The following are taken from the Scottish Government's website as part of their 'Community Engagement 'how to' guide. More information about the logistics for these techniques is available on their website. It is likely that these will be updated in due course to take into account more modern web-based and social media methods – watch this space.

Contents

Discussion Techniques

I. Focus groups are small-group discussions that give in-depth information and views on a specific topic.

Potential uses
Focus groups are often a helpful addition to resident surveys as they will allow any emerging issues to be explored in more depth and in a less restrictive way.

How it works
Focus groups need to be kept relatively small so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute and there is scope for discussions between participants. Normally, they should involve no more than 10 people.
You should identify someone to lead the group discussion. Agree a discussion guide in advance. Make sure it is simple, and draws out the issues you are keen to explore.

Often you will need to hold more than one focus group around a topic. For example, you might want to speak with people who might have different views on the topic - so different age groups, employment patterns. Make sure groups are represented in your focus groups.

II. Appreciative Inquiry is a way of organising a group discussion to focus on the positive aspects of the issue being discussed.

How It Works
Appreciative inquiry focuses on identifying the best of existing practices. A group discussion should firstly focus on what currently works well, and use this as a basis for thinking about how existing activities could be improved in the future.

Potential Uses
Appreciative inquiry can be a useful way of ensuring that consultation or involvement does not focus on negative experiences and what has occurred in the past. It is probably best used when you are keen to focus discussions on how to roll out and expand what works, rather than focusing on problems.

III. Scenario planning is a technique that tests out a number of "future scenarios" for the development of a community or neighbourhood.

Potential uses
By looking into the future, scenario planning can help communities or organisations explore the impact of decisions. These are usually quite specific scenarios such as school closures or the building of a new road.

How it works
Most scenario planning events usually run over a series of workshops. Participants work in small groups to envisage what things will be like in the future under a range of proposed scenarios. The aim is that this will enable consensus on how best to deal with the issues that either pose a threat or opportunity for the future of an area or organisation.

IV. Conflict Resolution involves bringing together people with opposed views with the aim of educating and informing one another regarding their concerns, and beginning to reach agreement about how a contentious issue could be addressed.

How It Works
The aim of this approach is to begin to build understanding between people who do not agree on a particular issue. It generally involves bringing together a small group of people, and allowing each to explain their views. This should allow people to air their worries, but it may also be useful to ask participants to spend some time discussing more positive elements of the issue - for example how they think it could be addressed, or something that has worked to address one aspect of the problem.
The event needs to be facilitated by an independent person in order to be effective.

Potential Uses
Often this can be the first stage in a long term process of addressing differences in viewpoints. Sometimes this approach can begin to develop a consensus, through presenting different views, making suggestions and agreeing future approach. However, you should recognise that this can involve long term commitment to discussing the issue and in some cases agreement may never be reached.

IV. World Cafe is a method which makes use of an informal cafe format for participants to explore an issue by discussing in small table groups. Discussion is held in multiple rounds of 20-30 minutes. The event is concluded with a plenary.

The World Cafe is a creative process set in a cafe setting. The event either takes place in a actual cafe or else the room is set up to resemble one as much as possible with participants seated around tables and an informal atmosphere created which allows for a more relaxed and open conversation to take place.
Participants discuss the issue at hand around their table and at regular intervals they move to a new table. One participant (the table host) remains and summarises the previous conversation to the newly arrived participants. By moving participants around the room the conversations at each table are cross-fertilised with ideas from other tables. At the end of the process the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session and follow-up possibilities are discussed.

Public Event Techniques

I. Community conferences bring together local people to receive information and give feedback on issues of shared interest.

Potential uses

Community conferences provide an opportunity to inform local people and receive feedback on the plans, service developments or strategies for an area.

Community conferences are one-off events and can be limited in terms of the depth of community engagement that can be obtained. However, they can also be the first step in developing more in-depth community involvement.

How it works

Community conferences can be advertised as public meetings to which local people are invited to attend. This can make it difficult to plan numbers, so the advert should be backed up by direct invitations to representatives of community groups and other community networks.

Generally, the conferences involve presentations on the topic or proposed plans, followed by the opportunity for attendees to have any questions answered.

