments
- Remember: one size does not fit all! Consider equality and diversity.

You cannot consult with absolutely everyone about absolutely everything. Make sure you do what an objective observer would consider reasonable and appropriate and follow any relevant statutory guidelines.

4.2.1 ENGAGING SELDOM HEARD GROUPS

The highest profile 'seldom heard groups' are listed above in 4.2. Equality and diversity legislation exists to ensure that all individuals (including seldom heard groups) are not discriminated against or treated unfairly or without consideration as a result of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age. A brief summary of current legislation which you may consider to be of relevance to ensuring that consultation is equal and inclusive is provided in the box below.

Often, external consultants with particular experience of engaging 'seldom heard groups' may be used to ensure that consultation is inclusive. In these cases, standard procurement procedures should be followed and directorate leads for Equality and Diversity advised of the use of such external consultants.

Summary of Current Equality and Diversity Legislation

Equality Act 2006
Establishes a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights by 2007 that replaces the three existing commissions. Introduces a positive duty on public sector bodies to promote equality of opportunity between women and men and eliminate sex discrimination. Protects access discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in terms of access to good facilities and services. Access the Equality Act 2006 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Women and Equality Unit website.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Outlaws the discrimination of disabled people in employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the administration or management of premises. Access the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 at the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) website. Further information is available at the Disability Rights Commission website.

Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005
Introduces a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality for disabled people. Access the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Disability Rights Commission website.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006
Protects against discrimination on grounds of age in employment and vocational training. Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation, harassment and instructions to discriminate. Access the Employment (Age) Regulation 2006 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Acas website and the Local Government Employers website.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
The directive protects against discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief in employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions. Access the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Acas website.

The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005
Introduces new definitions of indirect discrimination and harassment, explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity leave, sets out the extent to which it is discriminatory to pay a woman less than she would otherwise have been paid due to pregnancy or maternity issues. Access the Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Equal Opportunities

Commission website.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
The directive protects against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment, vocational training, promotion, and working conditions. Access the Employment Equality (sexual orientations) Regulation 2003 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Acas website.

Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended)
This gives an individual a right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the man and the woman are doing: like work; work rated as equivalent under an analytical job evaluation study; or work that is proved to be of equal value. Access the Equal Pay Act (Amendment) 1970 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Equal Opportunities Commission website.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975
The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex. Sex discrimination is unlawful in employment, education, advertising or when providing housing, goods, services or facilities. It is unlawful to discriminate because someone is married, in employment or advertisements for jobs. Access the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 at the Press for Change website. Further information is available at the Equal Opportunities Commission website.

Gender Recognition Act 2004
The purpose of the Act is to provide transsexual people with legal recognition in their acquired gender. Legal recognition follows from the issue of a full gender recognition certificate by a gender recognition panel. Access the Gender Recognition Act 2004 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Equal Opportunities Commission website.

Civil Partnerships Act 2004:
Provides legal recognition and parity of treatment for same-sex couples and married couples, including employment benefits and pension rights. Access the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 at the website of the Office of Public Sector Information. Further information is available at the Stonewall website

Race Relations Act 1976
The Act prohibits discrimination on racial grounds in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises. Further information is available at the Commission for Racial Equality website.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
Places a statutory duty on all public bodies to promote equal opportunity, eliminate racial discrimination and promote good relations between different racial groups. Access the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Commission for Racial Equality website.

Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulation 2003
Introduced new definitions of indirect discrimination and harassment, new burden of proof requirements, continuing protection after employment ceases, new exemption for a determinate job requirement and the removal of certain other exemptions. Access the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) 2003 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Commission for Racial Equality website.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
The Act seeks to stop people from intentionally using threatening words or behaviour to stir up hatred against somebody because of what they believe. Access the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 at the OPSI website. Further information is available at the Commission for Racial Equality website.

Advice and guidance about undertaking an appropriately equal and diverse consultation project is provided below specifically in terms of how to approach consultation with different 'seldom heard' groups. HR services have also produced a database that provides contact details for 'seldom heard groups'. This will be accessible alongside the Consultation Project Database.

BME (Black Minority Ethnic) People

Background

According to the Census 2001, white people in North Yorkshire make up 98.9% of the resident population, meaning that BME people make up approximately 1.1% of the resident population. The Census also shows that most BME people are mixed race (predominantly 'White and Black Caribbean' in Hambleton, Harrogate, Ryedale and Richmondshire; predominantly 'Asian or Asian British' in Craven; and, predominantly 'Chinese or Other Ethnic Group' in Selby and Scarborough). Recently, there has been considerable growth of migrant workers in the county. There is however no precise data available about the size of the migrant worker population.

The most important thing to note is that an increasingly diverse population means we need to consult with many

different people in the most appropriate way for them. For example, this means being aware of, respecting, appreciating and engaging with a wide variety of different languages and cultures.	
Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
Have you undertaken research into which ethnic groups are in North Yorkshire?	Get demographic information about the communities you are consulting with. Please note however, the Census 2001 is now rather dated and cannot account for new residents, BME people working in the county or new migrants. But, NOMIS (please see: http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/), the official national labour market statistics database, provides more up to date information about BME people of working age in the County.
Are there any existing or emerging groups or organisations you can consult with or will you need to consult with individuals?	Research what BME groups there are in the communities you wish to consult with and attend meetings to develop relationships.
How do you develop relationships with BME people?	Recruit BME residents on to working groups, boards or steering groups for initiatives or projects. Build individual capacity offering training opportunities and information about processes (e.g. how meetings are chaired). Ensure that the target audience for a consultation project includes BME resident representatives.
Are there any existing relationships, i.e. community development projects, forums, partnerships, etc. with the ethnic group that you want to consult with?	Connect and build relationship with existing networks of groups and / or develop new ones to address any gaps.
How long have the communities been in North Yorkshire?	For example, as noted above, the Census 2001 does not identify with the growing number of migrant workers in the county, but does identify that there was a resident predominantly 'White and Black Caribbean' population in Hambleton, Harrogate, Ryedale and Richmondshire in 2001. Such information suggests that migrant worker communities are beginning to establish themselves and that the White and Black Caribbean population is longer established. Undertaking effective localised research will however best identify how long particular communities gave been established in North Yorkshire.
What are the customs and traditions that the communities	Be aware of the different traditions, views and social norms that people have. Don't classify BME groups together. Remember that BME groups are diverse – consider

bring?	men, women, older people, younger people, disabled people, etc. Groups have different needs whether they are due to culture or language. Also, particualr effort may be required to engage BME (and, indeed, all) people who reside in rural areas and who are not members of specific representative groupings and forurms as a result of the dispersed nature of the population in rural areas. Explore the opportunities for training on racial awareness to help challenge stereotyping,

Young People

Background

The views of young people are very relevant. When working with children and young people, the best results can come from working in partnership with them. This can be difficult as some adults are used to being in a position of power over children and young people and the idea of sharing some of that power may seem strange and can be a barrier to overcome. The results are definitely worth it though.

Important things to remember when consulting with young people:

- Ensuring that you include young people from all communities and backgrounds in your activity
- Have positive attitudes towards all children and young people
- Be accessible to all children and young people
- Have the appropriate resources to support all children and young people
- Use information will inform and involve all children and young people
- Have the skills to enable young people's participation and will support all children and young people to develop skills to participate
- When engaging with young people, draw upon the expertise of staff who are closely involved with them through schools, groups and forums. They will help to co- ordinate views and encourage young people to become involved – because just sending them out a survey, questionnaire or consultation to fill in may not be very stimulating or interesting.

Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
How many young people are there in your area? What existing services are there for	Understand the community. Know how many young people there are, what service provision is in operation and what they are doing, where young people like to go.

them?	
At what stage should young people be involved?	Involve children and young people in designing, creating and planning events and projects. They need to be part of decision – making including venues, timings and identifying the issues that young people most want to talk about and work on. Even better, work with children/young people throughout the entire process to make it by young people for young people. Remember that parents, interpreters, signers and / or carers may also need to be involved.
Can I just go and organise my activity around the children and young people I want to consult with?	It is best practice not to. You should value, listen and involve children and young people throughout every step carried out, especially when allocating budgets, timeframes, venues and providing refreshments.
How can I involve young people in consultation effectively?	Activities such as workshops, social events or creative activities can be very effective. Similarly, using 'interactive technology' (such as the keypads seen on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire") at an event can be interesting as it allows young people to see how research is done. Also, ask children and young people how they would like their contribution to be recognised. This could be through reward vouchers or being involved in a launch or event and must be of value to their age group specifically.
Why would children and young people want to be involved in consultation?	Children and young people are the next generation(s). Their views are important. Do not dismiss them as irrelevant bystanders.
What can I do to increase the chance that children and young people will want to engage in my consultation project?	Young people should not be out of pocket to attend. They may need to travel to attend a venue so consider this when choosing a location. Also, consider how you could reward young people for their time and effort. Vouchers for the cinema, sports matches or high street stores are a good idea. You might want to hold a party or event to thank them for their time.
"Young People" covers a wide spectrum of age. Surely what is interesting to eight year olds will not be of any interest to eighteen year olds?	It is helpful to target specific groups around needs/ability/age and to think about the levels of support that any individuals will require.
How do I keep children and young people engaged in a long term consultation project?	Mobile phones, text messaging and interactive technology are particularly useful means for engaging with young people over a period of time.

Children and young people speak a different language?	Carefully consider the style and wording of surveys, forms, information or documents and their design. Do you need young people to re-word them? Learn from them!
In my experience, children and young people don't like sitting through meetings. How do I know they are listening?	Use fun and modern techniques to capture the imagination of children and young people. Arts can be a useful tool to help engagement with young people. Keep meetings or events short. And, most importantly make the activity interesting for young people! Finally, throughout the meeting, ask those attending what they think is being said. This helps ensure that the audience takes away the messages you want to convey to them.

Older People

Background

There are growing numbers of older people nationally and in the County. According to work done by the County Council, in 2005, of the County's entire population, 10% of people were aged 65 – 74; 7% of people were aged 75 – 84; 2% of people were aged 85+; and, 1% of people were aged 90+. Work also done by the County Council forecasts that, by 2020, 13% of the County's entire population will be aged 65 – 75; 8% of all people will be aged 75 – 85; 4% of all people will be aged 85+; and, 1% of all people will be aged 90+.

Despite the fact that older people are becoming a substantial part of the population, ageist perceptions and practices remain. Barriers to older people's participation include:

- Unnecessary use of 'professional' language, jargon and trendy acronyms
- Organisational inflexibility when carrying out engagement activities in a manner or at a pace that doesn't suit older individuals.
- Negative attitudes to older people.

To ensure that older people can be involved in consultation, we need to take account of the following factors. Doing so will help older people with different needs and preferences to be included:

- Develop and adapt a range of approaches so that individuals with different needs and preferences can be included.
- National organisation such as age concern can provide useful information and advice.
- Help make it easier for older people to engage. For example, it may be possible for you to visit a group of older people at a day care centre or via the Council's Older People's Reference Group.

Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
How many older people there are in your area? What existing services are there for them?	Find out the percentage of older people in your area, the organisations, groups and networks that support them and places/spaces that are older people friendly
Are activities planned with older people in mind?	Look at how meetings are conducted, where they are held, times of meetings and use of language. Remember safety and movement to and from cars and other transport.
In the information you provide fully accessible?	Ensure print, format and content of documents and papers for consideration at meetings is accessible.
How can I include older people?	Involve older people using appropriate feedback mechanisms / modes of communication. For example, do not assume that everyone has access to e-mail or the internet. It may be most appropriate for you to meet with groups of older people.
S/he's too young to need that!	Do not make ageist assumptions about older people and the amount of experience and expertise they may or may not have – if in doubt, ask!
Where you will find older people.	Go to places where older people are, for example older people's accommodation and housing. Or use techniques such as video link for events.

Disabled People

When engaging with disabled people you should offer all communication in 'Easy Read'. For further information about 'Easy Read' please see: http://www.drc.org.uk/pdf/DRC_ER_Booklet1006.pdf .

Background

Many people will **be** disabled at some time in their life, whether it is temporary or permanent. Disability is not something individuals **have**: individuals have impairments and we must take all impairments that exist into account and accommodate them. For example:

- Note that disability is not always physical – some people may have learning difficulties and your activity will need to accommodate this
- People should not be excluded because we do not invite them to engage with us in a way that is most appropriate for them

- Many disabled people have carers to support them and carers' views may be important as well.

In addition, it is important to be aware that some people have learning difficulties. Regarding people with literacy needs in particular:

- Note that not all people have a certain level of literacy – understand how to recognise the likely indicators of learning difficulties.
- Use plain language, diagrams or illustrations to help get messages across
- Make contact with learning support colleagues if necessary.

Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
How many disabled people are there in your area? What existing services are there for them?	Map your community to understand what organisations are there; what support you may be able to get from them; and, what places and spaces are access friendly.
What if I offend someone?	• Understand the attitudes towards disabled people, what behaviors are not acceptable in our society and how the engagement exercise will overcome these barriers. • Increase your knowledge and skills by getting training on disability awareness. • Staff involved in engaging with disabled people should have training in 'disability awareness'.
We have a ramp that provides access to the building. Is that enough?	Ensure that there is appropriate access to services and buildings for all those that you wish to engage with. Carry out access audits with disabled people. Listen to what they say are their access needs. Provide sign language experts and interpreters when needed. You may also wish to note that the Disability Rights Commission has produced useful guidance about how to make events accessible to disabled people. Please see: http://www.drc.org.uk/pdf/SP13.pdf
We already do a lot of consultation but we get a poor response from disabled people.	• Examine all your engagement methods and consider them from different perspectives. Ideally this would be done by engaging with disabled people, to determine their views of the methods. • Develop and implement protocols for managing consultation and engagement activities in your area, which include accessible facilities; pathways; and, ensuring organisers are aware of disability issues. • Support the development of community engagement projects run by and for

	disabled people.

