DEVELOPING YOUR COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

a practical guide for LSPs
Acknowledgements
The production of this guide has been a collaborative venture, with a number of people contributing. In particular Jane Foot, Sue Oppenheim, Helen Hughes, Neil Cleeveley and Toby Blume have all played a major role in putting it together. We’d also like to acknowledge the input from LGIU and all the localities that shared their experience to inform the guide.

This Guide has been published jointly by the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA), Urban Forum and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

Developing Your Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy
A Practical Guide for Local Strategic Partnerships
First Edition 2009
Published by Urban Forum, 33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR
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First published March 2009
ISBN no 978-0-9551421-4-7

1. Introduction

2. Why do a CCES?

   What is a comprehensive community engagement strategy?

   What is engagement?

   Why do community engagement at a locality level?

   The benefits of a CCES

3. Where are you now?

   Attitudes, aspirations and practice

   Performance data

   Mapping current engagement

   Cost analysis

   Assessing effectiveness

4. Where do you want to be?

   Policy context

   Local ambition

   ‘From here to there’ – what will get you to where you want to be?

   Planning for implementation

5. What Should go into your CCES?

   Values and principles

   Targets and priorities

   Roles and responsibilities

   Shared resources

   Shared learning programmes

   Sharing information

   Multi-partner structures

   Co-ordinated support for the Third Sector

   Joint actions

6. Conclusion

   10 handy hints for effective community engagement

   Further Information One

   Further Information Two
INTRODUCTION

Councils and their LSP partners are all committed to engaging with service users and empowering their communities. With less top down regulation, communities, councillors and partners can work together to improve well-being, guided by local priorities and a shared sense of what matters locally.

But in each area, there are a wide range of engagement practices, undertaken by different partners and services, and organised by neighbourhood or theme. The new ‘Duty to inform, consult and involve’ means that working in isolation is neither effective nor efficient. The Comprehensive Area Agreement framework will encourage local partners to review their arrangements and plan for the new requirements. LSPs and their partners recognise the need to streamline and co-ordinate community engagement and a number of areas are already working on a joint approach.

This guide sets out the arguments for a strategic approach to comprehensive community engagement in a locality, how to develop the strategy, who should be involved and what it should cover. This guide is aimed at local empowerment champions, practitioners, elected councillors, officers tasked with developing a comprehensive engagement strategy and anyone with an interest in community empowerment and engagement.

The council may well take the lead in proposing that the LSP partners promote the development of community engagement within the Police and the National Health Service is already well established and already at the heart of local engagement practice. But community empowerment, citizen satisfaction and service accountability are shared themes in all public services, and it is the role of the LSP to take on the responsibility for the CCES.

Voluntary sector and third sector organisations, as well as community groups, must be an integral part of developing and implementing the CCES. Local infrastructure organisations (LIOs), Community Empowerment Networks (CENs) and other community forums have a central role to play in shaping the strategy as well as engaging communities and linking them to councillors and other decision makers.

It is still early days. Most local areas are at the start of developing a comprehensive and locality based approach to engagement and empowerment. This guide will help stimulate local debate and change, and bring about a shift in power, influence and control to communities.
2. WHY DO A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (CCES)?

WHAT IS A CCES

- All partners in a local area should have a co-ordinated and strategic approach to community engagement and involvement – set out in their **Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy (CCES)**.
- A **CCES** connects councillors, community and citizen engagement and partnership decision making.
- A **CCES** commits all partners to work with each other and with communities to empower local people and improve local outcomes.
- A **CCES** starts from the perspective of the locality and the people who live in the area, not from the perspective of separate organisations or services.
- A **CCES** enables engagement about local aspirations, issues and improvements that require joined up working by partners and communities.
- A **CCES** is a framework that enables partners to bring together their community engagement work and plans.

The locality

A CCES will need to be developed by the LSP because of the link with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the agreed targets for increasing community involvement and improving quality of life.

A CCES can also be developed by a District LSP incorporating both LAA targets and their local targets. In two tier areas (and three tiers where parish and town councils exist), the districts, county (and parish council) partners will have to ensure that there is a good ‘fit’ between their respective strategies.

The majority of councils and many other partners already have some area-based working or local forums that cover an estate, a group of streets, a single ward, several wards, or clusters of parishes. The CCES provides a framework to integrate and co-ordinate these arrangements, recognising their significance not just for community empowerment but for service improvement.

Some CCES’s will also include co-ordination at a sub-regional level – that is at multi local authority areas. Much of the planning and delivery in relation to jobs, skills, housing strategies, transport and spatial planning happens at a sub-regional level, and the CCES can provide routes by which local communities can engage with these important issues.

What is engagement?

There are almost as many definitions and terms in use as there are partners and policy makers. There is particular confusion about the terms ‘engagement’, ‘empowerment’, ‘participation’ and ‘consultation’. A CCES will need to:

- Agree which terms and definitions are going to be used to avoid confusion and misunderstandings within the LSP.
- Be consistent in their language and be clear with residents about what they can expect.
- Take account of the range of activities that are covered by the Duty to Involve.

Different activities and expectations will be appropriate in different circumstances. Managers and communities will want to decide together what kind of engagement activity is appropriate, and be clear about the purpose of the activity, how much scope there is for communities to influence decisions and how communities will be involved.

In this guide, **community engagement** is used to describe the activities. **Community empowerment** is the objective and intended outcome of those activities.
Who to involve?
The duty to inform, consult and involve applies to 'representatives of local persons'.