Opportunities for more detailed, in-depth participation can be provided by breaking up participants into smaller workshop groups.

At the end of the conference there should be a review of the day and clear indications given to participants on what happens next and how their feedback will be used.

II. An 'Open House' event involves using a local venue as a drop in centre, allowing people to gather information and share their views.

How It Works

An 'Open House' event should usually run over a long period of time - such as a whole day and evening - allowing different people to access the event. The principle is that people are able to attend whenever and for as long as they wish, making involvement more accessible to a wider cross section of the community. Generally, events are held in trusted and well known local venues. This will clearly depend on the community but may include libraries, family centres or schools.

At the event, people should have the opportunity to gather information - for example through stalls and displays - as well as share their views - for example through workshops running throughout the day. People are able to choose which parts of the event they participate in. The day should also include 'fun' elements - such as games for children and classes for adults. This can be a good way of attracting people to attend this kind of event.

Potential Uses

This type of event is particularly useful when you want to hear a wide range of views on a certain issue. It is also a good way of making initial contact with communities, and encouraging more intensive future involvement.

A series of Open House events could also be run through a roadshow programme, with events held in a series of different venues across your area. These roadshows would apply the same principles as the Open House event, but would cover a wider geographical area. This might be particularly useful in rural or remote areas, where people may not be able to easily access a central point.

III. Open space events bring together a range of people, to discuss issues around a central theme. The events are based around workshops that participants create and manage themselves.

Potential uses

Open space helps to translate detailed discussions into action plans.

It provides an opportunity to bring together the knowledge of all participants and is attractive because they set the workshop agendas. Although it appears to be flexible and informal, there are strong reporting and recording structures in place.

Open space events have a flexible framework to accommodate a range of discussions and a large number of people.

It can incorporate from 5 to 1,000 people. Events can be one-off or run over a period of time. Events are based on a central theme and participants agree on issues that are important. These are prioritised to form workshops for the event. Open space allows the most important issues to be raised and gives people whom these issues are most relevant, the opportunity to discuss them.

The workshop groups are a way of bringing together all the issues, data and ideas around a topic. The discussions of each workshop are recorded, and participants can access them at the end of the event. A condensed action plan can then be determined, and circulated to participants.

It is felt that Open space allows a fast response: ideas can be identified, prioritised and implemented quickly.

Open space has been found to be a very effective technique that focuses ideas and is a catalyst for quickly translating them into action.

IV. Interactive displays offer people the opportunity to make comments and give feedback on information or options presented to them through the display.

How It Works

Interactive displays can be run in a range of different ways. Firstly, it could simply involve giving people the opportunity to ask questions about the display - for example through setting up a stall. Other methods can also be used - such as stickers, comment cards or graffiti walls which allow people to write or draw their views on the display.

Potential Uses

Interactive displays can be a useful technique for involving people who are not used to being consulted on their views, or who may be less confident about expressing their views using more traditional engagement methods. In particular, methods such as graffiti walls can prove an innovative way of gathering the views of young people.

V. Public scrutiny involves bringing together communities and service providers to give people the opportunity to review how services are provided. The scope of this scrutiny can vary from simply allowing the opportunity to ask questions, through to influencing how services are developed and delivered in the future.

In some cases, public scrutiny can be ongoing and can provide a framework for monitoring how services are provided and getting feedback on customer satisfaction.

Potential uses

This approach is useful when you are keen to ensure that your services meet the needs of service users, and you are prepared to act on the results of public involvement.

You should give some thought to how confrontational the event could be - if there are high levels of dissatisfaction public scrutiny could be challenging and you will need to be prepared to make changes.

Trying to develop an ongoing relationship, with people involved in monitoring service provision on a longer term basis, could be a way of beginning to build trust.

Survey Techniques

I. Resident opinion surveys involve people responding to a questionnaire either through completing a form or answering the questions in an interview. For example, door-to-door or street interviews.

Potential uses

Resident surveys are a way of finding out the opinions of local people on a particular topic in a structured way that can be extensively analysed.

They are also a method for gathering data on the profile of an area and to act as a baseline for measuring changes in people's views.

They can also provide an opportunity for people to find out about the study or initiative that is taking place. Questionnaires can also be a prompt to further involvement, with participants asked if they would like to receive information or invitations to events in the future.