Faith Groups

Background According to the Census 2001, 80% of people in North Yorkshire were Christian; 12% had no religion; 7% did not state their religion; approximately 0.2% of people stated they were Muslim; and, another 0.2% stated they had a different religion to those stated. The Census 2001 also records that there is a small number of people who are Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish; Sikh; and, of other religions that were not stated.	
Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
Which faiths are represented in your area?	Undertake a mapping exercise. What faith groups are in your area? Consider carrying out research in to the faith communities in local areas in which you are working. Develop an understanding of any concentrations of faith groups in communities. Do you need to do any preliminary research before your activity goes ahead?
Do you know how to access them?	Develop key contacts in faith groups who can help you. Develop a long – term approach to engagement with faith groups. Carry out formal consultation but also develop informal networks and contacts.
I am always afraid that I might touch on sensitive issues.	Be aware of, and sensitive to, the differences between faiths and their backgrounds. Engagement with faith communities makes demands for 'religious literacy' and understanding of differences. Develop links with inter – faith bodies. Be ready to challenge your own assumptions and to learn about different faiths and the cultural backgrounds that they have.
What do I need to consider before organising an event?	If you are holding any events, remember to consider: • Dietry requirements (such as kosher food or halal meat, gluten free, nut free, etc.) • Premises that are suitable (such as avoiding licensed premises or places where alcohol is consumed)
How do I know when not to carry out a community engagement activity?	Buy a faith calendar, firstly to make sure your engagement does not clash with faith days and secondly so that you could build your knowledge of when to engage with groups and what events may be appropriate to link to.
How do I know that a	Try to include a wide range of faiths in every exercise and make sure that you note

viewpoint is not just from one perspective?	their specific views. Always aim to include a wide range of faith groups.

Gender

Gender equality should mean that women and men get fair and equal treatment.	
Frequently Asked Questions	**Suggested Actions**
Have I got the gender balance right?	Consider the need for gender analysis in assessing and reporting the outcomes of community engagement processes. Monitor gender balance in participation and responsibilities.
What about surveys?	When conducting surveys and interviews try to ensure that 50 percent of the respondents are male and 50 percent are female. In any case the representation of either gender should not fall below 40 per cent.
I want to make sure that male and female participants in our activity feel comfortable about sharing information with us.	Consider using a female/male co-facilitating team in engagement activities. As appropriate, consider holding gender specific events.
I am pretty sure that we have a good gender balance. What else can I do?	Consider alternating the chairing of the meetings between male and female. Pay attention to the contributions in a meeting. If a meeting seems to be dominated by one gender, make efforts to invite people from the other gender to participate and express their views.
In the past, more women than men have participated, so we are doing well really.	Invite as many men as women, paying attention and targeting the gender group less likely to participate. Use inclusive language so each group feels invited. Consider using people from both genders in the promotion of an event.
In the last focus group we held, although there were more women than men, I noticed that the men were more vocal. What can I do to get women to say more?	Some women feel more comfortable expressing their views in a separate process. They feel that they have more opportunities to share their views and opinions in 'women only' group activities. This would guarantee the inclusion of some women for whom culturally it is not appropriate to speak in front of men,
Although the demand and initiative had come from the	• Consider the need to provide childcare to enable women with young children to participate. Inform about childcare provision in advance so women know of it's

community, when we arranged focus groups across the county, turnout was pretty low, especially for women.	availability. • Consider the most suitable time of day for women with family, childcare and work commitments, as well as for men who are single parents or have full time work commitments outside the area. • Consider concerns for safety and security associated with going out at night.
Making assumptions	Don't assume that everyone in your audience, forum/ focus group or consultation sample is heterosexual.
Providing a safe environment	Consultation and engagement activities should take place in an LGBT friendly environment. If you are holding a meeting, make sure that it is held in a safe place and at a safe time – recognise that LGBT young people aren't always safe in the same places as straight people.
Ensuring confidentiality	Ensure confidentiality from the beginning – and throughout. It should be noted that confidentiality should be preserved for anyone and everyone regarldess of their gender / sexuality.
Obtaining consensus	Have an agreement that sets out the agreed behaviors, details inappropriate words and spells out clearly that homophobia won't be tolerated.
Research.	Researchers must be knowledgeable about issues pertinent to lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people.

Finally in this regard, it is best practice to monitor equality and diversity across all that we do. Doing so helps us better understand our citizens and communities and to target our services. Collecting and monitoring such information enables us to know what different citizens and communities think and to better respond to their needs in service planning and delivery. Differences between people should always be acknowledged and, as appropriate, celebrated and catered for.

To help you do this, a standard set of equality and diversity monitoring questions is provided at Appendix 3. This offers a guide to Consultation Project Managers. Experience suggests however that the questionnaire as it is presented may not be appropriate for use in all Consultation Projects. Therefore, before using it, please consider if it is appropriate to ask the questions of the individuals that you are consulting with, and, if the questionnaire is used, please take care to ensure that only the most appropriate questions are posed for the Consultation Project in hand.

4.3 SAMPLING

Logistically, it would be impossible to consult with every potential stakeholder. So, all research depends on using 'samples', small groups of people that are representative of either the population or the target audience.

There are two ways to select a sample. What these are and how they are done is briefly summarised below.

Probability Sampling

With this approach, each person has an equal chance of being selected.

A random sample can be established simply by listing all of your stakeholders and selecting a number of them to consult with (e.g. 10%).

To make sure the sample is entirely random, you could assign a number to each stakeholder (e.g. no.1 – no.100) and then select any 10 stakeholders from the list to arrive at your 10% sample.

Alternatively, you could systematically choose your sample. This means, selecting your sample by using a particular way of choosing them. For example, of a list of 100 stakeholders, to arrive at a 10% sample (10 people), you could select every tenth person on your list. It would be up to you to decide what you did to ensure that the sample was random and made up of enough people.

Stratified sampling is another way to select a random sample. It also ensures that the sample is representative. For example, you may use ward data from the Electoral Register to ensure the same proportion of people from each ward is included in your sample.

Non-Probability Sampling

With this approach, a representative selection is not left to chance.

This approach is cost and time effective, but there is far more chance that the sample is unrepresentative or biased. Most people do non-probability sampling by choosing a set number of people from each stakeholder group.

It is also crucial to ensure that you speak to enough people. The sample you use should be representative of your stakeholders and this will dictate the size of the sample.

Best practice suggests that a manageable randomly chosen sample which is representative of all stakeholders of relevance to a consultation projects can be small or large. For example, for general surveys, most research companies use a sample of 1,000.

If, once you have selected your sample and you wish to compare different groups within it (e.g. males and females), to make direct comparisons between the two groups, you should select two sub-samples of equal size from the large sample.

When using postal surveys it is best practice to select a larger sample than you need simply because postal surveys notoriously receive a very low rate of response. Note however, some of the sample can be retained until necessary and does not all have to be used immediately.

For example, a sample of 2,000 stakeholders may initially be selected and 1,000 initially contacted with a postal survey. If the response rate shows that only 200 stakeholders have responded, part of, or the entire, remaining sample could be asked to complete the survey until the response rate is sufficient.

Finally, regarding sampling, ‘sampling error’ must be considered. Consultations are undertaken at one point in time. If the sample was reselected the results may differ. In a random sample, it is possible to calculate the sampling error or ‘confidence interval’. Generally speaking, the larger the sample, the smaller the confidence interval or sampling error.