Who are ‘local persons’?
Local persons are those likely to be affected by or interested in a particular function. People who live in the local area also includes:
- people who work in the area (including those who work for public bodies).
- people who study in the area
- visitors
- service users
- local third sector groups
- businesses
- bodies such as parish councils
- anyone else likely to be affected or interested in the function.
This means the CCES must also include ways of involving those who work, study or run businesses locally.

Who are representatives of local persons?
Councils and other partners covered by the duty should:
- Consider who is likely to be affected by or have an interest in the function.
- Involve a ‘mix of local persons’ – that is broadly representative of the individuals, groups, businesses or organisations considered to have an interest.
- Take steps to ensure that all parts of the community are involved, including marginalised groups, vulnerable people and others who are termed ‘hard to hear’.
- Apply the public sector equality duties: that means that partners must not discriminate in the way they engage, and must ensure that all groups have an equal opportunity to get involved.

The term ‘representative’ is not in this instance meant to refer to councillors.
A ‘function’ is more than a service – it is anything that is the responsibility of a local partner, including significant one-off decisions.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT is what happens through engagement and other activities. Power, influence and responsibility is devolved from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens. They gain the power to take decisions about services and initiatives that affect their lives.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OR INVOLVEMENT is the actions that agencies take to enable them to consult, involve, listen and respond to communities through ongoing relationships and dialogue. Communities participate with other partners to develop solutions, shape and design policies and services. Communities are involved in shared decision making.

CONSULTATION is the process by which agencies seek advice, information and opinions about strategies, policies and services, to inform their decision-making and design good services. This includes many familiar activities such as surveys, research projects, public meetings, user and resident forums. Agencies make decisions influenced by the knowledge they have gathered through consultation.

INFORMATION is an essential element of customer focus and community engagement. As well as improving access to and use of services, agencies should provide information to residents and those who work or study in the area about the options in relation to services, policies and proposed improvements. This information should encourage and enable meaningful community engagement and consultation.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 specifies three ways of involving local people:
(a) providing information about the exercise of the function,
(b) consulting about the exercise of the function, or
(c) involving in another way.

1 see Para 2.15 LGPIHS Statutory Guidance
2 Currently local authorities and Fire & Rescue authorities. The Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Bill proposes to extend the duty to a range of other public bodies including Homes & Community Agency, RDAs and the Police.
WHY DO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT A LOCALITY LEVEL?

Much has been written – most recently in the Community Empowerment White Paper and its Evidence Annex – about the benefits of or the ‘business case’ for engagement. This Guide argues that developing engagement at a locality level will bring improved opportunities and benefits to all partners, to the community and to the LSP.

Across government, the agenda is multi-agency and area based. The Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve, the Duty to Co-operate and the Comprehensive Area Agreement reflect this approach. These external requirements will drive the development of a CCES as an efficient and effective way to work. A strategic framework will bring all the engagement activity in a locality together, enabling partners to work together to address cross cutting issues and avoid duplication.

THE BENEFITS OF A CCES

A locality-wide comprehensive engagement strategy offers the following opportunities and benefits:

1. Improved service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness

Citizens and communities have knowledge and information about the wider concerns of the area, the different causes of and solutions to local problems and ideas about what would be a better use of available resources. This knowledge is essential for service improvement.

- A citizen or user viewpoint can drive collaborative working, and be a spur to joining up services more effectively.
- Many of the local priorities in a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) will only be achieved if communities are engaged and contribute their knowledge and resources.
- Multi-partner neighbourhood management principles should be at the centre of the service improvement agenda.
- The LSP will be involving communities in their joint commissioning.
- By working together to do community engagement and sharing their knowledge, the LSP can reduce duplication and waste.

2. Strengthened communities and cohesion

To have good community engagement in public services, the LSP has to build and sustain inclusive and dynamic community activity – from which involvement and engagement grow.

- A CCES should build on existing networks and relationships and provide opportunities for dialogue across communities and different interests.
- A CCES commits partners to investing in social capital, community development and building capacity in the area.
- A CCES must integrate work on tackling inequality and strengthening community cohesion.
- A CCES can ensure that the principles of ‘visible fairness’ and social justice apply across a locality – between different communities and interests – and across all services.
- A coherent and common approach to investing in skills, knowledge and resources will enable community engagement to be effective: this applies to voluntary and community organisations, councillors and front line staff in public and third sector agencies.
- All partners contribute to improving residents’ feelings of “belonging to their neighbourhood” (NI 2), their confidence in their “ability to influence decisions locally” (NI 4), and to their overall “satisfaction with the area” (NI 5) by identifying and solving problems. These are not specific to any partner but a reflection on all of them.

Over time, public sector organisations have developed their own community engagement approaches.

We have reached a point where these overlap and there are just too many meetings, resulting in consultation fatigue for both communities and the public sector itself.

Therefore, this is more costly than it needs to be and increases the potential for un-co-ordinated action”

Wycombe District Council
3. Strengthened accountability of partners and partnerships

Some would argue there is a ‘democratic deficit’ at the heart of localism. The reputation of councils will be enhanced by taking the lead on developing a CCES that connects elected councillors, citizen participation and partnership decision-making.

- The LSP should take the lead in adopting and promoting community engagement in order to improve the legitimacy and accountability of partnerships.
- A CCES can work for much greater accountability of local services. It complements extended scrutiny powers and can tackle residents’ perception of ‘buck-passing’.
- A CCES can link the work of councillors, community groups and partners into a coherent approach to engaging and involving local people.
- It can establish a more co-ordinated and coherent approach to community representation on the LSP, the thematic partnerships and other decision making bodies: how they are selected, supported and enabled to be accountable.
- Many local people volunteer for civic governance roles such as school governors or members of a regeneration board. The CCES can map these roles and provide routes for them to be accountable.
- Decisions about new democratic and engagement structures such as local community councils and forums – neighbourhood, town, area, parishes etc - should be part of the overall design of governance and engagement in an area, and part of the CCES.
- The CCES can agree ways to have more clarity and consistency in the information from all partners.