These surveys have the potential to reach a large number of people and can be a way of gauging the views of people who may not be in a position to engage in other ways.

How it works

With postal surveys, a better response is usually achieved if there is a prize draw for returned questionnaires.

Door-to-door surveys mean the quality and level of response may be better and they also allow a greater level of personal interaction. Door-to-door surveys can also ensure that certain groups, for example young people or people living in a particular street, are targeted.

II The LENS method was developed in Holland at the beginning of the 1990s. It offers an alternative approach to traditional survey methods.

Potential uses

LENS allows issues arising from resident's surveys to be explored in more detail and potential solutions to be examined.

How it works

Usual survey approaches focus on the existing situation and give people a limited number of potential responses. LENS provides an alternative based on "future analysis", finding out what people want to see happening in the future. It allows greater creativity in people's responses, thereby generating a wide range of ideas for community development.

It works through a series of question and answer sessions between a researcher and a resident's panel. Residents are initially asked to respond to a series of set questions about living in their area. Respondents can then attend panel meetings where responses to the survey are discussed and priorities for action identified.

The outcome of the method is a detailed plan setting out priorities, solutions, responsibilities and resource required.

III. Participatory rapid appraisal is a way of using lots of different community engagement techniques to understand community views on a particular issue. The aim is to enable local people to assess the issue, and make their own plans to address it. It is usually done quickly and intensively - over a two or three week period. A series of methods, including interviews, focus groups, mapping, events and so on are held during this time. The process is designed and led by local people. The organiser's must commit to taking action based on the feedback.

Capacity Building & Support

This doesn't have to be a separate activity undertaken before community engagement occurs but in some circumstances may be required.

It can take place with:

- Individuals - focused on increasing skills, confidence, and understanding for people involved in community activities of all types. The skills required can be very broad, involving interpersonal skills, leadership, organisational and administrative skills.

- Community groups - similar to those needed for individuals. However, more emphasis would be placed on the skills needed for organisational development and management; for visioning and planning; for working together and for working for change.

- Whole communities – where there are poorly developed or inactive groups, conflict between groups, or a failure to tackle issues facing the community; capacity building can support community forums, networks or umbrella groups to bring together local groups, addressing any differences, and working to establish a shared vision.

Specifically, effective capacity building work involves the ability to:
- ✓ Focus on the community perspective, its needs and issues
- ✓ Commission or undertake community based action-research
- ✓ Support community representatives / volunteers
- ✓ Strengthen community groups, organisations and networks
- ✓ Encourage participation, engagement and involvement
- ✓ Establish or advise on effective forums, systems, or structures
- ✓ Improve quality and impact through networking, exchanging, and communicating
- ✓ Commission or provide training, consultancy, review, and planning advice
- ✓ Provide project development and support, including accessing advice and support on ICT, organisational, financial and personnel management, and funding and resource attraction.

I. Community animateurs help promote and organise the participation of local people in

activities that help to make positive changes to their community. For example, intermediate labour market schemes, and Community Apprenticeship Schemes.

Potential uses
The role of the animateur is to provide a focus for increasing community involvement and input in development programmes in their local area such as regeneration schemes, health programmes, or crime initiatives. It can also be used to increase local skills and provide employment training. Animateurs also work with local voluntary groups to help them develop their work. They are recruited from the local community and can receive fees and training for a fixed time period.

II. Community conferences bring together local people to receive information and give

feedback on issues of shared interest and can also be the first step in developing more in-depth community involvement – see more information online.

III. Community visioning involves a group of people coming together to develop ideas about what they would like their community ideally to be like. After the vision is agreed the group will then work on looking at what needs to be done to bring about that vision and put this together in an action plan.

IV. Working in partnership with communities involves a long term commitment to engaging with individuals and groups. This is often seen as the most intensive community engagement method, as it involves participation and influence of communities within decision making structures.

How It Works
Partnership working with communities involves ensuring that people are able to influence the decisions that are made on a particular issue through long term involvement in decision making structures. This can involve setting up a community engagement structure which feeds into decision making - such as a Community Forum or Neighbourhood Panel with representation on strategic partnerships such as Community Planning Partnerships or relevant sub groups.

