

Acknowledgements

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Any mistakes or omissions in this Guide are entirely ours.

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Introduction

Who is this Guide for?

This Guide is for all front line staff and managers of public services who want to improve those services through talking to, and involving, the people who use them.

What is 'involving people'?

It's self evident, but worth repeating, that service providers can meet people's needs better if they listen to what people tell them, instead of relying on their own assumptions. They can also meet needs better if they listen to, and involve, not only those already using their services, but those who are not, for whatever reason.

'Involving people' can take many forms. At one extreme, it can refer simply to providing user-friendly information about services, at the other it can mean enabling people to take full control of those services themselves. There is no one 'perfect' way of involving people that suits all situations.

Although no single way of involving people is inherently better than another, there are certainly better, and more respectful, ways to treat people, whatever method is used. This is a point made by Sherry Arnstein when she talked, in the late 1960s, of a 'ladder of involvement'. (See page 67 for more details).

Why involve people?

Local and Health Authorities are legally obliged to consult or involve their patients or service users in planning, delivering and evaluating their services.

This Guide, however, assumes that its readers want to involve people, not simply to comply with the law, but as a way of developing better, truly responsive public services, based on mutual respect.

There are many publications providing general guidance on the theory and strategy of involving people in services. Some of these are produced by the Department of Health, Westminster Primary Care Trust (PCT), and Westminster City Council. Some are listed in the bibliography of resources provided on page 76 of this Guide.

This Guide assumes that involving people is carried out from a genuine conviction that this is the best way to improve both services and people's quality of life.

What this Guide can do...

You will find this Guide most useful at the point where you have already thought through what you want to achieve from involving people, whom you want to involve and what you intend to do with the results.

An involving people project cycle, showing the steps you need to go through before you use this Guide, is illustrated and discussed on page 68.

This Guide will help you with the part of your project that is to do with choosing and

implementing the method you are going to use. It will help you choose the most appropriate method for achieving your aims, give you step-by-step instructions for carrying it out and provide you with some key contacts in Westminster for more advice and support.

How to use this Guide

The diagram on page 68 and the section on managing involvement projects on page 69, set out the basic steps you need to take in any project to involve people.

This Guide will be useful to you at the point where you are ready to choose a method (point D in the diagram on p68), that is, after you have decided your aims and objectives, obtained management backing and found your partners or support.

Choosing your method

This Guide is divided into two main sections:

- Ways of involving people – one-off
- Ways of involving people – on-going

First you need to decide whether you want to involve or consult people on a one-off basis, on this occasion, or whether you wish to involve them in a more on-going way. This initial decision may be determined by the resources you have, or the commitment you are able to make. 'One-off' doesn't mean 'never again'. For example, you may repeat a one-off event several times, or the event might lead to more on-going involvement in future.

Second you need to decide the numbers of people you want to talk to at any one time: one person, a few people or a lot of people. Remember that talking to one or two people, or a small group, can give you insight into the way a whole community sees things. Again, this decision may be influenced by the resources you have.

Finally, use the table on page 6 to identify the best methods for each situation.

	With one person	With a few people	With a community or a lot of people
One-off	<p>Interviews (p22)</p> <p>Involving people in recruitment (p25)</p>	<p>Focus groups (p11)</p> <p>Using the creative arts to involve people (p18)</p> <p>Involving people in recruitment (p25)</p> <p>Mystery shoppers (p28)</p> <p>Open space events (p34)</p> <p>Visioning workshops (p46)</p>	<p>Café consultations (p8)</p> <p>Fun days and festivals (p15)</p> <p>Using the creative arts to involve people (p19)</p> <p>Posters and leaflets (p31)</p> <p>Open space events (p34)</p> <p>Public meetings (p37)</p> <p>Surveys and questionnaires (p40)</p> <p>Video booth (p43)</p>
Ongoing	<p>Active suggestion boxes (p49)</p> <p>Talking to people (p51)</p>	<p>Representatives on committees (p57)</p> <p>User forums (p60)</p>	<p>Posters and leaflets (p31)</p> <p>Newsletters (p53)</p> <p>Representatives on committees (p57)</p> <p>User forums (p60)</p>

Welcome! Now you're ready to start!

Involving people — one-off

Café consultations

Using the café consultation method is a way of enabling a large group of people to discuss questions in an informal creative way. It does this by offering people a relaxed café-type environment in which they can talk to others in small groups, and move between groups to meet new people and get a fresh perspective.

When to use this method:

- When you want to generate ideas and share knowledge
- When you want to engage people in lively discussion
- When you want to explore different possible strategies
- When you want to deepen relationships and shared ownership of the piece of work by an existing group
- When you want to engage groups of more than 12 people

When not to use this method

- When you are driving toward an already determined solution or answer
- When you want to convey information to people and not hear information from them
- When you want to make detailed implementation or action plans
- When you have fewer than 12 people

Before

- Clarify the reason you want to bring people together. Ideally, involve some participants in planning the event and deciding the questions to be discussed
- Check that your venue is wheelchair accessible
- You may wish to book British Sign Language interpreters for the event, provisionally
- Consider naming your café event — for example the “Carers’ Café” or the “Connecting Café”
- Send out invitations to your café event, asking people to identify any special requirements

Plan how you are going to create a hospitable space:

- Consider playing soft music while people arrive
- Consider creating a banner showing the name of the café
- Set out small tables with chairs for up to six people at each
- Consider covering the tables with colourful table-cloths, overlaid with sheets of flip-chart paper, and vases of flowers
- Give each table a ‘menu’ listing the questions you want the groups to discuss

- Identify and structure the powerful questions that matter to participants. Questions need to be:
 - Simple and clear
 - Thought provoking
 - Energising
 - Open to new possibilities
- The questions you ask need to require a longer answer than yes or no – for example, “How do we want to participate in planning services?”
- Make sure that there is enough space between tables for wheelchair-users to move around, and spaces at the tables for them to sit
- Collect together the essential props you will need on the day (see below)
- If you are working with a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, arrange to meet him or her 15 minutes beforehand to discuss seating arrangements.

During

Checklist of things needed on the day:

- Signs, or a banner, directing people to the café
- A CD player and CDs for background music (optional)
- A colourful table-cloth for every table (optional), overlaid with a sheet of flip-chart paper
- A vase and flowers for every table (optional)
- Flip chart paper and stand, blu tak, marker pens, Post-It notes
- A ‘menu’ card at each table setting out the questions to be discussed
- Refreshments

Facilitating the café

Introduce the café to participants:

- Explain why you are using the café style for your event. Explain that often our most significant conversations happen in informal settings
- Ask every table to choose a ‘host’ who will stay at that table, and make sure that the main points discussed are recorded on the flip chart paper covering the tablecloth (although everyone at the table is free to write or draw things)
- Ask everyone to discuss the questions for 20-30 minutes, and record their responses, in words, pictures or diagrams, on the flip-charts covering the tablecloths.

After 20-30 minutes ask everyone except the ‘hosts’ to move to other tables to discuss the same questions for a further 20-30 minutes with different people.

Ask the ‘hosts’ to explain to newcomers arriving at their table the main points of the previous discussion.

After people have moved between tables two or three times, discussing the questions for 20-30 minutes each time, ask each table to spend a few minutes considering the main points raised at that table.

Ask each table ‘host’ to tell everyone at the café the main points their table has agreed, and to underline these on the flip charts. You may also want to record these separately on a flip-chart.

When all the ‘hosts’ have spoken, you can ask the whole group questions such as:

- What is emerging here?
- If there was a single voice in the room, what would it be saying?

- What deeper questions are emerging as a result of these conversations?
- Do we notice any patterns and what do those patterns point to, or how do they inform us?
- What do we now see and know as a result of these conversations?

You can record these more general thoughts on a flip chart.

You may want to put the ‘tablecloths’ up on the walls and invite people to walk around and look at them during a break, and stick comments on them using Post-It notes.

After

It is vital that you write up the comments on the ‘tablecloths’ and send them out to all participants as a record of the event, highlighting the main points that were circled

You can transcribe the doodles, notes and thoughts on the ‘tablecloths’, or photograph them in all their messy glory, scan them onto a document and send them to people for further comments.