4. People are engaged about things that matter to them

A CCES creates the joined-up structures that enable communities to engage with the things that matter and in ways that make sense to them – rather than in ways that reflect different organisational boundaries and ways of seeing the world.

- A CCES creates opportunities for people to engage as citizens in decisions about their areas: the town, neighbourhood and community. Not just as a service user or customer.
- Communities can contribute to strategic decisions and influence partners’ priorities that are contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Development Framework, Joint Service Needs Analysis and Local Area Agreement.

"The changes do not require large sums of money but rather a commitment to use resources better; for example, carrying out community consultation and staff training together, rather than separately”

Wolverhampton One City Partnership

10 REASONS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. Improve service delivery
2. Reduce inefficiency and duplication in engagement practice
3. Strengthen partnership working
4. Increase citizen satisfaction levels
5. Improve accountability of the LSP and partners
6. Better knowledge of existing engagement practice and resources
7. Stronger links between communities and decision-makers
8. Bottom-up approach to service improvement
9. Improved CAA ratings, both locality assessments and organisational assessments
10. Improved outcomes for local people

- The CCES provides a context for partners to engage with different groups, such as young people, new communities and women, about their concerns which may not fall within service, neighbourhood or issue categories and require multi-agency responses.
- It provides the means to engage with and address the issues that all partners are concerned with but none are solely responsible for, such as migration, sustainable development, social cohesion and inequality.

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3 see the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill 2008 proposed Duty to Promote Democracy
3. WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

The previous chapter set out reasons why LSPs should take steps to develop a comprehensive community engagement strategy. This chapter covers the process of assessing what partners are currently doing. This is the first step to developing a clear vision of what you want to achieve in the future and how to develop your strategy, which are explained in subsequent chapters.

The outcome of the initial scoping stage is an explicit and realistic statement of what the local engagement priorities are, which partners are signed up, what will be included in the CCES and what will remains a matter for individual organisations, albeit better co-ordinated.

**Taking stock**

The first task is to establish where the LSP and each of the partners are at in terms of:

1. Their attitudes, aspirations and practice in relation to engagement.
2. Current performance, based on national performance indicators and other data.
3. Existing activities and structures.
4. The amount of money and other resources invested in engagement across the locality.

By assessing where you are currently, you will be able to compare this against where partners need to be to meet the new duties as well as achieving their ambitions. This will help to shape the CCES and identify the priorities for co-operation.
1. GAUGING ATTITUDES, ASPIRATIONS AND PRACTICE

An analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of partners’ attitudes to and aspirations for engagement generally and to developing a locality-wide approach will help you judge how far and how fast you can move. It will also clarify what initial work will be needed to prepare the ground for a CCES.

How far do partners agree:
- community engagement is a priority in the area
- a CCES is an effective way forward
- a CCES will help deliver shared targets and aspirations
- to put in sufficient resources to develop it
- they are willing to implement the shared strategy in their organisations and in the partnerships on which they sit
- that the LSP will be the champion of the strategy
- that the third sector should be resourced to be active in the CCES’s development and implementation.

Assessing local circumstances:
- What is the history of local attitudes, experiences and expectations of community involvement?
- How do the different partners see the opportunities of a CCES? How can any differences be reconciled?
- Are voluntary and community sector infrastructure bodies equipped to contribute effectively?
- Whose voices are not heard now, but should be heard in the future?
- What do the partners think of the LSP taking the lead? Are they willing to devolve?

The Echo tool\(^2\) can help agencies assess how open they are to community influence, and how able they are to respond. Using it to assess the relative position of different partners could inform the CCES scoping.

The NEA Framework for an Ideal Empowering Authority\(^1\) is a self assessment and peer challenge tool that can be used by councils, public sector partners and the LSP. It assesses how well an organisation is doing and helps to identify areas for improvement, which can be incorporated into the CCES.

The five pillars of the Framework are:
1. mainstreaming an empowering organisational culture
2. neighbourhood and community working
3. the role of councillors
4. evidence and business case for empowerment
5. integrating empowerment, cohesion, equalities and human rights.

You can use participatory research or focus groups to find out what community engagement practitioners and community groups think are the priorities for a CCES and for ‘joining up practice’. What do they think the barriers will be and what ideas do they have for strengthening collaboration and improving efficiency?

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority: Embedding community fire safety

MFR is a Beacon authority for its community outreach and partnerships work to reduce the risk of fires. Its work with community advocates found that those most at risk of fire were often also in need of care, health and housing services, and was able to work with partners to access those services. Its work in youth clubs and schools has also been recognised for its innovation.


2. BASELINE THE PERFORMANCE DATA

Collate all the data that you collect on engagement to provide the evidence base for the CCES and for monitoring to measure progress.
- Baseline data on all the National Indicator Set Performance Indicators (PIs) that cover engagement as well as satisfaction, trust and other outcomes that rely on communities being engaged, particularly those in the LAA.
- Are partners collecting other national and local measures that you can use for a snapshot of the current situation?
- Use qualitative methods such as focus groups with representatives from community groups or with councillors, surveys and online surveys of partners to assess current effectiveness.
- Survey voluntary and community groups to find out what they would like to see in the CCES.
- Do existing community engagement initiatives collect feedback, and evaluate practice?