Potential uses
This is a useful technique to ensure that local people are involved in community regeneration planning. Visioning can be used on an area-based level or to examine specific services, such as health or education. Community visioning encourages ownership and is a positive approach to talking about change. It also gives an opportunity for the community and service providers to work together on developing agreed, shared priorities and actions.

V. Action research means that local people or community groups carry out their own research into the needs and experiences of their community. Local people should largely define what research needs to be undertaken, and how this will be done. They are then involved in actually undertaking the research - for example through community surveys, open days and so on.
The approach gives local people power in defining the issues that affect them, and the way these should be explored. It is often an effective way of doing local research, as local people often have good links with the community, and can encourage higher rates of participation. It can also help to build community capacity.

VI. Participatory evaluation focuses on involving *all key stakeholders* in assessing the performance and achievements of an organisation, project or initiative. Local communities are clearly a key stakeholder in regeneration activity.
All stakeholders jointly set the aims for the research, and specify how it will be undertaken. The focus is on making sure that the research will be useful to all stakeholders. It requires quite a time commitment.

VII. Participatory budgeting is a tool that can be used to engage people in making decisions about how local budgets are spent.

How it works
There are many different ways of using participatory budgeting in local situations. Local people are invited to make decisions on priorities, services and budgets in their local area. This can be done on a formal, regular basis. For example local people could be involved in

neighbourhood committees, which develop proposals for budget allocations and projects. Or, it can be more informal. You could hold a local event open to anyone, and ask people to make decisions about funding.

Potential uses
Participatory budgeting is a way of involving communities in service planning and delivery in local services.

Using Arts & Innovation

I. Graphic recording is a way of recording discussions at an event through use of symbols and pictures.

How It Works

Graphic recording involves the use of an artist to represent the ongoing discussions at an event through using symbols or pictures. This artist could be a professional, or could involve a nominated community representative or facilitator. The pictures are drawn during the discussions for all to see, meaning that people have the opportunity to see what people are saying.

Potential Uses

This approach is particularly useful for anyone who has literacy difficulties, learning difficulties or people for whom English is not their first language. However, it can be an interesting way of involving any communities in discussions.

II. Legislative theatre is one example of using the arts to promote public involvement in relation to service provision.

Potential uses

Legislative theatre can be used to increase interest in local issues and developments, particularly among individuals or target groups that may not engage through traditional methods such as public meetings.

Legislative theatre can assist policy makers in identifying local priorities and consulting on issues and service developments.

How it works

Local people are involved in developing a play that it is relevant to their local area. During performances, the audience is encouraged to participate so that there is interaction and debate.

III. Story Dialogue involves bringing together people with different experiences of an issue to raise awareness and create understanding.

How It Works

The Story Dialogue process itself can be broken down into four stages:

- The story teller tells their story. You'll need to brief the story teller in advance (see section below on briefing) and ideally identify the theme(s) that the story will cover – it will help to give participants an idea of the aspects of practice that might be covered, although the discussion may go in different directions.
- Participants are encouraged to clarify the story using 'WHAT' and 'WHY' questions. These questions will largely be directed to the story teller.
- The facilitator helps the group to move on to questions that will generate new insights and useful lessons for practice: SO WHAT have we learned? NOW WHAT can we do about it? These questions can be explored in the whole group if it is small enough, or in groups of 3-4 if there are more than a handful of participants. As the participants address these questions, they should be encouraged to jot down each insight on a card.
- The facilitator collects in the insights and tries to group them together where appropriate, to generate collective lessons.

Regular Involvement Techniques

I. A citizens' jury is a small group of people who meet over a short period of time (usually between three and five days) to be informed about a specific local issue or topic and to debate the issue in order to come to conclusions or identify solutions.
Citizens' juries are organised by an agency or organisation that wishes to have public input on a particular decision or identified areas for action.

Potential uses
Juries can feed into particular decisions taken by an organisation or debate a specific topic and make recommendations about it.
Examples of a single-issue topic include a decision on where to site a hospital. A jury could also be held to discuss youth crime and to debate potential solutions.