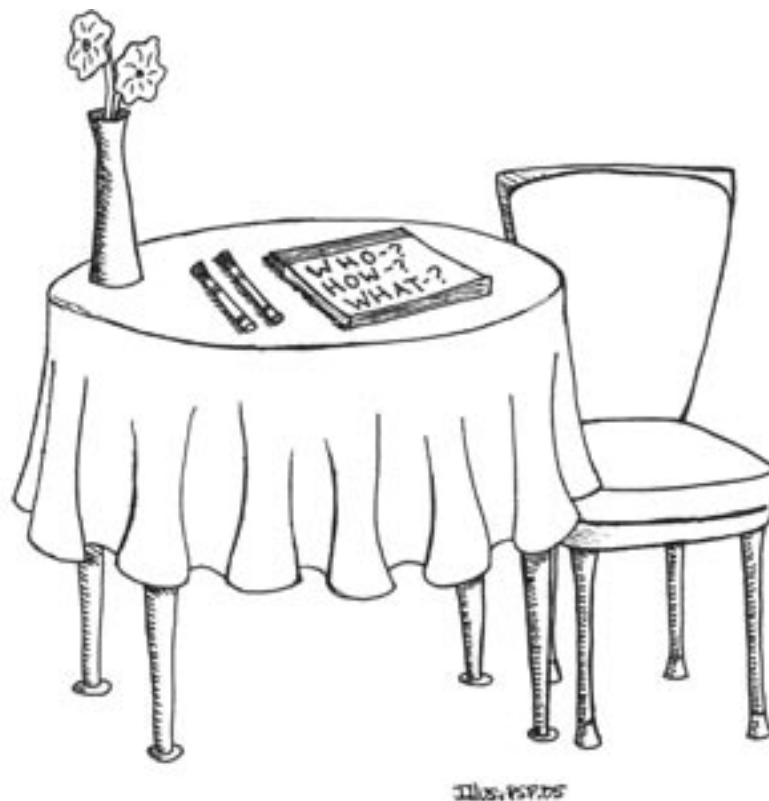
People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216

Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

More information

See the World Café website for more guidance at www.theworldcafe.com. The ‘Café To Go’ guide is particularly useful at www.theworldcafe.com/cafetogo.pdf



Focus groups

Focus groups, or small discussion groups, are useful when you want qualitative and in-depth information about a topic or set of issues. They usually consist of between six and 12 people. They can be facilitated by one person with another person taking minutes or making notes.

When to use this method

- When you want to explore a specific issue, process or topic in some depth
- When you want to ask more in-depth exploratory questions that can't easily be answered by a survey
- When interaction between participants may help generate ideas
- When you want to engage people who may not be able to read or write
- When you want to explore not only people's views but also the experiences or feelings behind them.

When not to use this method

- When you want to collect quantitative data from a large population of people
- When you want to know how many people in a given population have particular views or experiences.

Before

Some factors that can influence the quality of a focus group

- Clarity of purpose — you need to be clear about what information you want from the focus group
- Appropriate environment — you will need a comfortable and accessible environment for the group, free of interruptions
- Sufficient resources — you will need support in recruiting people, developing questions, making notes of the discussion and feeding back to participants
- Appropriate participants — see below
- A skilful facilitator — the facilitator needs to be skilled in active listening and in enabling all group members to speak. You may need a facilitator who can speak the language of group members, if English is not their first language
- Effective questions — you will need to prepare some open questions beforehand, but be flexible enough to explore unanticipated issues that come up
- Recording the discussion — it is advisable to have an assistant who can take notes in the language that is being spoken
- A verified report of the discussion — it is a good idea to check the main points you have noted with group members before the end of the discussion.

Recruiting group members

- Use a variety of methods to contact interested people: leaflets, posters and direct individual invitation
- Ask people you recruit if they have any special requirements
- If you want to involve people whose first language is not English, recruit a facilitator and note taker who are able to speak the language of the group, and use that language in recruitment materials, as well as English
- It can be effective to recruit group members in partnership with other agencies, for example, recruiting young people through a youth worker, or older people through a luncheon club
- Consider holding the discussion group at premises already used by the group you are trying to reach, for example, at a youth club or nursery
- Choose a time, day and venue that will make the group accessible to the people you want to reach. Make sure the venue is wheelchair accessible
- Offer some incentive for membership of the group. All out-of-pocket expenses should be paid, but you may also wish to offer, for example, a cooked lunch, a crèche or a training opportunity
- Members of the group will need to have a shared experience of, or interest in, the issue you want to explore
- It is wise to invite slightly more people than needed, to cover non-attenders
- Although your group should be inclusive and accessible to all those you want to reach, it isn't necessary to include a representative of each section of the community in your group, such as one disabled person, one older person, or one parent. A focus group is not a survey of all opinion.

Deciding the size of the group

A focus group, or small discussion group, works best with between six and 12 participants. This number gives scope for a range of different viewpoints and opinions, whilst providing a safe environment, enabling all to contribute.

Deciding on a facilitator

It is important for the group to have a good facilitator. Ideally the facilitator should:

- Have some training or experience in facilitating groups
- Know something about the topic
- Relate well to the participants.

However, anyone with good active listening skills and respect for the participants can gain valuable information from a focus group discussion. Experience has to start somewhere.

Planning how long the group should last

A focus group, or small discussion group, should last for between ninety minutes and two hours. Everyone's concentration will begin to wane after this time.

Planning what questions to ask

You need to prepare a short number of open questions to keep the discussion on track and make the most of everyone's time:

- Introductory questions are designed to get participants discussing the topic in general. For example, 'Everyone here is living with a long-term condition. What are some of the aspects of living with a long-term condition?'
- Linking questions enable the facilitator to move from the broad general

discussion to the more specific area of interest. For example, 'What particular issues might you need help or support with?'

- Key questions address the key issues which the facilitator wants to cover in the focus group session. For example, 'What sort of service would help, where would you like it to be, how would you like to access it, how should it be publicised?'. No more than four or five key questions should be asked in a ninety-minute to two-hour session.

Planning the follow-up

Before recruiting group members, consider:

- How the notes of the discussion will be fed back to participants and reported to service providers
- The timescale for reporting back and subsequent action
- How participants will be kept informed of progress.

Planning the right environment

- The group needs to meet away from distractions, ideally sitting in a circle so everyone can hear and see each other easily.
- The group will need a private and soundproof room, free from interruptions
- Make sure that someone is available outside of the room to deal with latecomers, as it is disruptive to allow anyone to join the group once it has started.

During

Materials you will need:

- Signposts to the room
- Chairs in a circle
- Note pads and pens/pencils
- Flip chart and stand, marker pens
- Name badges
- Watch/clock
- Prepared questions
- Refreshments

Before people arrive

The facilitator and assistants should arrive well before the participants and ensure that the room is clearly sign-posted, refreshments are in place, the room is in the correct layout and that the environment is comfortable and quiet.

Welcome and introductory briefing

After welcoming the participants to the group the facilitator should:

- Begin introductions starting by introducing him or herself, and any assistant
- Give housekeeping information and repeat the time boundaries of the group
- Explain the purpose of the focus group
- Explain the process of the session – what will happen after the group.
- Suggest some basic ground rules, such as no mobile phones, confidentiality, giving everyone a chance to speak, and listening to each other, and ask for any additions
- Ask for any questions or issues that need to be clarified.

Begin focus group discussion

Follow the question set outlined above (introductory questions, linking questions, key

questions). Always ask open questions.

Summarise each section as you go along, and check back with the group that the notes taken are correct.

Finish by:

- Summarising the discussion in broad terms
- Repeating the information already given on what will happen next, how the results will be reported, any other action and timescales
- Thanking participants and asking for final questions.

After

Summaries

As soon as possible write up a summary of your notes, while ideas are still fresh and vivid.

Analyse the summaries

Look for trends (comments that appear repeatedly in the data) and surprises: unexpected data can be extremely revealing. Remember that tone and context can be as important as the actual words spoken.

Write the report

This should include an introduction on the background and purpose of the focus group, basic anonymous details of the participants, notes of the sessions, and summary and conclusions.

Translate results into action

Make sure to feed the results back to the focus group participants, and tell them what is happening next.

Report the results back and try to ensure that they lead to some service improvement, however small.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216

Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

Fun days and festivals

This is a one-off event to celebrate, and interest the community in, the work of the group, programme or organisation. It can be an opportunity to reach out to all members of the community, enable them to meet staff and each other, raising the profile of the group, programme or organisation in the process.

When to use this method

- To make contact with all sections of the local community
- To launch services or projects
- To celebrate significant achievements.

When not to use this method

- For an on-going programme of events.