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1. Available via www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge - community empowerment and engagement pages. The Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA) is a network of 18 councils supported by IDeA.
2. www.changes.uk.net
3. MAPPING CURRENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

It is important to have an idea of what is happening locally. What structures exist for engagement with communities of place, identity or interest? How successful are these activities? What influence do communities have now and where do they want to influence in the future? The CCES needs to build on and improve existing work and relationships.

The development of the CCES can make use of the familiar methods of mapping, self assessment and auditing. Doing it at an LSP level can make it more complex and challenging, but you can build up the information over time through community research, e-surveys, working with front line staff and councillors and a wide range of other methods.

Mapping can be challenging but it is extremely valuable. Agencies and partners may not be able tell you exactly what engagement activity their organisation carries out or how much time and money they spend on it. Partners will have different definitions and understandings of what constitutes engagement. You will almost certainly find duplication and inefficiencies; communities often complain of being over-consulted and of numerous agencies approaching them at different times asking similar questions.

Mapping engagement is valuable because it makes visible what the different partners are doing. It should lead to some efficiencies and rationalisation. It will highlight potential for co-ordination and collaboration. The end product is a very useful tool for improved co-ordination by partners, and better community knowledge of the opportunities to get involved that exist.

There is no one way to do the mapping but the key challenge is to agree a format for organising the information that fits locally. Depending on the scale of activities in your area and your current level of knowledge, there are different ‘typologies’ and organising principles that you can use:

1. Use an agreed ‘typology of activities’ e.g. all consultation surveys, all neighbourhood structures, all information giving activities. Local partners and communities will use lots of different tools and activities in the course of a single process.
2. Map out different community engagement structures e.g. neighbourhood forums, tenant and resident associations, user groups, forums, and which geographical areas or groups they cover.

3. Map different communities – service or function focused, community of interest or identity, geographical communities – and how they are being consulted and involved. Where are the gaps in representation?

4. Prioritise those activities that:
   - Do, or could, impact on LAA targets.
   - Will deliver shared legal or regulatory requirements e.g. CAAs, Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve and Equalities Duties.
   - Are associated with neighbourhood governance or management and tackling inequality.
   - Are aimed at empowering citizens and communities or improving cohesion.
   - Are cross-cutting and impact on more than one partner.

In future you may want to expand the mapping to other priorities. It is useful to refer to the lead partner who is responsible for the activity and where possible to the specific outcome or target they are trying to achieve (e.g. increasing volunteers, increasing the number of people who feel they can influence decisions, increasing service satisfaction or reviewing a policy).

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**Derbyshire Community Engagement Group**

This working group includes all the public sector partners who consult and engage with communities in the county. This includes the county council, all district councils, Connexions, Derbyshire Mental Health Trust, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire County Primary Care Trust and Derbyshire Constabulary.

They have signed a concordat and have an annual work programme. They work together to;

- co-ordinate and collaborate, through regular meetings, sharing skills and joint problem solving.
- facilitate and share best practice, and advise on quality standards.

They are planning to map all engagement activities in the county.

4. COST ANALYSIS: WHAT RESOURCES ARE PARTNERS INVESTING IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Partners are already investing significant human and financial resources in community engagement and involvement. These costs may include:

- direct costs: staff, venues, communications, volunteers’ expenses, research, grants to the third sector and other bodies.
- expenditure on consultants and other research finding out about residents’ and customer views and priorities.
- estimated indirect costs from other staff e.g. portions of staff time, skills training, communications budgets, events.

Some partners may also have other income headings. For instance, they are making use of Area Based Grant for former NRF activities, external funds from Europe, government programmes or Lottery funding. These may be tied to specific services or geographical areas.

The easiest way to estimate costs is to do it roughly as part of the mapping exercise. Involve’s True Costs of Participation Framework offers a structured way of thinking through the complexities of the costs and value of participation. For the purposes of this mapping, a much simplified version can be used.

5. HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR ENGAGEMENT?

What information do partners have about the impact of the engagement activities on decision making, service improvement or feelings of empowerment?

Starting with your map of activities, ask yourselves what are the intended outcomes of each engagement activity? Does it impact on the way that people or organisations behave? If so, which outcome is it helping to achieve?

Do you have hard data on things like citizen and community satisfaction with engagement methods and outcomes? What evidence do you have that working with communities is having an impact on other outcomes such as recycling or healthy eating? You can make use of qualitative (or soft) information such as anecdotes or views from front line staff which will give you a ‘feel’ for how well you are doing.

Survey community groups on how joined-up they feel engagement is, and identify any changes they feel could be made to reduce duplication and confusion, improve representation and inclusion and support them to be more involved.

Bad experiences of engagement can destroy trust and good will. This exercise may well identify things you should stop doing altogether. “Poorly thought out empowerment initiatives can lead to disempowerment which in turn reduces local well-being”.

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Newcastle Partnership DRAFT
Community Empowerment Framework
A Partnership Approach

Newcastle Partnership is proposing to adopt a Community Empowerment Framework. It is still early days but it is intended to create a context in which the work and the plans of many partners can be brought together and developed. It will help tackle some of the key empowerment challenges for the city such as:

- What agencies have to do to become truly empowering?
- How communities by location and communities of interest and identity can all be empowered?
- How empowerment and engagement can be developed across all neighbourhoods in the city?


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3 Open Strategy tool (www.openstrategies.co.uk/how.php) can help analyse the connections between activity and impact.
4 Young Foundation (2007) Neighbourliness = Empowerment = Well-being
2. LOCAL AMBITIONS

LSPs – through their Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and LAA – will already have agreed to priorities and targets that relate to community involvement:

- The SCS may include commitments to:
  - Strengthening community cohesion.
  - Stronger communities, thriving voluntary and community sector
  - Support for social enterprise.
- LAA targets to increase the number of citizens who feel involved or able to influence local decisions.
- LAA targets which may require engaging with citizens and communities in new ways e.g. reducing smoking, taking more physical exercise.
- Supporting better representation and accountability of third sector organisations on local partnerships.
- Police and councils may be supporting neighbourhood working or management of services.
- Specific partners may be working on new policies or services which will include community engagement, for example the Local Development Framework or the new assessment of economic conditions.