4.4 WHAT WILL YOU ASK?

When you have decided who you will consult, you need to decide what you will consult on. Please avoid asking questions just because they may be interesting to somebody, at sometime, perhaps…

When developing consultation questions you should begin by doing the following:

- **Identifying what your consultation project objectives are**. Why do you want to consult people? What decisions will the consultation project influence? Who are you consulting for? For example, you may want the consultation project to do one or more of the following:
    - Compare and challenge the existing service
    - Look for unmet needs
    - Shape the way your service is delivered
    - Measure satisfaction with the service

- Prioritise future spending
- Set targets for a service
- Check out reaction to new ideas or initiatives
- Look for quality improvements
- Check opinions, views and attitudes

- **Identifying what your stakeholders will want to say to you, but do not stereotype.** Be aware of what stakeholders do, why and how and do not ask a stakeholder a question which is not relevant to them.
- **Being challenging**. Best Value requires us to challenge what happens now to make improvements for the future. This will require you to ask questions which you may not want to ask but it must be done!
- **Keeping a record of why you chose some questions and not others**. This will help ensure that the project remains appropriate and relevant as well as effective.

Once you have done this, you can begin to think about what kind of questions you will use. In an ideal world, you would consult people about what questions to ask. In practice though, this is not always viable due to resource constraints. So, it may be useful for you to consider the following examples of popular questions:

- What do people like most / least about the service?
- Is the standard or level of service right?
- Is the frequency of the service right?
- Is the service reliable?
- What takes too long?
- What about comfort, convenience and safety factors?
- How good is your customer service?

4.5 CONSULTATION METHODS

4.5.1 A variety of methods can be used to consult with citizens and communities. The key issue is to select and use the correct method or methods to meet your consultation objectives and to ensure that you get answers form those that you want to consult with.

4.5.2 To build a rich picture it is important to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Please note, where possible, it is best practice to involve those you wish to consult with in any planning which is done to identify which research methods to use, with whom, why, how and when. Doing so helps ensure that the right method is chosen for each stakeholder. In practice however, such an approach can be time consuming and costly. We therefore strongly encourage you to share your experiences with, and learn from the experiences of, others across and outside of the organisation. Quantitative and qualitative methods are briefly defined below.

Quantitative Consultation Methods	**Qualitative Consultation Methods**
Focus on providing statistically reliable information using a large sample of people. They are used to answer predetermined questions such as the percentage of people who are satisfied with a service. They usually involves sampling a group of people and asking them questions. If the sample is drawn up using statistically reliable methods, the results can be said to be reliable for all people whose views you need. By repeating quantitative surveys, you can get a snapshot of attitudes and track whether perceptions change over time or compare the views of different types of people. Typical quantitative consultation methods include: • Postal surveys • Telephone surveys • E-surveys	Explore people's attitudes, behaviours and motives in more depth. They usually involve small numbers of people and cannot provide statistically reliable results. They can, however, explain behaviour much better than quantitative research. For example, while a postal survey may be able to tell you how many people use the council's library service, qualitative consultation methods will help you identify why people use the service or not. Qualitative consultation is most useful for complex issues where there is no simple 'yes' and 'no' answers. They can help decide issues to cover in a questionnaire survey and how to word questions; be used to pilot written material such as leaflets and application forms; be used to test the water for new policies; and, be used to get people to explain their views at length. Typical qualitative consultation methods include: • Face to face interviews • Focus groups • Observation

4.5.3 A variety of quantitative consultation methods is summarised below together with consideration of the potential pros and cons of using them as well as, where possible, tips on how to best use them. Please note that all consultations should be made available in a variety of formats (for example, large print, audio, Braille, Easy Read, different language, etc.) upon request.

Postal Surveys	
This method involves sending out a questionnaire to respondents for them to complete and return to you. Designing the questionnaire will need thought to ensure questions are not 'leading' the respondent to answer in a certain direction and to ensure the question meets your consultation objectives.	
Pros	• Large numbers of people can be contacted, either targeted or at random, at relatively low cost. • Sample can be statistically accurate • Respondents can complete the questionnaire in their own time, which may lead to more considered responses
Cons	• There is little control over who fills in the questionnaire so results may not be representative • It is difficult to ask questions relating to awareness • Forms need to be kept short or they will put off respondents from filing them in • There tends to be a low response rate – sometimes as low as 5%.
Tips	• To increase low returns, always enclose a pre-paid envelope and a covering letter explaining clearly what the survey is for • Chase non-returned questionnaires with follow up letters, reminding people to complete and return the questionnaire • Offer the same questionnaire in different languages to enable all groups to respond

E-Surveys
E-Surveys (electronic surveys, including online surveys) are growing in popularity. Like postal questionnaires, they allow you to ask a large numbers of people their views. They can also include some routing of questions, so that respondents giving one particular answer are led down one route to answer further, specific questions. Some software used for e-surveys transfers the responses to a separate database for analysis and other software is able to analyse responses immediately. There are a number of options available.

Pros	• The questionnaire can often be longer than a postal survey • The questionnaire can be designed so that different groups of people can be interviewed • Illustrations and links to relevant web pages and sites can be provided to help the respondent answer a question • Very easy to conduct in-house • They can be relatively inexpensive – the overall cost depends on what software you use • Data analysis is usually done for you, depending on the software you use • They are not time consuming or labour intensive for the person you consult with (consultee) or you as the 'consulter' • They can be completed at any time, anywhere by anyone and may encourage some seldom head groups to take part • They do not require trained interviews • Response rates are quicker and cut out postal costs
Cons	• Some potential consultees find completing online forms daunting • They may not engage a representative sample and it is not easy to quality assess the data received when an e-survey is completed anonymously. The data may therefore be neither reliable nor representative. • They are generally available only to those with access to e-mail and / or the internet
Tips	• Select and use a software that collates and analyses data for you • Ensure you include the standard equality and diversity monitoring questionnaire to aid data quality assessment • Ask consultees if they are happy to provide contact details. This can aid data quality assessment and support data analysis • Use specialist support where necessary / appropriate.

Face to Face Surveys	
Face to face surveys are the traditional way of asking larger numbers of people their views using a structured questionnaire. Interviewers are used and they read the question to the respondents usually by stopping them in the street or calling at their homes.	
Pros	• The questionnaire can often be longer than a postal survey • The questionnaire can be designed so that different groups of people can be interviewed • A higher response rate is usually achieved than with postal surveys • It is easier to identify the appropriate person to complete the questionnaire

	• Interviewers can use show cards or carry examples to test response. Show cards may be particularly helpful for face to face surveys of people with learning disabilities.
Cons	• They are more expensive than postal surveys • They are time consuming and labour intensive • Interviews should be done at different times of the day and to ensure that all persons are questioned • They require trained interviewers • Interviewers need to be trained in sign language or be accompanied by an interpreter • They may be more time consuming for the respondent
Tips	• Interviewers can carry a brief description of the purpose of the survey in relevant community languages and in different formats such as Braille. • An appointment can be made to return if a person has particular assistance needs that cannot be met when the interviewer approaches them. • For most large surveys it is often possible to contract out the interviewing for a face to face survey and undertake only the design and analysis of the questionnaires in-house • Please use the Disability Handbook which is to be made available via the County Council Intranet.