Before

- Start preparation in advance (at least three months before the event)
- Involve the local community in the planning process. They will be a great help in clarifying the objectives and purpose of the event. For example, is the event to celebrate something, get information out to a particular group, inform the community about what your organisation/group is doing, or increase your membership? Try to make involvement as inclusive as possible by thinking of potential barriers and planning to overcome them
- Decide on the date of the event. Check what is happening locally to make sure that there won't be a clash, or perhaps you could link the fun day or festival to something else that is happening locally
- Decide on the venue. Do a risk assessment of possible venues. For example, if the event is held in an indoors venue, what numbers can be accommodated safely and comfortably? How accessible is it? Will it accommodate all the activities that you may want? If your event is going to be held outside, are there amenities close by?
- Decide on the speakers and who you would like to open or close the event
- Make a list of all the possible costs of venue hire, entertainment, publicity, decorations, staffing, transport to and from the venue (if not on your own premises) for those people who are unable, or who would find it difficult, to get there by themselves
- Decide on how much you want to spend, and set a budget and revise your plans if necessary.

Publicity

- Design a flyer that can double as a poster (if you receive any sponsorship, ensure that you provide information about the company or organisation that has sponsored the event). Consider producing publicity materials in community languages
- Write a brief article to send out to local newspapers or newsletters, including community language newsletters
- Draw up a distribution list of key individuals and organisations to mail the flyer to. Follow up with emails and phone calls
- Ask everyone on your list to distribute the information on to their members via mail-outs or newsletters
- Contact local businesses for giveaways, (sponsorship helps to raise the profile of their business). Ask them to place your flyer in their windows
- Send out invites to speakers
- Word-of-mouth advertising is very important and this can be done by your user group
- Advertise the event at all meetings you and your staff attend
- Contact the local media – press and radio.

Activities and entertainment

When planning involvement activities and entertainment, think about:

- Selection (who will it appeal to?)
- Age appropriate activities, including children's activities
- Activities that will be accessible to deaf and disabled people
- What, if any, supervision may be needed
- For adult activities: who are you appealing to? Is it suitable and appropriate for this occasion?
- Whether the activity can be safely carried out in your chosen venue
- Giveaways – what can you offer as prizes?

Insurance

Check with your insurers whether you will need additional cover for vendors, entertainers and any activities organised as a part of the fun day.

Security

Find out if security will be needed at the event and ensure sufficient cover if needed.

Back up plans

If it is an outdoor event, what will happen if it rains?

Food

Check on health and safety requirements in terms of serving food. For example, do those serving the food have the relevant documentation? Does the venue have appropriate food preparation space and adequate hand-washing facilities?

Medical emergencies

Ensure that there are first aiders on site who are clearly identifiable.

And finally...

- Have a preparatory meeting with all those involved, to look at what will happen on the day
- Have a floor plan of the venue
- Allocate designated areas of work

- Allocate tasks for the day

During

- Take a register of attendees so that you can stay in contact. You could tie this in with a raffle to encourage participation
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for each different area of work, for example, supervising the setting up, welcoming speakers, on-going cleaning, taking photographs
- Have a team available at the end of the day for clearing up and cleaning
- Make sure that the team/staff are visible throughout the day, for example, by making sure that staff wear name badges or t-shirts with your logo on them
- Have fun! After all, it is a fun day.

Photography and video

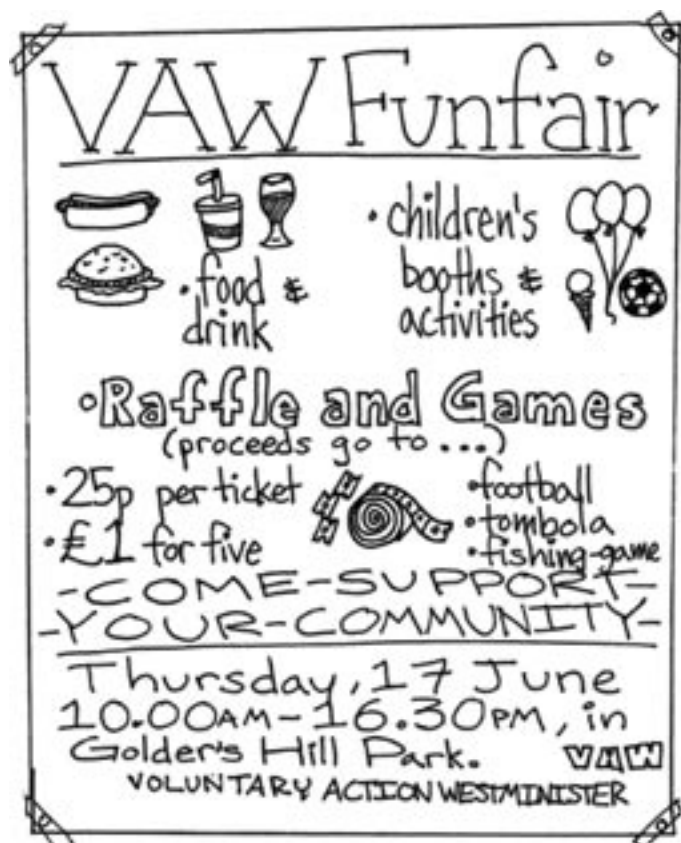
Get permission from attendees or their parents (if they are children) to use any photographs taken on the day in any publicity.

Feedback

It is important to get feedback from those who have attended the event.

Decide on how you want to get the feedback. Some examples include:

- Simple feedback sheets/questionnaires which could be handed in at the end or during the event
- Brief interviews by members of the staff/team using a clipboard with pre-decided questions
- A video booth, where people can give their feedback direct to camera
- A graffiti wall



- A picture of a tree trunk inviting people to write comments on leaves and stick them on the tree.

After

- Write letters of thanks to all speakers and helpers
- Send photographs of the event, with a brief article, to local newspapers and newsletters
- Collect and collate the information and feedback supplied by attendees
- Make contact with attendees thanking them for their input, reporting back what they said and letting them know what will happen as a result.
- Make efforts to establish an ongoing relationship with attendees
- Have a de-brief with team members and partners to learn from the event, and assist in planning the next one
- Think of ways to develop people's involvement further.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, Church Street Children's Centre Outreach Team,
020 7723 1216

Voluntary Action Westminster, South Westminster Children's Centre Outreach
Team, 020 7723 1216

Voluntary Action Westminster, South Westminster Community Network
(facilitator), 020 7723 1216

Using the creative arts to involve people

Using the arts to involve people can be a good way of bringing people from different groups together and encouraging more creative responses. People do not have to be artistically gifted to participate, although an artist/facilitator can be helpful. Using the arts can promote positive interactions between people and between parents and children. It does this by providing a safe and stimulating environment for people to play and learn together.

When to use this method

- When working with parents or carers of small children who are disabled or have communication difficulties. Creative activities such as art, music and drama encourage interaction with children and promote the understanding of child development
- When involving children and young people
- When consulting people on new services or facilities
- When you want to break down barriers and encourage integration and a positive attitude to diversity
- When consulting people on high-level strategic documents. Non-verbal forms of self-expression can provide a creative addition to more conventional forms of consultation
- When it is possible to work in partnership with an arts organisation or individual consultant.

When not to use this method

- If workers lack skills, interest and experience in this area, and there is no possibility of 'buying in' the necessary skills and experience
- If it is judged that clients would be uncomfortable with singing, drawing or role playing. However remember that with the right skills people can be inspired to experiment in all of these areas.

Before

Planning

- Clarify what you want to achieve from the activity
- Identify all the costs of materials, staffing, equipment, film, and venue, and ensure that your budget is sufficient to cover these costs
- Plan the activity with the artistic consultant or member of staff skilled in the area
- Decide on and prepare the props that you will need

- Identify a suitable venue – one that is safe, accessible and local to the participants
- Assign staff to various roles. For example, if the aim is to record by video play activity between parents and children, assign one member of staff to video, one to facilitate the interaction, one to work with the children and one to accompany with music, or provide the artistic materials.

Prepare the props

Props you might need include:

- Video camera or digital camera
- Guitar or keyboard
- Song sheets with the words of any songs that you plan to sing during the session.
- Arts and crafts materials (for example, coloured paper, crayons, modelling clay) and visual aids.

During

Make sure there is someone available during the activity to:

- Record attendance
- Photograph or video the activity
- Organise and replenish refreshments
- Distribute and collect feedback sheets.

After

- Review feedback by the group to evaluate the event
- Edit and prepare a video of the session
- Presentation of video to attendees (usually for small groups).



