



Researching / Understanding your Community

Prior to engaging with your community there is the opportunity to do some background research and for questions to be discussed to enable you to start the engagement process from a strong place of knowledge and understanding. Below is some information, standards, and further questions to consider enabling you to start this process with confidence.

Background information

Gather information about your community and the issues it faces. To undertake a desktop analysis a couple of sources you could use are- Somerset intelligence – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/jsna
Office for National Statistics (census data)
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html

www.smartcommunities.online/community-review/

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Component	Where can you find information?	Example questions you could ask?
Governance	SALC Somerset Council (New Unitary Authority)	How many people are involved in local decisions? How many seats on the parish or town council are filled? How can the Community engage with the new Somerset Council?
Transport and Connectivity	Local Authority Transport Plan Local Transport Forums	How many cars are there in the local area? How far do people travel to work/nearest supermarket/town centre? To what extent are other means of transport alternative to the private car available?
Services	Local Authority NHS Trust or equivalent	How far away are you from your nearest job centre/secondary school/GP surgery? How does this compare with other communities in our county?
Environmental	Local Authority Local Plan Local environmental/climate change/green groups Environment Agency Somerset Wildlife Trust	How much does the community recycle? Is there a flooding risk? What actions are being taken to address the Climate Emergency?
Equality	Local Authority Local Plan Somerset Diverse Communities	Are there any areas of deprivation in our community? How many households are in fuel poverty?
Economy	Local Authority Local Plan Local Economic Partnership Local Federation of Small Businesses/Chamber of Commerce Office for National Statistics website Somerset Social Enterprise Network	How many working people live in the community? Do retired people outnumber the economically active in your community? How many small businesses are there in the local area?

The 10 National Standards for Community Engagement

The Scottish National Standards for Community Engagement provide a useful reference point for ensuring a quality and effective engagement process. They were published in 2005 by the then Minister for Communities and identify good practice for engagement between communities and public agencies. The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) developed the standards drawing on the experience of over 500 community and agency representatives.

The SCDC website contains a detailed description of the standards and other useful resources: www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/10-national-standards/

The 10 Standards are:

1. The Involvement Standard - We will identify and involve the people and organisations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.
2. The Support Standard- We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.
3. The Planning Standard - We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree on the purpose, scope, and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
4. The Methods Standard - We will agree on the methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
5. The Working Together - Standard We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.
6. The Sharing Information - Standard We will ensure the necessary information is communicated between the participants.
7. The Working with Others Standard - We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.
8. The Improvement Standard - We will actively develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.
9. The Feedback Standard - We will feedback on the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.
10. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard - We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.

Know your community

Stakeholder analysis – this involves identifying all the groups and societies in the area and all the various sections of the community. This allows you to understand your community and target your work more precisely. Your community may include:

- Schoolchildren (5-16)
- Young people (16-30)
- Families with preschool children
- People employed in the community
- Older people
- Commuters
- People with learning difficulties
- People with physical needs
- Faith groups
- Community groups and societies
- Visitors
- Local businesses
- Housing estates
- Single parent families
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Travellers and Romani people
- Families
- Migrant workers

It is important to know and understand all the different communities that make up the Parish/Town as they may require different approaches when it comes to engagement and consultation. In addition, it will help you understand where the different pressures in your community are stemming from.

An example of this is a Parish in Somerset that has a free car park- meant for locals coming in from the surrounding villages to use the amenities- Surgery, shops etc. as it is quite rural. However due to location, it is usually full by 8.30am with commuters using it as a point to access car shares or public transport on their way to the city.

Community Matrix

Once you have identified the different groups and organisations that make up your community it is a good idea to look at the best way to contact these people and the groups and organisations that can help you do this. The Example Matrix A below is an example of how you can do this.

In addition, the matrix could be used to identify different engagement and communication channels to help you with gathering views and also encouraging people to complete the survey. Example Matrix B shows how this works.

Example Matrix A

Existing Groups	Art group	Community lunch	School	Skittles Team	Keep Fit group
Over 60s	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Parents with preschool children					Yes
Commuters				Yes	Yes
School children			Yes		

Example Matrix B

Engagement Activities / Events	Coffee Morning	Online Survey	Postal questionnaire	Website	Fete
Over 60s	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
People in social housing		Yes			Yes
Commuters		Yes		Yes	
School children	Yes			Yes	Yes

See 'Community Groups and Engagement' template (ready for use and populating).