Telephone Surveys	
These are done in the same way as face to face surveys, but the questions are asked over the telephone.	
Pros	• Large numbers of people can be contacted at a relatively low cost • Relatively easy to conduct in-house • Easy to survey people who live in wide geographical areas • More complex issues can be tackled than in a postal survey • Easy to reach some seldom heard groups (e.g. disabled people, older people, lone parents) • A text telephone or minicom may be used to communicate with people with a hearing impairment
Cons	• Households without a telephone or those that are ex-directory are excluded • Trained interviewers must be used • Easier for the respondent to be distracted than in a face to face survey • The language barrier will need to be addressed if the person speaks little or no English • Cold calling can often annoy the prospective respondent • Sample results may not be representative

	• Individuals with learning disabilities may not be able to understand questions over the telephone • Individuals with hearing impairments may not be able to participate in a telephone survey. Ensure that alternative modes of communication are provided as necessary. • There may be language barriers for some people who do not have English as their first language
Tips	• Call at convenient times for the people you wish to speak with. Meal times are unlikely to be convenient for parents / carers. • Don't lose your respondent before you start: always clearly explain what the survey is about. • Offer respondents the chance to be surveyed over the phone using a language which they are most familiar with: English is not everybody's first language.

Referenda	
These involve holding a formal poll on a single issue.	
Pros	• The views of a large number of people can be obtained efficiently and relatively quickly • Returns can be given by post, by telephone or minicom and electronically
Cons	• Can only be used for single issues that require little explanation • Can only give a yes or no answer or a choice between a limited number of options
Tips	• Ensure a maximum response from relevant people by distributing polling cards to people at appropriate locations / venues. For example, if you want to gather views on changes to canteen menus, distribute polling cards in the canteen to canteen users. • Provide sufficient information on the card to enable people to understand what the referendum is about and enter into the poll.

Comment and Suggestion Cards	
These are often used to record views, ideas and suggestions of service users and visitors to museums, libraries, receptions, exhibitions and events. A leaflet or card with closed questions (i.e. questions that allow a person to answer 'yes' or 'no') will provide quantitative data. Open questions for comments and suggestions (i.e. questions that allow a person to provide lengthier comments and responses than simply 'yes' or 'no'), will provide qualitative data.	
Pros	• Relatively easy to use and to administer • Low cost • Good PR exercise, especially if prizes, if offered for completion of Cards, are well publicised

Cons	• May produce low rates of return • Rates of return are likely to vary in relation to promotion of the Cards • Sample may not be representative since only some people may be service users or visitors
Tips	• Ensure a response from relevant people by distributing comments / suggestions cards to people at appropriate locations / venues. For example, if you want to secure suggestions from service users, provide feedback cards either at the point of service delivery (i.e. where the service user receives the service) to all service users, or direct to service users. • Provide feedback to those who have provided comments and suggestions previously and demonstrate how previous comments and suggestions have been used to inform service planning, delivery and improvement. Doing so can encourage others to provide comment / suggestion and reassure those who have already done so that they were listened to. This can help reduce / avoid feedback apathy.

4.5.4 A variety of qualitative consultation methods is summarised below together with consideration of the potential pros and cons of using them as well as, where possible, tips on how to best use them. Again, care should be taken to offer supporting documentation in alternative formats (for example, large print, Braille, audio, and different languages) as appropriate / upon request.

Panel Surveys	
These are regular surveys, usually of a representative group of people. In local authorities, these are most commonly used for residents' panels of 500 – 1,000 people. The County Council (Corporate Performance Team) operates a Citizens' Panel of 2,000 people.	
Pros	• Can be used to tackle more complex issues, if panel members are properly briefed • Panel can be structured to be fully representative of the whole community • Can be used to tackle different issues or to assess changes of opinion over time • Useful in sparsely populated rural areas • Consultation can be quantitative or qualitative using all or just some of the panel members
Cons	• Setting up a panel to start with can be time consuming and resource intensive • Panel members can become too sympathetic of the authority, and no longer representative of public opinion • Not suitable for consultation about services used by limited numbers of people • Not always useful for seldom hear groups as by their very nature these groups are unlikely to input to a panel

Tips	• Panels can be regularly refreshed to ensure that they remain representative

Focus Groups	
Focus groups are small groups of usually between eight and ten people who are invited to attend informal discussion sessions on a particular topic. Sessions are facilitated and people are often offered an incentive to attend.	
Pros	• Relatively easy to organise • Can be used to consult different sections of the community and useful for consulting specific target groups of people • Interpreters, sign language interpreters, etc. can be used • Complex issues can be tackled through discussion
Cons	• Results cannot be representative, unless a large number of groups are organised • Results cannot be easily quantified
Tips	• Some people speak up more willingly than others, so, always remember to 'break the ice' with a group. For example, you could ask people to tell the group a curious fact about themselves (e.g. something about a previous job, something they have done, somewhere they have travelled). • Before you start, remind the group that there are no right or wrong answers: what is right is that they voice their opinion. • Make clear any anonymity agreement / Chatham House Rules conditions which apply to each focus group that you facilitate.

Observation	
Observation involves watching and recording what takes place in a particular situation. For example, people using a reception area can be watched to see how they act – do they know where to go, do they pick up a leaflet, do people look at the notice board, do people prefer to speak face to face, etc. A variation of this is mystery shopper research which involves the researcher visiting, telephoning or even writing as a customer and making notes.	
Pros	• Can be useful to gain an external picture of how services function from the customers' perspective • Mystery shopper exercises can highlight any weaknesses in customer service areas
Cons	• Will only be reflective of the time the researcher spent • Not necessarily representative of the service as a whole
Tips	• If you are observing people / a situation anonymously, be as unnoticeable as possible: blend in with the wall paper! Knowing you are being watched can make people uncomfortable and

	can make people change their behaviour so that the observer sees an act rather than the 'real thing'. • Observe as many people and situations as you can in any one setting, using more than one observer if at all possible. Doing do helps ensure that findings are multidimensional and more robust. • When observing people / a situation anonymously, if asked what you are doing, do not lie. Provide as much information about who has requested the observation and advise the questioner who they can speak to for more information.

Neighbourhood Forum	
This is any kind of structured, regular local meetings for local people to consult about issues of local importance	
Pros	• Once the structure has been established, it can be used regularly • Can be led by elected Members, and provides a useful link between Members and local people
Cons	• Difficult to ensure attendees are truly representative of the local community • Can become dominated by a few vocal people • More difficult to run successfully in areas where there is no clearly identifiable neighbourhood
Tips	• Publicise the event well in advance, using the most relevant and appropriate mediums for those you wish to attend. • Ensure the agenda is agreed in advance by those holding the meeting and appoint a Chair who will ensure that the agenda is followed to the letter. This helps ensure continuity and flow, reduces distractions and maximises the positive outcome of a meeting. • Linked to the above, have a clear idea of what you want the meeting to achieve and make everyone aware of this at the start of the meeting. With an effective Chair, this helps ensure that the meeting stays on track and is transparent throughout. It can also help reduce any possible concerns about 'hidden agendas' or 'deaf ears'.

Citizens' Juries	
These involve a small sample of the public paid to spend perhaps a few days debating an issue in a quasi-judicial setting with evidence from witnesses.	
Pros	• Can be used for very complex subjects, e.g. travellers' sites and school closures • Formalised setting means participants can be made fully aware of the issues

Cons	• Sample is very small, and so not usually representative of the whole population • Limited numbers directly involved may reduce larger public ownership of the results • Time consuming and resource intensive
Tips	• Ensure the objective of the exercise agenda is clear and make everyone aware of this at the start of the exercise. With an effective Chair, this helps ensure that the meeting stays on track and is transparent throughout. It can also help reduce any possible concerns about 'hidden agendas' or 'deaf ears'. • Interviewing jurors about what they think they have heard ensure that, in advance of their consideration of that information can help ensure that the information that the jurors consider is correct and full. Inviting commentators back to provide a brief summary of their information for the jurors can minimise the risk that jurors have forgotten or not heard all of the relevant information before they reach their decision. • Ensure there is sufficient time for the jury to consider what they have heard and to discuss their thoughts about it. Facilitating group discussions with the jurors can help each person have their thoughts heard.