People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, Church Street Children's Centre Outreach Team, 020 7723 1216

Westminster City Council, Arts Liaison Officer, 0207 641 2498, arts@westminster.gov.uk

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 0207 723 1216

More information

Church Street Children's Centre Outreach Team use creative arts in their 'Fun Tots' group, which is a six-week group of locally-based programmes. The team use materials such as songbooks, activity cards, videos and parent evaluation forms. If you are interested in viewing these programmes, please contact the Outreach Team (details above).

A list of organisations working with creative arts can be obtained from Westminster City Council Arts Council or from the Voluntary Action Westminster directory.

Interviews

Interviews can be used to involve people in evaluating and developing services by obtaining detailed, qualitative information about people's experiences of services. People can be involved both as interviewers or interviewees.

When to use this method

- When you want to get detailed and qualitative information about people's experience
- When you want to involve people in a detailed evaluation of services
- When you want to involve people who may feel inhibited when speaking in a group
- When you have people available to arrange and give 60-90 minute interviews and write them up afterwards.

When not to use this method

- When you need quantitative data.

Before

- Be clear about your aims
- Prepare in advance how you will organise any payments to interviewees or volunteers (expenses, for example)
- Think about how you can ensure that the process is accessible and inclusive
- Recruit user volunteers, if they are going to be interviewers
- Decide on the questions to be asked, with the participation of any volunteer interviewers. (Initial questions should be relaxing, inviting people to talk of things they know a lot about)
- Plan open questions, and don't plan too many. Questions simply provide a framework: the aim is to encourage the interviewee to tell their story in their own words
- If you are involving volunteer interviewers, consult them on their availability and need for training
- Plan and provide training for volunteer interviewers (if appropriate) to include:
 - The purpose of the interviews
 - Empathy with the interviewee
 - Role play
 - How to note the main points of the interview
- Decide (with user volunteers) who you want to interview
- Recruit interviewees (with the help of user volunteers) through face-to-face contact, notices and leaflets or visiting community groups

- If the interviews are to be held indoors, book a quiet, comfortable and accessible room where interviews will not be disturbed
- Offer interviewees a range of time slots, and confirm interview details at least a week beforehand
- If you are working with volunteer interviewers, they may prefer to interview people out in the community, for example, in the park, outside school, at the market. Discuss with them beforehand how they will do this and any issues they need to consider
- Decide how you will record the interview. Taping the interview will leave you free to listen. If you decide to tape it, you need not transcribe the whole tape afterwards: you can simply take notes from the tape of the main points
- Set up on-going support and feedback sessions for user volunteers.

During

- Checklist of things you might need on the day:
 - British Sign Language (BSL) or other language interpreter
 - 'Do not disturb' sign for door
 - Refreshments
 - Note pad and pen
 - Tape recorder (optional) – but check that it works, and that there is a installed!
 - Camera
- Put the interviewee at ease by offering them refreshments, reassuring them that there are no wrong answers and starting with some easy questions
- Ask the questions, and listen to the answers
- Be flexible, but gently bring the interviewee back to the questions if necessary
- Take a note of any travel expense claims
- Tell the interviewee you will be sending him or her the notes of the interview for checking within a given timescale (and stick to it!)
- Either tape record the conversation, or write notes of the main points raised by the interviewee.

Afterwards

- Organise support and feedback session for user volunteers, as agreed with them beforehand
- Write up the notes of the interview (from the tape or from written notes)
- Send the draft notes to the interviewee for comments and corrections, by email or, if by post, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope
- If the interviewee adds any comments and corrections, send back the final version, for information
- Ask the interviewee if he or she would like to be credited, or wishes to remain anonymous
- Send all interviewees, and volunteer interviewers, a copy of the final report
- Ensure that all payments offered to the volunteer interviewers and interviewees are made on time.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216

Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000, www.westminster-pct.nhs.uk

Westminster PCT, User Involvement Manager (Mental Health) – responsible for the User Focused Monitoring Project, 020 7150 8000

More information

Westminster’s User Focused Monitoring Project (UFM) offers an example of this method in practice. The UFM Project is led by mental health service users. It monitors the quality of services by recruiting and training service user volunteers to interview others. For more information, please contact Westminster PCT Involving People Team on 020 7150 8000.

Involving people in recruitment

Involving people in recruitment has clear benefits for services, staff and service users. It benefits services by visibly putting values into practice, and helps ensure that the best candidate is selected. It benefits service users by demonstrating respect for their expertise and developing their skills. It benefits applicants by demonstrating the values of the prospective employer and providing personal development.

When to use this method

- When you want to recruit staff who respect service users' experience and are committed to involving them in services
- When you can give time and resources to preparing and supporting service users in their role.

When not to use this method

- When you are unable to prepare service users for their role
- When you are unable to support service users through the process
- When you are not prepared to be challenged by service users' views.

Before

- Decide beforehand which recruitment processes you wish to involve service users in — commenting on the person specification? Short-listing? Interviewing? All three? It is good practice to involve people in as much of the process as possible.
- Think of how to make the process accessible to deaf or hard of hearing people.
- If involving service users in interviewing, decide with them whether to include service user(s) on the panel, or whether to set up a separate panel of service users that will conduct separate interviews with applicants
- Decide what weighting service users' scoring will carry. There is no reason why service users' scores should not carry a weighting that is equal to that of other panel members.
- Be clear about how you will reward service users involved, and remove barriers to their involvement
- Decide some minimum requirements for the role, for example:
 - Reasonable experience of being a service user or carer
 - Willingness to attend training, if necessary
 - Availability on the specified dates.
- Invite interested service users to express an initial interest through:

- Posters and leaflets to other statutory and voluntary services attended by users
- Posters and leaflets in your own service
- Encouraging staff and colleagues to mention it to users who might be interested
- Invite those expressing an interest to a welcome interview to give some information about what is involved, check they are still interested, and that they meet your minimum requirements
- If possible, provide training in short-listing and interviewing for all members of the panel together, including service users. Half-day sessions are more accessible than full-day.
- Be sure to send out job descriptions and person specifications to all panel members, including service users, in good time before the short-listing meeting, or interview.

Checklist of topics to cover in training

These topics are adapted from those used in Choosing Staff, a Westminster project that trains and supports learning disabled service users to take part in staff recruitment and selection.

- Why we want to involve service users
- What sort of jobs are we selecting for?
- What sort of person do we want?
- Confidentiality
- The recruitment process
- Short-listing (if applicable)
- Interviewing skills: listening and being fair
- Interviewing skills: asking questions
- Working together as a group



- How do we decide?
- Interviewing: a practice session
- Reflection on what I have learned.

During

- Ensure that service users are supported in accessing the meeting or interview room
- Allow time beforehand to agree how the group will work together
- Build in comfort and refreshment breaks
- Ask for the service users' feedback on the process at the end, and be sure to thank them.

Afterwards

- Ensure that the service user is rewarded as agreed
- Write a thank you letter and inform the service user of the outcome of the interview (for example, did the successful candidate accept the job?)
- If possible, meet up with the service user, or arrange for a third party to meet up with him or her, to get feedback on the process.

People to contact

Choosing Staff project: Learning and Development Manager, Westminster Day and Employment Services for People with Learning Disabilities, 215 Lisson Grove, London NW8 8LW, telephone 020 7641 1500

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216,
Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

Mystery shoppers

Mystery shoppers are ‘under-cover’ service users. They are volunteers who audit services by pretending to be service users, and then report on what they find. The mystery shopper methodology has been used most commonly in working with young people to assess services such as sex advice services.

When to use this method

Use this method if you want to involve service users:

- In assessing the customer care aspect of services
- Who are either healthy or managing long-term conditions (for example, where there is no clinical risk to them in participating).

When not to use this method

- When you have very limited staff and time available
- The mystery shoppers would have to display symptoms or be prescribed medication for their conditions.

Before

Planning and ethical approval

- Be clear about your aims and objectives
- Find out about other mystery shopper projects and lessons learned
- Obtain ethical approval, if necessary from your ethical approval committee, management committee, or similar relevant committee.

Work with the providers of services being audited

Work with providers of the services that the mystery shoppers are going to assess to ensure their support to the project. Do this by explaining the project aims, gaining commitment to listen to the findings and asking for constructive suggestions.

Recruiting the mystery shoppers

- Recruit mystery shoppers, through contacts with other organisations, giving talks, displaying posters, or a recruitment evening. (You may need to select a smaller number of people from all those who are interested.)
- Consider how you can make your group of mystery shoppers as inclusive as possible.