The CCES must address the bottom-up concerns as much as it meets the government’s agenda. Communities will have their own priorities to join up engagement, hold partnerships to account, reduce duplication and buck passing and to tackle problems that need multi-agency collaboration.
3. WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHERE YOU ARE NOW AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE IN THE FUTURE?

Comparing what you do now and what you will need to do in the future is a critical stage. It marks out where change is needed, what you will need to do differently and where new arrangements are required. This is the ‘bottom line’ for deciding the CCES goals and priorities:

- Where are the gaps between what LSP partners do now and what they collectively or individually need or aspire to do? What do communities say they want?
- Where are the overlaps and duplications?
- What is not effective or worthwhile?
- What new or different things will partners have to do to meet their legal requirements?
- What will it take to achieve the community involvement targets the LSP is already committed to?
- Where are the benefits of being more joined up?
- What structures will be needed to engage communities? Or to co-ordinate engagement?
- What will need to be done to meet the new CAA benchmark?
- Does the third sector have the resources and capacity to fulfil its role?
- What are communities telling you to do to improve engagement and empowerment?

**Risk analysis**

- What are the risks and costs of the LSP not taking a co-ordinated and strategic approach?
- What are the risks to the LSP’s reputation if citizens and communities are not involved and do not feel empowered or able to influence?
- What are the risks of signing up to a CCES?
- What are the risks of not getting buy-in from all partners?

You will need to consider how you can respond to these risks and find ways to minimise their impact and likelihood of occurring.

You will not be able to make the final decision about the scope of the CCES until you have tested the water in terms of the partners’ willingness to collaborate, done some initial mapping of the scale of activities and assessed what resources you will have available.

**Wolverhampton One City LSP – Community and Public Involvement Strategy for Wolverhampton**

The LSP has a strategy for all partners to work together to engage and involve local people. The Citywide Involvement Network oversees the strategy and reports to the LSP Board. The Strategy contains:

- a statement of values shared by all partners providing services
- a mission statement and the planned improvements
- shared principles that will underpin involvement
- the actions that the partners will take to join up their engagement, for example:
  - shared policies and quality standards
  - ways of informing, consulting, involving people and providing feedback
  - activities that are inclusive but do not duplicate
  - opportunities for communities and users to develop their skills to support their involvement
  - a shared database of involvement initiatives and techniques
  - websites that link partners, community organisations

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/065BABE6-6BFD-49B4-B1FD-AB3ECB56E70A/0/consultationstrategy.pdf

4. PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Think ahead to implementation. It is obvious that a strategy that only exists on paper is not worth a lot and can actually be damaging as it makes it more difficult to mobilise support for another try. What is going to be the best way to make this work in your area?

**A change process**

If community engagement is to be meaningful, it will be a fundamental challenge to the way public services work and how decisions are made: it is an organisational change process. Each partnership and each partner will need to look closely at ‘how they do things’ and make the changes that reflect the transformed relationship between local public services, councillors and citizens.

A CCES is more than just principles and good intentions. It contains clear ambitions linked to agreed targets and outcomes, commitments to joint action and detailed plans for how partners are going to work together. Clear milestones and properly resourced implementation plans will assure local people and external inspectors that partners are committed to improvement.
It is better to negotiate a realistic scope and achievable goals to start with. You will have to judge where partners can rationalise and coordinate better and where new activities or opportunities are needed as part of the strategy.

**Getting ownership of the CCES**

Meaningful involvement will only come from all the participants feeling that they are contributing towards goals that they have helped to formulate. This may well make demands of all partners.

- **Ownership** – all partners must have a stake in its success. Community buy-in is as important as public sector and third sector engagement.
- **Progress** – planning how you are going to demonstrate that the CCES is effective so that partners are confident to extend its scope.
- **Learn** – from each other – different sectors have different traditions, networks and learning in relation to community engagement.
- **Resources** – make a realistic assessment of the staff and other resources available for both development and implementation.
- **Cultural fit** – for some areas and sectors delegating powers to an LSP-led body is challenging.
- **Inclusivity** – how is this CCES going to make community engagement more inclusive and give greater access to those without power or voice.
- **Embedded** – the CCES has to become embedded in the day job of managers and frontline staff.
- **Expertise** – specialist staff and community groups can advise on the best engagement practices and principles.
- **Political backing** – political buy-in is really important especially as the CCES will include some councillors’ activities.
- **Monitor and review** – commit to monitoring the impact of the CCES, and to making changes to improve it.

**Structures, links and networks**

New partnership structures can be kept to a minimum.

- The LSP Executive is the sponsoring body of the CCES.
- A working group of all partners who are signed up to the CCES to take responsibility for implementation and monitoring progress.
- Where necessary, a specialist task and finish group can work on a specific outcome, target or activity.
- Communications – simple routes and channels that keep the CCES group in touch are essential. A shared part of one of the partners’ websites is one way to do this.
- The role of the local infrastructure organisation, Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and other forums that engage local people should be defined and funded.

- Working networks, e.g. community engagement staff or community development workers, can be a useful way to collaborate and share knowledge across partners.

**Croydon – Getting closer to communities**

Croydon LSP has a well developed approach to community involvement.