How it works
Membership is drawn from the general public and the format is broadly similar to that of a court case. The jury is presented with evidence and can question and discuss this with those "witnesses" presenting verbal evidence. An independent moderator leads the jury in their discussion.
Once all the information has been considered and presented and the jury has had sufficient time for deliberation, they make a series of recommendations. This can be quite an expensive tool.

II. Citizens' panels involve a representative sample of the local population, who have agreed to take part in consultation activity. They can involve between 500 to 3,000 people. Potential participants are normally recruited by random sampling, or door to door recruitment. You should try to make sure that panel membership is broadly representative of the population. Consider issues like age, gender, ethnic origin and disability.
Panel members are then asked to complete surveys on a regular basis. You can choose to ask the whole panel to fill in the survey, or target particular groups - such as older people or minority ethnic groups.
Often, citizens' panels are set up jointly, for example by Community Planning partners. This means that surveys can explore a range of different issues, and consultation takes place in a co-ordinated way.
Generally, citizens' panels can achieve high response rates and are fairly cost effective. They can also measure whether people's views are changing over time. This can help to assess the impact of service developments.

Toolkits

Priority Search

Priority Search is a specialist technique, and can only be used through buying Priority Search software. It involves using focus groups to identify some of the main issues affecting people in their local area. The issues raised in these focus groups are then fed into the Priority Search software, which automatically generates a survey for use with a wider group of people.

The survey is designed so that there are various different statements about key issues, and respondents identify which is more important to them. Statements are presented in different ways throughout the survey, with the aim of identifying which issues are most important to the respondent.

Future Search

Future Search is a way of organising intensive meetings and discussions about future actions on a particular issue. It involves bringing together large groups of people - at least 60 to 80 - to discuss their experiences in small groups and plan for the future. Future Search is a specific technique with a standard methodology for running these events. The minimum length for a Future Search event is four sessions of half a day each, spread across three days to allow for 'soak time'.

Dialogue Designer

Online tool which asks four questions about your proposed engagement and gives a number of approach options. It asks:

- What you want to achieve
- Who you want to consult with
- How sensitive the subject matter or relationship is
- How much time you have to run the consultation

The choices you make in response to each question will help you plan your consultation. At each step you may be offered guidance on the choices you have made. After your response to the final question one or more possible consultation methods will be suggested. Each method has further information for you to explore, and there is also support as you go through the process about how to select the groups with whom you wish to consult – for example how to ensure you get proportional representation if that's key to the engagement activity; or how to engagement professionals/experts in the field.

To access the tool go to: http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/DDdefault.htm. There is also a comprehensive handbook covering the tool and community engagement as a concept at: http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/Docs/Dialogue_by_Design_Handbook.pdf.

Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE)

This is a tool that the Scottish Government as part of the work around the 10 National Standards in Community Engagement support SCDC to create – it allows you to record each step of the engagement process logically to facilitate well-constructed, managed and evaluated engagement from which you can learn and improve your practise. It is essentially a recording tool which takes you through steps of: Analyse – Plan – Do – Review and can help you:

- Reflect on what you're trying to achieve
- Develop plans that relate to your purpose
- Monitor progress in implementing your plan

▪ Evaluate the process and outcomes to learn lessons for future activity

It is free to register on the website, and there is also a databank from across Scotland which you can tap into.

For more information go to: http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a method to help with planning and evaluating community development activity. It was devised by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC).

The method aims to ensure there is clarity about:

• The aims of community engagement activity
• What activities will be undertaken
• How success will be measured.

SCDC has produced training and resource materials explaining how to use the ABCD approach and it is the basis for the LEAP (Learning Evaluation And Planning) approach. More information can be found at: http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/LEAP/.

Planning For Real

Planning for real has been used since the late 1970s as a way to give local people a 'voice' and professionals a clear idea of local people's needs in order to bring about improvement to their neighbourhood or community. Although the basic idea behind it has remained the same, the technique has evolved over the last 20 years. With training and advice, groups have adapted the principles to suit their own specific needs.

Planning for real is a practical technique involving a 3D architectural model of a local area, which people use to decide what needs to be done to improve their surroundings. Groups have used it to tackle all sorts of issues relating to housing, traffic, community safety, vandalism and the living environment (parks and play areas).
The recognised advantages are that it engages people; lets them take an overview; gives everyone a chance to join in; and generates ideas.