Training the mystery shoppers

- It is advisable to provide at least two training sessions
- The first training session can focus on getting to know each other, exploring the role of mystery shopper, exploring and agreeing some basic standards for the

services to be audited, and introducing a practice task or Task One (see below)

- The second training session can focus on introducing the scenarios for Task Two, practising role play for the scenarios, and troubleshooting any problems that might come up.

Risk assessment

You will need to consider systematically the potential risks of each scenario the mystery shoppers are going to enact, and decide on strategies to reduce the risk.

For example, a young woman mystery shopper, in using the scenario of seeking advice about avoiding pregnancy, may be offered an immediate pregnancy test. In this case the agreed strategy, to avoid the risk of exposure or embarrassment, might be to say that the mystery shopper has no time but will return the next day.

During

Task One

It is a good idea to give mystery shoppers an initial, relatively easy, practice task after their first training session.

A possible Task One would be to find out how easy it is to get information about services within a limited time, using a scenario such as ‘a friend wants to get some condoms but doesn’t have any money to buy them – can you find out where he should go?’

Task Two

Task Two would be actually to use the service, role playing a scenario such as:

“You are going to a service because you want some free condoms. This is the first time you have asked for condoms. If you are under 16, your partner is a similar age to you, you have spoken to your parents about this (or you are planning to) and you are happy about your relationship.”

- Mystery shoppers should be able to choose the services they want to visit and the scenarios they want to use
- Mystery shoppers should use false names and addresses, and carry with them a letter from a senior manager (for example, from a director of public health) certifying that they are legitimate mystery shoppers, in case they want to get out of an awkward situation
- Each mystery shopper should be given an assessment form on which to write up their views of the services, based on the standards already agreed in training
- A limited time period should be set for the visits and for completion of the assessment forms
- The project worker should be on call during the period of the visits, and should check in with mystery shoppers occasionally to make sure all is OK.

After

Producing a report on findings

- Consider holding a half-day event for mystery shoppers to share findings and experiences, to agree a format for the report, to ask for volunteers to help produce the report, and to get feedback on how the project went
- The final report should be based on the feedback from each mystery shopper’s assessment form and from the discussion at the half-day event.

Feeding back to service managers

- Invite service managers to an event where mystery shoppers can feed back their findings directly to service managers, through either giving presentations or adding individual comments to a presentation.

Tell mystery shoppers what will change as a result of their findings

- It is very important to tell mystery shoppers what actions service managers intend to take as a result of their assessments
- Plan another mystery shopper project a year or two later to check what has changed.

Reward or recognise the mystery shoppers' achievements

A social event or outing may be one way of rewarding mystery shoppers for their contribution.

People to contact

Croydon PCT, Research and Evaluation Specialist 020 8274 6000

LCHEN (London Community Health Evaluation Network) via Health First www.healthfirst.nhs.uk

More information

Westminster Involving People Network on VAW website at www.vawcvs.org

Posters and leaflets

Producing printed material to let people know something about your organisation or to seek their participation in something is a form of involvement where the people concerned have quite a passive role. But if done well it can help generate interest and encourage people to be involved with services more directly.

When to use this method

- When you want to share information with a lot of people
- When you want to contact people who already visit services
- When you want to encourage people to attend an involvement activity or event.

When not to use this method

- When you are dealing with a small number of people, when personal, phone or email contact might be more effective.

Before

Objectives

You may have a design department, or someone within your team who produces posters and leaflets for you, or you may have to design them yourself. In any case, the first thing to do is to think hard about the following questions:

- Who am I trying to reach?
- What do I want them to do?

If you are not doing the design yourself, you need to explain your objectives as clearly as possible to the person who is.

Technical issues

- If you are supplying artwork to an outside printer, talk to them before you start designing, to find out what kind of software files they can accept, and what further information they will need from you
- It is much better to ask them lots of questions at this stage than to find out that there is a problem just before your deadline
- Get a quotation (or several) — prices will vary depending on quantity and on whether you want full colour, two colours or black and white printing. You will need to bear this in mind once you start your design
- You can design a simple poster or flyer in a word processing programme such as Microsoft Word. You would have more options regarding layout in a desktop publishing programme. The simplest of these is Microsoft Publisher, but if you are going to be designing a lot of publicity material you might want to consider a

more professional package such as Quark or Adobe InDesign

Grabbing attention

- Always remember that many of the people you want to reach will simply glance at a notice board or leaflet rack for a few seconds. You need to ensure that your message gets to them in those crucial moments!
- You will need an attention grabbing headline – just like newspapers and news headlines on the television do. You really need to stop people in their tracks and make them feel they just have to know what it's all about!
- Having got someone's attention, the last thing you want is for them to think "so what?" Ask yourself the question: What do I want people to do as a result of seeing the publicity? Perhaps to ring someone, book a place on a course, or simply turn up at an event. Keep a prominent place, perhaps at the bottom of your poster or flyer, for a "call to action" giving people a reason to act straight away, before they get distracted by other concerns
- If you are publicising an event, ensure that essential information about the date, time and venue are clearly visible. This sounds too obvious to write down, but you will notice lots of professionally produced publicity where it does not happen!
- For folded leaflets, important things such as the headline, name of your organization and contact details need to be on the outside and short, very relevant information on the page you first unfold. Keep more detailed background material for inside covers
- In all cases, keep it simple and don't use too many words. Blocks of text or long lists are off-putting for everyone, but especially so if English is not someone's first language or for those who do not have a strong command of the English language
- Consider getting a proportion of your posters or leaflets translated into other widely spoken community languages, or include a short piece of text (in the relevant languages) signposting people to where they can find out more in their first language
- Choose images that match the subject matter and 'feel' of what it is you are promoting. For example, is it formal or informal, for teenagers or senior citizens?

Design

- Start to take notice of posters and leaflets that draw your own attention, and try to work out what it is about them that makes them noticeable. This will give you ideas about the kind of design you want, or don't want, for a particular project
- The images you use on your poster or leaflet may be photos you have taken yourself. Check that you have the consent of the people in them – if children are pictured you need to get a signed consent form from their parents. There will be a selection of clip art for you to use in your word processing or desktop publishing programme, and this will include photos as well as various styles of line drawings. You can also use a search engine (for example, Google) to find images on the Internet, though bear in mind that there may be copyright issues in using pictures found in this way
- Once you add an image to your poster, you will be able to change its size, colour, rotation and how it fits in with text on the page. Do not make images bigger than their original size or they will look very unclear
- The font you use for your text will alter the appearance of your work quite markedly, so experiment with different ones. You may wish to use one font for headlines and another for longer pieces of text. However, avoid using too many different fonts as this will look messy – use the same ones consistently to give a

unified look

- Your organisation may have a logo you should use on any publicity material – you will need to follow any guidelines on colour, size or positioning
- Once the first draft of your design is complete, print out a copy and put it up on the wall or amongst other leaflets to see how it stands out. Ask colleagues for their impressions – this is a valuable chance for a test run on how people respond and whether they notice the important information.

During

Distribution

- There is no point in having a beautifully designed poster if no one gets to see it!
- Think again about the people you are trying to reach, and consider where they are likely to spend time and notice information
- Make a list of suitable venues and contact them to ask if they will display your poster. If possible visit as many places as you can in person, get to know the people who work there and explain a little about your project. If they feel involved then they are more likely to talk to people about what it is you are trying to publicise. Perhaps you could offer to do the same for their events in return.

After

Evaluation

- You should try to keep track of the impact your material is having. If it advertises a particular event or ongoing session, if possible, arrange for those who attend to be asked where they heard about it. If it was from a poster or leaflet, ask them where they saw it. If you do this consistently you will build up very valuable data about which material and which distribution points are most effective
- If you get a chance to meet members of your target audience, don't be afraid to ask them what they think about a poster or leaflet campaign. Their responses will help you plan your next design.

People to contact

Westminster City Council, Communications Department, 020 7641 6000

Westminster PCT, Communications Department, 020 7150 8242

South Westminster Children's Centre, Information Worker, 020 7828 4083

Voluntary Action Westminster, Information and Communication Worker, 020 7723 1216

More information

Tips from Microsoft on using Word to create high impact documents:

www.microsoft.com/atwork/getworkdone/documents.msp

Articles and links about Microsoft Publisher:

www.bcentral.co.uk/products/applications/publisher.msp

Open space events

In an open space meeting the participants self-manage themselves to create their own programme around a theme of strategic importance. The meeting can be of any size from five to 1,000 people and can be held over one to three days. Apart from the pre-decided theme, there are no speakers and no set agenda so participants decide exactly what is discussed and when.