- The LSP has one third of its membership from the VCS, one third from the private sector and one third from the public sector.
- The Community Network chooses the VCS representatives to sit on partnerships and holds them to account.
- 10 Neighbourhood Partnerships enable local people to discuss issues with the full range of public sector providers.
- Neighbourhood Plans provide for joint action between agencies.
- A Community Development Forum brings together community development workers from different agencies.
- The Community Involvement Strategy Group, with representatives of the key agencies, co-ordinates involvement activities and develops good practice.

Croydon is a Beacon Council for Getting Closer to Communities www.beacons.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/764846

**Signing off**

The final stages of drafting the CCES will be to agree the ongoing management arrangements for the strategy. This is something that the CAA will examine.

- Is it clear where the time and resources will come from to manage and progress the strategy? Can you point to them in the partners’ budgets and service plans?
- What are the arrangements for the LSP to monitor implementation and achievements?
- Who is the Councillor Champion? Or the LSP Executive Champion?
- Have you conducted a risk analysis of the CCES? Is it clear how the LSP will manage these risks?
- How will the CCES be reviewed to take account of changes or new opportunities?
- How will the CCES be promoted to partners and citizens?
- What training will accompany implementation?
- How will community engagement objectives be written into service specifications, job descriptions and performance appraisal for those working on partnership projects?
5. WHAT SHOULD GO IN YOUR CCES?

There is no single model or template for the contents of a CCES. This Guide suggests the following headings:

1. Shared values and principles
2. Agreed targets and priorities
3. Roles and responsibilities
4. Shared resources
5. Shared learning
6. Shared information
7. Multi-partner structures
8. Co-ordinated support for the community sector
9. Joint engagement activities

1. Shared values and principles
A statement of values and principles makes an explicit commitment to the benefit of empowering and engaging citizens and communities. The CCES is an opportunity to review and upgrade all the partners’ existing commitments in terms of good engagement practice, effective relationships, representation, and equalities.

It is quite likely that there is already an agreed Compact between third sector organisations and public sector organisations. It may provide a good starting point for identifying values and principles, as well as working standards.

Embedding equalities and human rights
Equality and diversity are integral to the practice of participation.

- The public sector equalities duties, not to discriminate and to promote equality of opportunity, apply to the Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve.
- The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 specifies that the Citizens Panel set up under the Act must include communities who are under-represented in civic and political activity.

Wakefield Partnership: The Engagement Framework
The Partnership’s Engagement Framework provides for a consistent approach by all partners when engaging communities.

It includes:
- the partnership’s commitments to work together
- the principles that will guide their work
- a commitment to community development to support engagement, learning and development for staff and communities
- Partnership Advisory Group to advise and oversee the Framework
- an online resource with tools and best practice
- A website tracker of current and planned community engagement.

www.wakefieldlsp.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F5E2E2C4-7AECE42FD93DC61F48D5D629/0/Engagement_Framework.pdf
2. Agreed targets and priorities

Agree your shared goals and priorities based on all the work you’ve done to assess your current activities and compare them with future requirements and ambitions. What are your agreed targets and outcomes in relation to engagement and empowerment? How will the CCES help partners meet their joint duties and shared commitments?

The LSP, through the CCES, must clarify which are the key issues that partners are going to collaborate on and which ones they are going to co-ordinate. There is a spectrum of joined-up working: informal networks, co-ordination, collaboration; through to delegating work to another body. How joined up do you want to be?

3. Roles and responsibilities

The LSP has a significant leadership role in promoting and joining up community engagement and the CCES must identify how they will do this and who will be responsible:

- The LSP may want to nominate a community engagement champion or champions from the Board.
- The CCES should identify how the LSP will provide the leadership to bring about culture change and arrangements.
- The CCES will set out how the LSP will monitor and review the CCES.
- The LSP should take steps to improve their accountability and transparency, and the involvement of councillors and communities in their decision making.
- The LSP should ensure that their community representation is as accountable and democratic as possible.

Councillors are a key element of community engagement and their roles and responsibilities for community engagement should be part of the CCES.

4. Shared resources

Efficiency is a driving force for a CCES.

- The CCES will need to identify how the strategy will be resourced, and where money will be spent. The mapping activities will have identified current expenditure and pointed to where resources could be better used.
- Can partners align the budgets for community engagement activities? Or even pool budgets that directly impact on LSP priorities or LAA engagement outcomes?
- Is there support for shared community engagement staff? Or joint investment in community development?
- Can the LSP support shared e-consultation and e-participation tools?

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**The Waltham Forest Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy (2007-2010)**

The Council’s strategy for engagement has already resulted in a council-wide approach to engagement, with a central engagement unit. It is also concerned with how the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council can “maximise opportunities for joining up engagement initiatives to achieve efficiency savings and improve the effectiveness of this work”.

Their priorities are to share delivery mechanisms, as well as knowledge and skills:

- Strengthen the relationship between the LSP and the neighbourhood level Community Councils.
- Encourage partners to use the Council infrastructure to do engagement particularly in regards to the implementation of the SCS.
- Build on well developed joint engagement structures e.g. within adults social and children’s services.
- Share information with partners on the views of local residents.
- Work with key partners to improve the sharing of information and dissemination of good practice, and explore ways in which more collaborative working can be developed.
- Provide the LSP with summaries of issues raised at Community Council meetings.
- Work more closely with the third sector to maximise their potential for effectively representing the views of local people within the wider partnership and influencing the Council’s decision making.

www1.walthamforest.gov.uk/moderngov/mgConvert2PDF.asp?ID=6020
5. **Shared learning programmes**

Expenditure on capacity building and training has grown significantly over recent years.