4.6 DESIGNING A QUESTIONNAIRE

Once you know your consultation objectives and the consultation methods you will use, you will need to start to design your questions. The method you use will influence the design, e.g. postal surveys will need to be kept clear, simple and relatively short; surveys using trained interviewers can be more complex; and focus groups can be held using simply a list of key issues. You should also consider the need to make questionnaires available in different formats (for example, large print, Braille, audio, different languages, etc.), as appropriate, according to the needs of your consultees.

The guidelines below will help you decide the type of questions you want to ask, how to structure your questionnaire and how to pilot (test) your questionnaire.

Type of Question

Four different types of question may be asked:

Behavioural	These are questions about what, when, how, where, why and which. They are usually factual. For example, how often do you use the library?

Attitude	These are questions used to measure perceptions, attitudes and opinion. For example, how satisfied are you with the library service?
Awareness	These questions test public awareness and recognition of services, policies, information and publicity material. For example, did you know that the library is now open evenings and weekends?
Classification	These questions provide information about the respondents themselves. For example, age, gender, disability, ethnicity, etc. Such information helps us better understand different types of citizen but such questions should always be optional and confidentiality should be assured.

Open and Closed Questions

Once you've decided what type of questions to ask, you can decide whether you want 'open' or 'closed' questions.

Open Questions	These allow respondents to say or write their own answer. For example, thinking about your last contact with the County Council, what enquiry or problem did you have? Sufficient space should be provided in written questionnaires for people to answer as they wish to. Data from open questions is often, by nature, more difficult to analyse but can provide important qualitative information. Be aware however, if lengthy responses are received, sufficient time will be required to analyse the data received. Time can be saved in this regard by, for example, using specialist software to analyse open question data. The Corporate Performance Team would also be able to help you analyse any qualitative data.
Closed Questions	These allow respondents to choose one or more answers from a range of options provided. For example, did you contact the County Council by phone, letter or in person? Closed questions are much easier to analyse by giving the number and percentage of people's answers.

Rating Scales

Rating scales are commonly used. They give respondents an equal number of positive and negative options to choose from and ask respondents to tick the relevant one for them. Most researchers choose to not include an option of 'don't know' in rating scales to force respondents to make a choice. For example:

Which phrase best describes what you think of the County Council's Highways service?			
VERY GOOD	GOOD	POOR	VERY POOR

Numerical rating can also be used. If this method is used you need to ensure that the respondent knows and understands which number denotes a positive response and which number denotes a negative response. It is likely that you will get a number of 'neutral' answers with this method.

Question Wording

To help improve response rates, take care to:

- Keep the language simple, jargon and acronym free
- Keep the questions short
- Avoid multiple questions in one sentence
- Avoid leading questions
- Keep the question specific

Questionnaire Layout

To help improve response rates, take care to:

- Structure the questionnaire clearly so that it is easy to read and follow
- Follow RNIB clear print guidelines
- Offer the questionnaire in alternative languages and formats

- Explain why this consultation project is taking place and assure respondents that confidentiality will be maintained
- Set questions out in a logical order. Simple introductory questions should come at the beginning. Questions may also be grouped under headings with simple guidance about how to complete them.
- Route the respondent to ensure they do not answer questions that are not relevant to them. For example, stating "*If your answer is no, please go direct to Q.8*"
- Ask challenging, complex and personal questions towards the middle and end of the questionnaire
- Thank the respondent at the end of the questionnaire
- Include the deadline for return of completed surveys and a postage paid envelope for postal surveys

Piloting the Questionnaire

Before starting the full survey, it is best practice to test ('pilot') your questionnaire out. Testing a questionnaire out on a number of people from different backgrounds can identify it it makes sense, gives you the information you need, is understandable, etc.

If the 'pilot' identifies problems with the questionnaire, they should be resolved before the full consultation project begins.

4.7 PLANNING AND PROMOTING CONSULTATION EVENTS

Consultation events can be a very effective way to consult with a large number of different people at the same time. Care should however be taken to ensure that they are well planned and delivered. Some tips about how to plan an effective consultation event are provided below.

- Ensure the consultation method is appropriate for your target audiences
- Take advice from members of the target audience, to ensure the consultation method is appropriate
- Ensure the consultation exercise is well publicised in a variety of media to attract
- Ensure the layout of the room is appropriate, e.g. chairs in the 'round' rather than with an audience and top table. In this respect, pay particular attention to ensuring those with a disability can access the event.
- Check if you need to provide translators, signers, interpreters or carers
- Check the timing is appropriate for your target audience. In so

your target audiences

- Explain clearly from the outset what you are consulting on and what the options are
- Ensure it is available in the right format, e.g. different languages, Braille, audiotape, etc.
- Ensure venues are fully accessible for the target audience
- Ensure the venue appropriate, e.g. community buildings such as schools, or day centres rather than council offices
- Ensure the results of the exercise are widely communicated in a variety of media

doing, ensure plenty of notice is provided to those with a particular dependence (for example, those who are supported by carers, signers, community and other non-private transport providers and translators) to help ensure that those individuals can make appropriate arrangements to attend.

- Check if you need to provide crèche facilities
- Ensure you have checked holidays including school and religious holidays and festivals
- Check if you need to provide or pay for transport for those attending
- Provide adequate refreshment for those attending
- As necessary, provide appropriate incentives for those attending and tell them when they can expect feedback on the project

You should also note the following about promoting public consultation events.

- Good promotion in advance of the event is vital
- Specific audiences may need to be targeted, e.g. by providing promotional materials in different languages, through local ethnic media and groups or via business and tenant associations
- Clearly communicate the process and timescales for the consultation project
- Use a variety of media, e.g. newspapers, TV. Radio, notices, personal invitations, roadshows, open days, exhibitions, posters and leaflets in libraries and County Council offices, etc.
- Clearly communicate the reason for the consultation event and the options available to people who wish to be involved

4.8 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

New information technologies provide an ongoing source of ideas and developments that can stimulate new approaches to customer focus and consultation. For example, Information Management Technologies (IMT) can help you convert information about your communities into intelligence for decision making. Also, Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRMs) can help an organisation to tailor its services to meet the needs of its customers.

All information technology and management systems can help improve your understanding of your customers and improve access to and satisfaction with public services. For example, websites and the internet are becoming more and more important as internet access increases and people begin to understand what can be done with the internet. In particular, online polls are becoming very popular. The County Council's Web Team is best placed to advise you about undertaking online polls.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM is a business strategy that helps you understand and anticipate the needs of your current and potential customers. It maintains a complete and single view of the relationship between you and your customer and is available to all appropriate staff. CRM systems can help your organisation to use core data to support service delivery across multiple channels and to create a single view of customer relationships.

Successful CRM systems encourage better interaction between you and your customers and can improve customer satisfaction and service efficiency. They are implemented via:

- Websites. Like many other local authorities, the County Council is developing its website to improve customer services and access to services.
- Contact Centres. Like many other local authorities, the County Council has developed a Contact Centre, using new technologies to improve customer service.
- Joint Access Centres / One Stop Shops. Like many other local authorities, the County Council has developed an approach to providing Joint Access Centres, to improve customer service and access to services.