When to use this method

- When the situation is complex and must be resolved quickly
- When there is a high degree of diversity of views
- When all stakeholders are needed for good decisions to be made
- When you have no preconceived notion of what the outcomes should be
- When conflict is holding back the ability to change.

When not to use this method

- When the course of action has already been decided on
- When someone wants to control the event
- When there is inadequate follow-up after an event.

Before

- Select a focusing theme or question for the event. It should frame the higher purpose and widest context for your discussion in a positive way. For example 'How do we make our communities safer?'
- You may decide to hire a facilitator for this event
- Book venue and order refreshments. The venue needs to be a suitable size for the number of people you expect to attend and you will probably need to have separate smaller rooms for break-away discussions. Ensure that the venue is fully accessible
- You may need to book at least one British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter for the event
- Invite participants — it is always a good idea to invite a range of people from different backgrounds and different viewpoints. Include the theme, date, place and time of gathering in the invitation
- Set the room up with chairs in a circle or concentric circles with space in the centre. Keep some spaces free for wheelchairs. A blank wall should be labelled the 'Agenda: AM, PM' wall and another wall as a 'News' wall
- Put blank sheets of paper, or Post-It Notes, and coloured pens in the centre of the circle.

During

- The facilitator explains to participants the main theme of the event, the key principles of open space and the *Law of Two Feet* (see below)
- The facilitator explains how anyone can convene a small group to discuss any topic they care about, related to the theme of the event. The facilitator also gives information about all the locations where the small groups can meet
- The facilitator then invites participants who want to talk about particular topics related to the theme to step into the circle, and write the topic name, their name, meeting time and meeting place on a Post It Note or piece of paper. Participants need to be given some time to think about the topic they'd like to discuss
- Participants stick their papers with topics or ideas on the Agenda wall (they can put up more than one). The participants who put up topics will then be the convenors of those discussion groups and be responsible for reports on their



topics to be produced and placed on the News wall

- Once all topics have been placed on the Agenda wall, the facilitator must get people to sign up for discussion groups and manage their own schedules
- Discussion groups take place and reports are produced from each one and placed upon the News wall. It can help to have computers and printers available to type and print reports during the event instead of handwritten reports. During discussion the role of the facilitator is to manage the overall space
- About an hour before the end everyone should reconvene into the circle formation and debrief on the main points raised, simply listening to whatever people have to offer without discussion.

After

Results

- Check every issue of concern to anybody has been discussed
- Identify critical focal issues and next steps

- Rank all issues in priority order
- Produce a full written record of all discussions exists for distribution to all participants.

Key principles of open space events

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- When it starts is the right time to start
- When it's over, it's over.

The Law of Two Feet

At each discussion group, people can leave when they wish, or join another group, when they feel they have contributed or learnt all they can. This means people have to take responsibility for what they care about, using their own two feet to move to whatever place they can best contribute or learn. There are two types of behaviour you might observe. 'Bumblebees' are people who flit from group to group, cross-pollinating, and 'Butterflies' are people who may spend some time outside of any group, either thinking alone, or chatting to one other person.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216

More information

www.openspaceuk.com or www.openspaceworld.org

Public meetings

Public meetings can either be meetings which are open for the public to attend or meetings specifically planned for the public. They can be used as an opportunity to hear the views of members of the public and to inform them of your plans.

When to use this method

- If you want to give generalised information to a wide audience
- If you want to find out people's general opinion on an idea or a service change
- If you want to inform many people.

When not to use this method

- If you want to get detailed feedback
- If the people you are targeting are unlikely to attend a public meeting, for example, users of services are from a wide geographical area, or when subject area is highly sensitive and users may wish to remain anonymous.

Before

Planning for a public meeting should start at least two months before the planned date – but the earlier you can book a venue and speakers the better.

At least two months before

- Decide the purpose of the meeting and the intended audience
- Set a date and book a venue. It is advisable to view the venue if you are not already familiar with it. It must be fully wheelchair accessible.
- Invite and confirm Chair and speakers
- Provisionally book British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters
- Produce and distribute publicity articles and notification to newsletters.

One month before

- Find out from the Chair and speakers what equipment they need, if any
- Design and produce publicity materials
- Send publicity materials to Chair and speakers and distributors
- Notify media and prepare press pack
- Prepare any necessary documents for the event
- Book audio-visual equipment required
- Book refreshments, remembering to include vegetarian options. Ask for water to be available for the speakers. You will probably have to estimate numbers
- Produce agenda with timings
- Decide on, and ask for, the room layout required
- Assign roles at the event, for example, someone to welcome speakers, register

attendees, organise catering, take minutes, and take photographs.

During

If any members of the press arrive, make sure to meet with them to brief them, if necessary.

For the event remember to bring:

- Name cards and name tags for speakers and guests
- Signs to put up around the venue to direct attendees to the meeting room
- Copies of agenda and documents that are necessary for the meeting
- Handouts of presentations
- Water for the speakers
- Registration forms. Attendees could be invited to give their contact details if they want to hear of future events
- Camera so that you can take photos to be used in publicity materials (don't forget to get permission from attendees to take and use their photographs)
- Audio visual equipment and extension cable
- Leaflets and exhibition stands
- Pens and paper.

After

Action ideas and suggestions

There will be certain action points arising from public meetings, like questions that still need answering, for example. Additionally feedback, ideas and suggestions from the public will have to be communicated to the people involved with the services discussed at the meeting.

Feedback

The most important things to do after a public meeting is feedback to the people who attended any unanswered questions and what will happen with the information obtained during the meeting. It is then vital to feedback again at a later stage whether any action or changes have occurred as a result of the meeting. You could do this through another public meeting, a newsletter, by letter or through an information leaflet.

People to contact

Venues

When choosing a venue you should think about how many people you expect will attend (make sure room is big enough), where they will be coming from (make sure the venue is not too far away) and always make sure that it is accessible to disabled people.

Some recommended venues in Westminster with disabled access and large hall:

- Abbey Community Centre, SW1 (020 7222 0303)
- Beethoven Centre, W10 (020 8969 5881)
- Paddington Arts, W9 (020 7286 2722)
- Regent's Hall, W1R (020 7629 2766)
- St. Anne's Community Centre, W1D (020 7437 8039)
- Westminster Council House, NW1 (020 7641 2755).

Advice

Westminster PCT, Involving People Coordinator, 020 7150 8127

Voluntary Action Westminster, PPI Forum Support Team, 020 7723 1216

Voluntary Action Westminster, Partners in Health Worker, 020 7723 1216

More information

Interpretation

If you require an interpreter at the meeting you must book as early as possible, especially for British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. For hiring of interpreters in Westminster contact GRIP (020 8962 4532) or Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

Cost

Costs are dependent upon the number of people you cater for, the venue you hire and the length of the meeting. A venue for approximately 100 people will cost between £50-250 (additional costs for equipment) and you should allow £3 per person for refreshments.

Getting people to come along:

One of the main problems associated with public meetings is getting people to attend. Timing is vital for a good turn-out; think about your target audience and what would suit them best (even go and speak to people and find out what time they would prefer). For example, if you particularly want to target mothers then morning meetings will usually get a higher turn-out.

Additionally, remember that the audience may not be experts in the subject being discussed – it is essential not to use jargon and not to cram too much information into a short time. If people are confused they will not come to future meetings!

Surveys and questionnaires

Questionnaires are frequently used in quantitative market research and social research. They are a valuable way of collecting a wide range of information from a large number of respondents. Good questionnaire construction is vital to the success of a survey. A useful way of checking a questionnaire for problems is to pilot it with a small sample of respondents first.

When to use this method

You could use a questionnaire:

- When you want to gather information that is easily quantifiable or easy to categorise
- When you want to get data on a large sample of people
- When it is necessary to protect the privacy of participants
- When corroborating other findings
- When you have access to the resources and expertise necessary to distribute the questionnaire, pay for return postage, and analyse the results.

When not to use this method

- If you need more detailed qualitative data, for example on people's actual experience of a service
- If you don't have the resources to distribute the questionnaires, pay for return postage or for interviewers, and to analyse the results
- If the people you are trying to reach include those who cannot read or write, or where you do not have the resources to translate questionnaires into other languages.

Before

Before anything else check to see if a questionnaire already exists that you can use.