- Joint training for staff from different partner organisations and for community groups is a good way to embed a common understanding and build relationships. Courses could include councillors too and might include shared learning programmes, action learning sets – cross-partner and cross sector training – and other shared learning programmes.

- Capacity building events: for the local third sector to raise awareness of opportunities to engage; and the public sector to strengthen engagement and raise standards across the partnership.

6. **Sharing information**

Information is fundamental to all community engagement. While sharing information may look like a good place to start, each partner often has their own data collection definitions and systems and corporate standards for publications. What can be shared?

- Research and data on the communities’ needs and aspirations – an essential test in the CAA.

- Sharing data and evidence collected by partners for local and national purposes – including for customer segmentation and service targeting.

- A protocol for the disaggregation of data by demographics as well as by geography.

- Access to the Place Survey data.

- A calendar of engagement activities to help with co-ordination and forward planning by service managers.

- A database of community and voluntary groups (though remember you will need to consider data protection rules).

7. **Multi-partner structures**

A CCES should design a single system of multi-partner structures, setting out how they will connect to each other and to the LSP, and how communities will be involved.

- What community-led structures exist that partners link to e.g. CEN, CVS, Migrants Forum, Youth Council?

- Are there shared structures for neighbourhood and community engagement e.g. neighbourhood policing, LINks?

- A coherent approach to neighbourhood management: defining boundaries, co-location of services and shared engagement arrangements. How will councillors engage?

- An agreed approach to parish and town councils and new neighbourhood or community councils.

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**Wycombe Pathfinder Community Engagement**

Wycombe District is testing a new way of engaging with local communities through a single approach used by the whole public sector. It includes the PCT, Police, NHS Hospital Trust, Fire & Rescue, the local third sector and the Parish Councils. Councillors are involved too.

The purpose is to:

- Make it easier and simpler for communities to engage with the whole public sector

- Develop and strengthen community engagement and partnership arrangements based on geographical communities within the Wycombe district

- Focus on actions and service improvements to meet local priorities

The piloted model brings changes in structure, membership and function:

- The 16 most local neighbourhood action groups will retain their problem solving and self-help focus, but will also help improve services and have a stronger role for councillors.

- Four Community Partnerships will have partners involved (unlike their predecessor Area Committees), and will develop links with the District and County LSPs.

They have set a target of £250,000 efficiency gains over 6 years from this rationalisation.

8. Co-ordinated support to the third sector
A skilled and inclusive voluntary and community sector infrastructure is essential for coherent and effective communications and collaboration between public agencies, community groups and citizens.
- Are there community networks that should be sponsored by the LSP not just the local authority? What is the plan for sustaining and growing the CEN or the local infrastructure organisation?
- Are there forums for BME groups, new communities, women, young people and other equalities groups that need support to ensure a diversity of voices?
- How can the third sector be helped to support representatives to be accountable and to feedback to their communities?
- Community and voluntary groups should be funded for their partnership and engagement activities.
- Third sector providers should consider – along with other providers – to act in the spirit of the Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve and the Duty to Co-operate.

9. Joint actions
This is a core benefit of the CCES. There are many arenas in which joint action – at whatever level of partnership working is realistic – can be developed.
For instance:
- Every partner has – or will have – a ‘duty to involve’. Planning to meet this duty as an LSP is a necessary element of a CCES.
- A locality-wide approach to the new tools and techniques (e.g. petitions, participatory budgeting, councillors call for action), would be both effective and efficient.
- A delivery plan for the LAA community empowerment targets. Who would have to do what differently to increase the number of people who feel able to influence decisions?
- How will the LSP partners involve communities in commissioning?
- Can community charters and area plans be used for re-designing and targeting partners’ services so they are suitable for local needs?
- What can the LSP do to support civic activism and build social capital?
- How can communities be involved in defining outcomes such as well-being, happiness, sustainability and cohesion?
- How can the LSP engage with new communities such as migrants or refugees?

Brighton & Hove Involving third sector organisations in strategic partnership working
Brighton & Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) network’s key objective is to provide a channel through which local third sector organisations can be represented as a single body on city-wide partnerships.
- The Forum has a representation and accountability policy, election procedures and defined roles and responsibilities of elected representatives. It supports the representatives with information, regular networking and discussion forums.
- The Forum is represented on all strategic partnerships in Brighton & Hove, giving the third sector a voice in decision-making on policy, funding and other issues covering the local economy, neighbourhood renewal, health, education and the welfare of children and young people.
IDEA’s Partnerships and Places Library
www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8411619
Developing comprehensive approaches to community engagement is still an emerging topic of work, with many areas just starting out on the journey to join things up across the locality. As this work progresses we will continue to gather and disseminate the learning and good practice that emerges. You will be able to find out more on IDeA, NAVCA and Urban Forum’s websites (see useful information and resources).

Joining things up is not straightforward, but it can lead to significant benefits - efficiency gains, service improvement and citizen satisfaction – all leading to improved outcomes for local people. Co-ordinating and simplifying engagement is not easy but it can be exciting, inspiring and fun.

There’s no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to develop a CCES, but by adopting some basic principles and progressing in a considered and thoughtful way, you will find solutions to your own challenges and the approach that will work for your area. There will no doubt be ups and downs along the way, but you should never lose sight of the rewards for achieving your goals.

And to help you on your way, here are a few handy hints!

### 10 HANDY HINTS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. **Built in, not bolted on**
   
   Effective community engagement means thinking about it at the outset. Involving people at every stage of the process can greatly improve the quality and the sense of ownership with what’s happening.

2. **Kill apathy as a concept**
   
   Despite a widespread belief that people aren’t interested, the reality is that they do care about the issues that affect them. Start where people are at, not where you want them to be.