4.9 CONSENTS AND AGREEMENTS

The Market Research Society's 'Code of Conduct' for market research sets out the following best practice consents and agreements for consultation projects, largely in relation to consultation with children and young people:

- The **anonymity** of those who respond to a consultation must be preserved unless they have given their informed consent for their details to be revealed. If respondents have given consent for data to be passed on in a form which allows them to be personally identified, the consultation project manager must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that it will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected and fully inform respondents as to what will be revealed, to whom and for what purpose.

- If respondents request **individual complaints or unresolved issues to be passed back to the service or organisation that has commissioned the consultation project**, those managing the consultation project should meet that request. The comments/issues to be passed back to the service or organisation that has commissioned the consultation project must be agreed with the respondent and must not be linked back to any other data or used for any other purpose without the explicit consent of the respondent.
- **Respondent details must not be passed on to another third party** for research or any other purposes without the prior consent of the respondent. The only exception to this is if the service or organisation that has commissioned the consultation project controls the consultation project data.
- **The consent of a parent or responsible adult (acting in loco parentis) must be obtained before interviewing a child under 16 in the following circumstances**:
  - In home/at home (face-to-face and telephone interviewing)
  - Group discussions/depth interviews
  - Postal questionnaires
  - Internet questionnaires
  - Email
  - Where interviewer and child are alone together
  - In public places such as in-street/in-store central locations. But, note that interviews being conducted in public places, such as in-street/in-store/central locations, with 14 years olds or over, may take place without consent of a parent or responsible adult. In these situations those managing the consultation projects must give an explanatory thank you note to the child.
- Please note, it will also be **necessary for you to secure consent when consulting with non-children, for example an adult with learning disabilities**.
- Where the consent of a parent or responsible adult is required **those managing the consultation project must ensure that the adult is given sufficient information about the nature of the research to enable them to provide informed consent.** Those managing the consultation project must ensure that the parent or

responsible adult giving consent is recorded (by name, relationship or role).

- For **self-completion postal questionnaires**, those managing consultation projects must ensure that:
    - when it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that all or a majority of respondents are likely to be under 16, these are addressed to the parent or responsible adult; and
    - when it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that all or a majority of respondents are likely to be under 16, that all questionnaires carry a note or notice explaining that consent is required for all children to participate.
- For **research administered electronically over the Internet**, when it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that all or a majority of respondents are likely to be under 16, those managing the consultation project must ensure that respondents are asked to give their age before any other personal information is requested. Further, if the age given is under 16, the child must be excluded from giving further personal information until the appropriate consent from a parent or responsible adult has been obtained.
- In **all cases, those managing a consultation project must ensure that a child has an opportunity to decline to take part, even though a parent or a responsible adult has given consent on their behalf**. This remains the case if the research takes place in school.
- **Personal information relating to other people must not be collected from children** unless for the purposes of gaining consent from a parent or a responsible adult.
- **Those managing a consultation project must ensure that any material handed to the service or organisation that has commissioned the consultation project or included in reports, without consent from respondents, is anonymised** e.g. transcripts containing direct quotes and projective material.
- **Respondents' cooperation is voluntary** and must be based on adequate, and not misleading, information about the general purpose and nature of the project when their agreement to participate is being obtained and all such statements must be honoured.

Other specific consents and agreements may be required for consultation with other groups of seldom heard people. Please speak to your Directorate consultation lead for advice.

4.10 RESOURCES

In planning your consultation project you should carefully consider what resources will be required to ensure that the consultation objective is achieved. A checklist of the types of resources you may need is provided below to help with this.

Resource Checklist

- Money
- Time
- People (number of and, if possible, specific individuals)
- Printing
- Postage
- Transport
- Venue hire
- Incentives
- Refreshments
- Technology and equipment
- Training
- External consultants
- Advocates
- Interpreters
- Signers
- Carers

Regarding incentives in particular, best practice suggests that it is right that people who attend focus groups are offered a ‘thank you’ for attending and contributing to the group. It should be noted that the County Council does not as yet have a corporate policy in this regard. All decisions regarding incentives must therefore be referred to your senior manager.

You should also consider how you can maximise efficiency with your consultation project. For example, ask yourself:

- Can you work with partners to reduce the cost of the project?
- Can you use the Consultation Project Database to inform you about any existing research from within or outside of the County Council which serves your objectives?

The Corporate Performance and Research Team can help you with this.

5.0 HOW TO COMPLETE A CONSULTATION PROJECT

5.1 COLLATING AND ORGANISING CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Organising and collating responses to postal and other surveys, completed interview sheets and notes of focus groups and other meetings, etc. in a logical and meaningful way helps:

- make you more familiar with the data you receive
- make it easier for you retrieve specific pieces of information from across the entire project
- you to analyse consultation findings.

When collating and organising data, you may wish to collate and organise it according to one or more of the following:

Collate and Organise your Data by

- The type of method used
- The date that the data was collected
- Per individual, using an anonymous ‘identifier’ code number. For example, you may apply a numbering code to each set of responses which will permit you to organise your responses whilst not identifying the individuals. This is usually done as follows: the first response is labelled ‘#001’; the 23rd response is labelled ‘#023’; and, the 103rd response is labelled ‘#103’, etc.
- Per group (using an anonymous identifier such as a code number as detailed above, applying a number to each group)

5.2 EVALUATING CONSULTATION FINDINGS

It is important to evaluate every part of a consultation project: from planning to completion. A checklist of key considerations to bear in mind when doing this is provided below.

Consultation Evaluation Checklist

- Did as many people take part as you needed and as expected?
- Was the research carried out well? Did the techniques you used work as well as they could?
- Was the sample representative? If it was not, why?
- Did you get the information you wanted in sufficient time? Was it of the right quality? Did it go into sufficient depth?
- Did the consultation project change anything?
- Did people believe you wanted to know what they thought?

- Did you engage people from within seldom heard groups
- What did the people who responded to the consultation think of it?
- If you used external consultants, did you get value for money? i.e. did they allow you to achieve your objectives, within budget and on time?
- What would you differently next time?

5.3 PURSUING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If after evaluating the results of your consultation project you find that you have insufficient evidence to achieve your objectives, you should consider re-running the project as a whole or in part.

Such decisions should not be taken lightly and will be best taken when you understand the nature and scale of any weaknesses in the consultation project. Any weaknesses will become clear at the point at which you evaluate you consultation project. If you have evaluated the Consultation Project as it developed, you will know how weaknesses you have identified could be reduced / removed in the course of the project. There is however always a chance that there are no clear weaknesses in the project. In this case, you may wish to speak with a member of the Corporate Performance and Research Team who may be able to help you understand and identify why your Consultation Project objectives were unmet and how the situation can be resolved.

Finally in this regard, any decision to re-run a consultation project should be referred to your senior manager who is best placed to consider the budget implications and net benefits (return on investment) from doing so.

5.4 ANALYSING CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Once you have all the data you need, you've organised it and collated it, all you have to do is analyse it! This sounds simple, but can sometimes be very difficult.