Defining your objectives

- A questionnaire without a clear goal and purpose will end up asking pointless questions and waste participants' time. Well-defined goals are the best way to assure good questionnaire design. One of the best ways to clarify your study goals is to decide how you intend to use the information
- You will also need to give careful thought to who you want to complete the questionnaire (or whose views you wish to elicit). Is there a pool of people that you can easily access? Do you have a mailing list of people you wish to target?
- Questionnaires that are sent out in the post are lucky to get a five per cent return rate, with a stamped addressed envelope.

Planning the analysis

- Decide what sort of analysis will be appropriate to your questionnaire
- You may need to use specialist software, or employ a consultant to carry out the analysis
- When designing the questionnaire, check with your consultant if you are using one, for ease of analysis.

Designing the questionnaire

There are two broad types of questions.

Open-ended questions:

- Ask for unprompted opinions
- Are good for getting personal opinions or when the range of responses is not tightly defined
- Elicit a variety of responses that more truly reflect the opinions of the respondents.

BUT

- The responses are more difficult to analyse
- They may be interpreted in different ways so you may get answers to different questions than the ones you asked
- They require more time and thought on the part of the respondent.

Closed questions:

- Matrix questions—identical response categories are assigned to multiple questions. The questions are placed one under the other, forming a matrix with response categories along the top and a list of questions down the side. This is an efficient use of page space and respondents' time
- Scaled questions—responses are graded on a continuum (for example, respondents are asked to rate the appearance of the product on a scale from one to ten, with ten being the most preferred appearance)
- Closed ended questions—respondents' answers are limited to a fixed set of responses. Most scales are closed ended.

Other types of closed ended questions include:

- Dichotomous questions—the respondent answers either “yes” or “no”
- Multiple choice—the respondent has several options from which to choose.

Closed questions are easier to analyse than open questions, and can be machine-read.

Some tips

- Keep it simple and avoid jargon
- Avoid double negatives. Even single negatives should be reworded as positives
- Ask one question at a time. Avoid complex questions. If more than one question is hidden in a survey question, you will not know which one the respondent is answering
- Check whether each question is really necessary, and what you will do with the information gained
- Avoid leading questions. A leading question is one that forces or implies a certain type of answer
- Include some questions about demographic information. This will probably be useful regardless of what your questionnaire is looking at. Demographic

information is usually collected at the end of the questionnaire

- Begin with a few non-threatening and interesting items, encouraging the respondent to continue
- Place the most important items in the first half of the questionnaire. This means that partially completed questionnaires will still contain important information
- Give your questionnaire a title that is short and meaningful to the respondent
- Try not to exceed two A4 sheets of paper
- By including both closed ended and open ended questions, you will reduce the respondent's boredom
- Formulate a plan for doing the statistical analysis during the design stage of the project. Know how each question will be analysed
- Use a different colour for the paper, other than white A4. Peach, pink and yellow are proven to prompt attention and thought to each answer.

Pilot—quality testing

- Before the questionnaire is sent out, it is important to pilot it on representatives of the target audience. If there are problems with the questionnaire, they will probably show up here
- You can then produce a new questionnaire taking on board their points and comments.

During

Conducting the questionnaire

- Provide a brief well-written cover letter. This provides your best chance to persuade the respondent to complete the survey
- Include clear and concise instructions on how to complete the questionnaire
- Consider using incentives as motivation for a properly completed questionnaire
- Make it convenient. The easier it is for the respondent to complete the questionnaire the better. Always include a self addressed postage-paid envelope
- Could the questionnaire be emailed or web-based?

After

- During the planning stage you will have identified what statistical analysis will be appropriate. This may mean employing a specialist consultant depending on the level of analysis needed
- Consider how you will feedback the outcome of the questionnaire to those who have been involved, and then do it.

People to contact

Westminster PCT, Health Improvement Information and Resource Centre, 020 7150 8000

More information

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/questionnaire_construction

www.kevinboone.com/howto_survey

www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/questnrs

Video booth

A video booth is a private area where someone can sit in front of a video camera and be recorded while giving their views or responding to questions.

When to use this method

- If you want to get detailed, vivid and direct feedback from people about their experiences and opinions
- When involving those who feel inhibited about speaking in a group, or whose first language is not English (as their input can be translated by voice-over)
- When you want to see and hear how people feel about services and the community
- When you want to involve people in a visual evaluation of services or in a film or power-point presentation about your project/services
- When you want to involve people who find it more difficult to communicate by the written word.

When not to use this method

- When you want a fast, non-time consuming method (editing the video takes time)
- When you need lots of quantitative data
- When you have had no editing training or experience.

Before

Set a date, locate a venue, and get all the equipment ready (see checklist below).

Before setting up a video booth:

- Define what you want to come out of it
- Decide on the questions to be asked. Plan some initial questions that are easy to answer and help people relax
- Plan open questions moving from general questions to more specific ones, if the topic is of high importance to participants. If the topic is of low importance to participants, start with specific questions. This gives people a lead into broader, more general questions
- Produce consent forms for all participants to sign giving their permission for their input to be used by your service. (If possible translate the forms into more than one language). Be clear about what you need to use it for and what you will do with the recordings afterwards
- Select a quiet room or space (inside or outside) where there is very little noise as this can spoil the sound of the recording. A screen must be provided for privacy. If the booth is in a different room from a larger event have a sign (with a catchy

slogan) indicating the place where the booth will be (preferably translated and with pictures) inviting people to come and have their say

- Make sure the video booth is fully accessible.

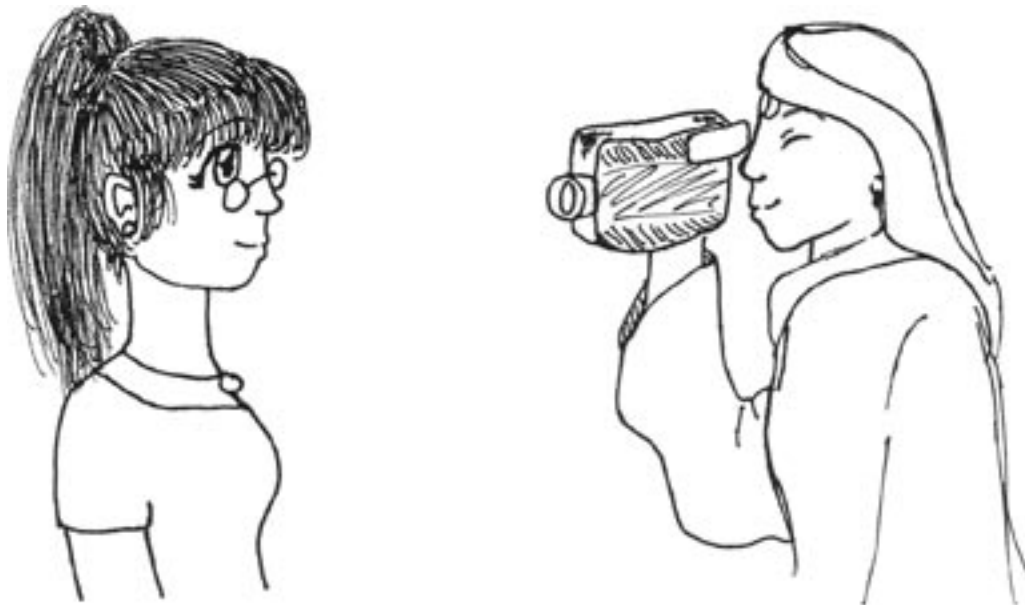
Cost

- Digital equipment varies in price depending on the make, features, and place of purchase
- It is recommended that all digital equipment is insured against theft, damage and for future upgrade
- Consider hiring or borrowing equipment to reduce costs.

During

Checklist of things needed on the day:

- Consent forms, including address so that you can send people a copy of the final video. You may need to provide consent forms in more than one language
- Signage to the booth
- A big screen or board for privacy
- Comfortable, quiet and accessible venue where there is not a lot of noise and where a board or screen can be put up
- Comfortable chairs, extension leads, digital camcorder, tripod, extra battery, battery charger, blank video tape (and extras), monitor for interviewees to review their answers.



After

Edit the video, using voice over as necessary. Send a copy of the video to all those filmed.

People to contact

The Queens Park New Media Centre offer training and advice on use of video and other new media. They may also be able to work in partnership with your group or organisation for an event that uses multimedia. They do not hire out equipment. Phone 020 8964 5891.