3. **Be clear about the constraints**
   
   Don’t promise the world if you can’t deliver it! It’s better to offer something small that you can deliver than to offer something big that you can’t. Try to be clear where the boundaries are, who makes the final decisions and what resources are available.

4. **It’s a marathon not a sprint**
   
   Delivering change and regenerating communities takes a long time. Be prepared for the long haul; everyone gets disheartened if things take forever to happen, but try be realistic about how long things take too.

5. **Communication x10**
   
   Show what has been achieved – it’s not just about doing, it’s also about letting people know what is being done. Make sure you let people know what is going on – information is always the first stage! Two-way dialogue is critical to any change process.

6. **Have a champion**
   
   The most successful strategies have someone – or often lots of people at different levels – pushing them forward who really believe in the cause. If community engagement is important, make sure it’s included as part of people’s roles.

7. **Make it meaningful**
   
   Remember that any plans you make should lead to action. Everyone gets bored of participating when nothing actually happens. As people see things happening, confidence in the process will follow and soon there’ll be no holding them back!

8. **Assess your goals at every stage**
   
   Keep asking yourself – is what we are trying to do realistic? Targets should be clear and achievable (SMART) and have milestones along the way. But don’t be afraid to change direction as you go along if that makes more sense.

9. **Be prepared to be unprepared**
   
   If you think you know exactly what’s going to happen, it’s probably not engagement. Don’t try to stifle or control the process too much. Be flexible and prepared to respond to what’s happening around you.

10. **Have fun!**
    
    Anything new can be scary but remember to have fun! Fun is not the F-word and if you want people to get involved it’s got to appeal. After all, having fun makes us happy and well-being is important to us all.
**FURTHER INFORMATION ONE**

There are many government community engagement initiatives that will benefit from a co-ordinated and ‘locality’ response rather than each partner organisation and third sector body responding in isolation. A co-ordinated approach will also help community groups trying to ‘join things up’ from the bottom up.

The CCES pages on www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge - community empowerment and engagement pages contains a full summary of this policy context.

**New locality performance framework**

Community engagement is at the heart of the new performance framework, which applies to all statutory partners in the locality.

- The duty to involve citizens in place-based strategies such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement, Joint Strategic Needs Analysis, and the Local Development Framework.
- The National Indicator Set contains many indicators that measure citizen engagement and/or progress on issues for which community involvement is critical to success.
- Most LAAs include at least one target related to community engagement and empowerment.
- The w licence of IDEA/LGA self assessment tool for the LSP highlights citizen and user involvement.
- The Comprehensive Area Assessment – both the area assessment and the seven inspectorates’ organisational assessments – not only assess community engagement activities but also take note of levels of satisfaction and customer feedback when they make their judgement. 1
- The CAA will publish an annual report on their findings specifically to spur community engagement and improve public service performance.
- User and citizen engagement is an important mechanism to drive service improvement and replace top down regulation.

**New legal framework**

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced two new duties:

- Duty to inform, consult and involve (to be extended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill – published December 2008).
- Duty to co-operate: partners must work together to deliver LAA targets including those that improve community empowerment.
- The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 provides the opportunity for communities to demand that issues are debated and that changes are made nationally.
- A duty to promote democracy is proposed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill – published December 2008).
- The Equalities Bill 2008, proposes to merge the current duties on gender, race and disability into a single Equalities Duty.

**New democratic duties**

One important aspect of localism – of which community engagement is an important theme – is to strengthen the powers and duties of local councils and councillors to hold local public services and partners to account, and take the lead on local issues.

- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 has extended Scrutiny to the LSP and LAA targets. These new powers follow on from substantive changes made in many places to support councillors to engage communities and contribute to empowerment.
New empowerment initiatives

Proposals for extended neighbourhood-level democracy and management makes this a strategic issue which should be seen as an integral part of the CCES since it is fundamentally about engaging and empowering communities and will have an impact on all partners.

- Powers to establish neighbourhood or Parish councils – in towns and urban areas.
- Multi-agency neighbourhood management, especially arising from neighbourhood policing (see LGPIH and Policing Green Paper)
- Neighbourhood charters or Community Contracts (CLG (2008). How to develop a local charter – A guide for local authorities)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/localcharters
- Asset Transfers
  www.dta.org.uk/activities/campaigns/communityassets/
- Participatory Budgeting -
  www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk
- Cohesion Delivery Framework
  www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/cohesiondeliveryframework
- Take Part local pathfinders
- Digital Mentors Pilots
- Timely information project
- Extending LINks to areas beyond health and social care
- Community Land Trusts

Information about all the Empowerment pilots and initiatives can be found on the empowerment section of the Communities and Local Government website.

1 See paras 50, 51,53 and 54 of the CAA Joint Inspectorates Proposals for Consultation. July 2008
2 Policing Green Paper “From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together” (Home Office 2008)
FURTHER INFORMATION TWO

USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LGA & NCVO (2008) Votes and Voices The complementary nature of representative and participatory democracy.
NICE Guidance on Community Engagement (FEB 08) www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH9
CLG (2008) How to develop a local charter – A guide for local authorities
DoH (2008) Real Involvement: working with people to improve health services

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

CLG (2008) Communities in Control: real people, real power. (Community Empowerment White Paper)
CLG ( October 2007) New Performance Framework for local authorities and local authority partnerships
CLG (2008) National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships:
  Handbook of Definitions. Annex 1: Stronger and Safer Communities
CLG (2008) NI 4: Feeling able to influence local decision making: understanding barrier, facilities and strategies for increasing empowerment.
CLG (2007) Third Sector Principles of Representation
Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
Sustainable Communities Act 2008