This section provides very brief guidance to outline how you can go about analysing quantitative and qualitative data. It is not an exhaustive account of the subject and you should always ensure that you know what you want to achieve from the analysis (i.e. your consultation objective) before you choose any particular data analysis technique.

5.4.1 <u>QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS</u>

Commonly used Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques	
Mean	The mean is the **average of a set of data**. To find the mean, you need to add up all the data, and then divide this total by the number of values in the data.
Mode	The mode is the value which **appears the most often** in the data. It is possible to have more than one mode if there is more than one value which appears the most.
Median	Middle of the range To find the median, you need to put the values in order and then find the **middle value.** If there are two values in the middle then you find the mean of these two values.
Range	To find the range, you first need to find the lowest and highest values in the data. The range is found by subtracting the lowest value from the highest value.

5.4.2 <u>QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS</u>

Commonly used Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic

Once the data has been written up, upon reading it through, particular themes are likely to become apparent. These are the focus of thematic analysis. Once they become apparent, start to write them down and soon you will have a list of the key themes in your data. For example, data from a consultation project that set out to identify customer satisfaction with waste management might look like this:

"*I feel my **bins are emptied** often enough, but I want more kerbside **recycling**. I spoke to the council about it and they told me there was **not enough money** to do that this year. So, I have to take everything, myself, to the tip. Doing this takes so much **time**. I wish the council would introduce better **recycling systems**!*"

In the data above, key themes have been identified with bold text. These are:

- Frequency of waste collection (i.e. *I feel my **bins are emptied** often enough)*
- Type of recycling systems (i.e. *I want more kerbside **recycling***; and, *I wish the council would introduce better **recycling systems**!")*

- Barriers (i.e. *they told me there was* ***not enough money*** *to do that this year)*
- Impact of current recycling systems (i.e. *Doing this takes so much* ***time****)*

Conceptual Once a thematic analysis has been completed, it is possible to dig a little deeper into the data and consider how people talked about those themes that are key to the consultation findings. This is called conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis can help you identify with key issues that are affecting the situation that you are consulting on and identify what is at the heart of a situation.

Using the above example, a conceptual analysis is likely to look like this:

"*I feel my* ***bins are emptied*** *often enough, but I want more kerbside* ***recycling****. I spoke to the council about it and they told me there was* ***not enough money*** *to do that this year. So, I have to take everything, myself, to the tip. Doing this takes so much* ***time****. I wish the council would introduce better* ***recycling systems****!*"

Themes	Concepts
Frequency of waste collection	• Satisfactory, no real concerns (i.e. ***I feel my bins are emptied often enough****)*
Recycling systems	• Do more (i.e. *I* ***want more kerbside recycling***) • Do better (i.e. *I wish the council would introduce* ***better recycling systems****!")*
Barriers	• Budget (i.e. *they told me there was* ***not enough money to do that this year***)
Impact of current recycling systems	• Direct negative impact on individuals' time (i.e. *Doing this takes so much*

6.0 HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR CONSULTATION FINDINGS

6.1 REPORTING ON YOUR CONSULTATION PROJECT

Two key tasks in this regard are identifying priorities and communication methods.

Identifying Priorities

Your data analysis will have told you what the key findings were. From that list, you should focus on:

- Results that are very good or there were no suggested actions
- Results that identify a need for action which cannot be addressed in the short term
- Results that identify a need for communication and what, who, where and how
- Results that identify a need for action and outline what the next steps are
- Results that identify with difference between people and groups, for example BME, older people, young people, etc.

Communication Methods

It is crucial that those who contribute to a consultation project are thanked for doing so and made aware of the outcome of the project. The post-consultation proforma will help you do this, Note however that different audiences will have different needs. Reporting results could therefore use a variety of different methods of communication. The County Council's Communications Unit is best placed to advise you about how best to communicate with your chosen audiences. But, in brief, it may be useful to consider whether the following types of communication would help you report on your consultation project.

- Presentations
- Seminars and workshops
- Summary reports
- Feedback documents to respondents
- Via the County Council's website
- Via the County Council's intranet
- Staff newsletters
- The NY Times

- Detailed reports
- Detailed spreadsheets
- The local media

6.2 THANKING STAKEHOLDERS AND KEEPING THEM INFORMED

Four key tasks in this regard are:

- Identifying stakeholders who contributed to the project
- The scope of your communications
- Explaining your decisions
- Managing complaints

Identifying Stakeholders

It is important to identify the key stakeholders, primarily those that contributed to the consultation project, and decide the best way to communicate results to them. In the first instance, you should identify which of the following types of stakeholder you want to communicate with.

- Elected Members. This is particularly important if the results impact their ward, division or portfolio
- Frontline staff
- Partners
- Representative organisations of particular seldom heard groups as appropriate
- Chief Officers and senior managers. This is particularly the case when the results impact their service
- Respondents
- Users, residents and other members of the community

The Scope of your Communications

Different audiences will want different levels of information. For example, residents may simply want to hear the headlines but senior managers may want to know every detail of a consultation project's findings.

Care should be taken to ensure that each audience gets the right amount of information for them. This can be done by asking them what information they want as they contribute to the project. It is also worth noting that the findings of a consultation project which focused on attitudes and perception should be communicated honestly and openly. Also, ensure that consultation project findings are made available to as wide and most appropriate audience as possible, including the voluntary / community sector, via the County Council Communications Unit and / or the 'North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations' [insert hyperlink].

The following are the different types of levels of information that may be made available following completion of a consultation project.

- Headline findings or an executive summary
- Invitation to feedback and suggestions
- An action plan
- Full results
- How the methodology worked

Explaining your Decisions

By feeding back to stakeholders and respondents to a consultation project you demonstrate transparency. A lack of feedback can have a negative effect and foster suspicion about your motives for not communicating what the consultation project found. This can make people unwilling to be involved in future (experience consultation fatigue). A checklist of what to do to maximise transparency and avoid / minimise consultation fatigue is provided below.

- Use the most appropriate communication method(s) to tell people:
  - why the consultation project was done
  - when the project was completed
  - how the project was done and how they helped
  - who else was involved
  - what the consultation project identified
  - what will happen as a result of the project in the short and longer term

Managing Complaints

Using information acquired from complaints is a vital part of service improvement. A complaint receive in one department can provide learning from many others. You should note however that people making complaints may not be representative of all of your communities. Complaints should therefore be properly researched before responding. The County Council's

Corporate Complaints System is currently being improved to help us use complaints to improve what we do.

7.0 HOW TO USE A CONSULTATION PROJECT

7.1 USING A CONSULTATION PROJECT TO IMPROVE SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES FOR CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES

You planned and completed your consultation project for a reason and defined your consultation objective around that. Details that you provided to the Consultation Project Database when you completed the pre-consultation proforma are available to say what you did, when, how, why, where, etc. And, you have provided feedback to respondents and other stakeholders telling them what the consultation project found and what is to be done with those findings. It is now time to take action.

It is not just your responsibility to do this though. The Corporate Performance and Performance Team manages the Consultation Project Database and produces quarterly reports for the Corporate Performance Management and Communications Officer Groups. These reports summarise the contents of the Consultation Project Database at any one time.

The Corporate Performance and Research Team, your Directorate representatives on those Groups, senior managers and elected Members are key to ensuring that your consultation project is used in a logical and practical way to inform and underpin service improvement.

For more guidance in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact the Corporate Performance and Research Team.