Paddington Arts, www.paddingtonarts.org.uk, 020 7286 2722

Voluntary Action Westminster, Church Street Children's Centre Outreach Team, 020 7723 1216

More information

There are many local businesses that offer multimedia equipment hire. You could try:

Gordons Audio Visual

020 7387 3399

Symes Mews, 37 Camden High Street, London NW1

Executive Audio Visual

020 7723 4488

80 York Street. London, W1H

Visioning workshops

Visioning workshops are meetings at which participants are facilitated to imagine the future that their project is trying to achieve, and plan how to achieve it.

Visioning workshops are an extremely useful tool when change is necessary, but the exact nature of the change is uncertain. Involving service users in the early stages of planning can release new ideas and untapped creativity, resulting in planning which is fit for purpose and owned by the local community or service users. Workshops allow people to get together to decide the exact nature of the change that is proposed.

When to use this method

- If you are open to creative thinking and new ideas
- If you are at the early stages of developing an approach to a problem or issue
- When change is necessary

When not to use this method

- If you already know what options are open to you
- If you are unable to incorporate new ideas into your planning processes.

Before

- Determine the main question(s) for your visioning workshop
- Hire a consultant trained in conducting visioning workshops
- Book venue and refreshments
- Compile invitation list and send invitations.

During

- Visual information in the form of maps, photographs, drawings, 3D models can help the visioning process
- Ensure adequate support staff to enable facilitator to run the workshop properly.

After

- Feed options into planning process
- Write a thank you letter to the participants that also informs them of the outcome of the workshop (for example, which scenarios arising from the visioning have been incorporated into the plans).

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, Policy and Engagement Team, 020 7723 1216

More information

Planning for real: www.nif.co.uk

Involving people — ongoing

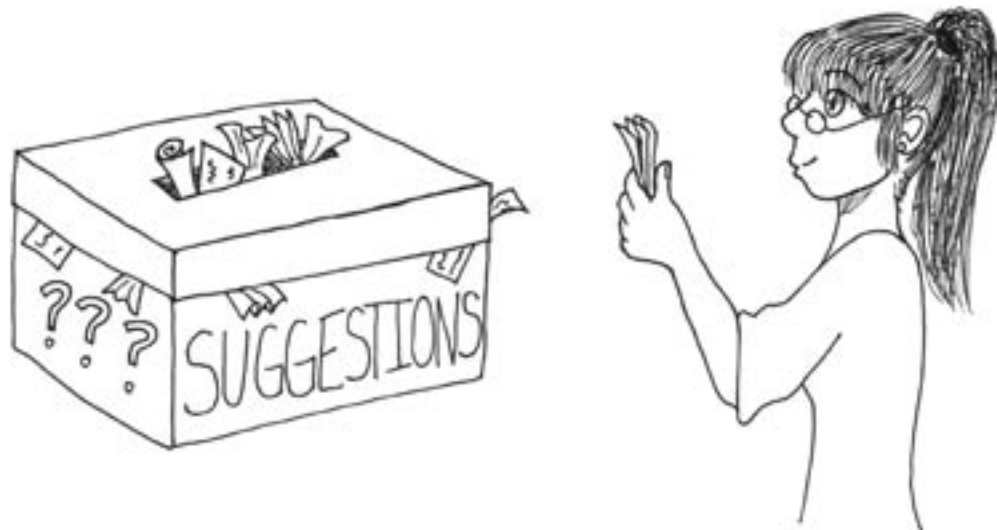
Active suggestion boxes

Active suggestion boxes are boxes placed in a central area where a service is provided into which users can anonymously put comment cards completed with their opinions and suggestions. Active suggestion boxes are a good way of getting honest feedback about your service.

When to use this method

- You need an inexpensive way of getting honest feedback
- You want to encourage people to participate and feel part of the local community
- You are committed to taking on board the feedback and improving service delivery
- You want to hear about and address, any problems being encountered.

When not to use this method



- If you do not have the resources or commitment to make use of the feedback
- If there would be particular access issues for the particular user group. For example, if your core group are people whose first language is not English and you do not have access to the necessary translation resources.

Planning

- Ensure that you have the time, resources and capacity for maintaining the process, checking suggestions made, acting on them and publicising the response
- Consider offering incentives such as a prize draw

- Ensure that boxes are located in a prominent place, together with a sign saying what they are there for. Make sure the location is accessible to everyone, including wheelchair users
- Consider giving a comments slip to every service user. Make sure that the comments slips are visible and replenished frequently. You will also need to provide a pen or pencil to complete them with
- You may need to provide comments slips in more than one language
- It might be also be worth developing a system for staff to record all informal comments made by service users – for example, a *comments book*. Reviewing this information can help to improve services.

Launch

- Install suggestion boxes securely at a time which won't disrupt normal services
- Put up a poster encouraging use of the boxes, announcing any prize draws, and promising feedback.

Maintenance

- Plan to examine the books or boxes regularly and ensure that there is a system in place for regularly considering suggestions and responding to them.
- Put up regular notices summarising the comments or suggestions received and action that is planned as a result.

People to contact

Westminster PCT, Involving People Coordinator, 020 7150 8000

More information

GPX Group have suggestion boxes in a variety of sizes, shapes and prices. Visit www.gpxgroup.com for more information.

Internet Stationers

www.internet-stationers.co.uk

Talking to people

One of the most neglected mechanisms of finding out what people think is through simply talking to them! This is a cheap and easy method of getting immediate feedback.

When to use this method

- All the time! But specifically for minor decisions and initial input on larger projects, ideas or changes
- If you want to make sure people are genuinely involved in all levels of the service you provide
- If you want to involve people in your work but don't have much money available.

When not to use this method

- You want to find out the views of many people
- You require formal evidence for a decision.

Planning

Speaking about something specific

Sometimes the easiest way of consulting users is to just go and have a chat with people. A common myth is that all consultation requires formal methods, such as surveys, but finding out people's views or talking through an idea with someone is an equally valid consultation tool. This can be while they are using your services or in the community, for example, at GP surgeries, community centres, churches, or supermarkets.

Before you speak to people consider the following questions:

- What are you going to ask/discuss?
- Do you have enough time?
- How can you make sure that you are being inclusive, that everyone is given an opportunity to comment?
- Have you chosen the most appropriate venue? Will people have enough time to talk to you? And will people be comfortable talking in this venue or even in public?
- Do you want to record your conversation? If you do, you must ask the permission of the person you are talking to.

Maintenance

Picking up general feedback

Every day staff members receive feedback from users that is often lost because there is no system in place to capture the information. Passing on comments, complaints and suggestions from users and other staff can be invaluable for improving services and so

below are some suggestions for how this information can be processed.

- Suggestions or comments boxes (please see previous section)
- Comments book or board
- Database: a simple (or as complicated as you wish!) database can be set up using Access or Excel to log main points arising from conversations with users. It is a good idea for the frontline worker to keep a pad of paper at hand to note the particular comments and then to feed them into the database. It is vital to regularly monitor the database or spreadsheet for trends and for these trends to be reported higher up the system (for example, a basic report from a GP receptionist is submitted to regular GP practice meeting)
- Job description: when inducting frontline workers the importance of involving patients and the public in work should be emphasised, and specifically included in job descriptions. If staff members are aware of the benefits of feeding comments into the system they will be more likely to do this in their work.

People to contact

Westminster PCT, Involving People Coordinator, 020 7150 8000

St Mary's NHS Trust, PALS Team, 020 7886 7777

More information

It is important to be sensitive when talking to people. Many subjects can be highly emotive and it is important to consider this before approaching someone. Additionally some people might consider some topics inappropriate to be discussed in public and be unwilling to participate.

It is also important to consider confidentiality – some people will not talk to you unless they can be assured that they will remain anonymous. This is even more relevant if you have decided to record the conversation.

Newsletters

Newsletters are a way of sharing information with a large number of people. They can be a one-off publication, feeding back from a single event, or a regular publication publicising the ongoing work of a group or project.

When to use this method

- When you need to communicate a lot of information in a lively and user-friendly way
- When you have an established pool of people with whom you wish to communicate
- When you have the resources to sustain this method of communication (of an ongoing newsletter)

When not to use this method

- When you do not have the resources to sustain this method of communication
- When you do not have access to basic desk-top publishing or layout skills
- When you do not have an information stream to provide interesting content for an ongoing newsletter

Planning

Should you really write a newsletter?

You should only consider producing a newsletter if you have reliable on-going sources of information. Though you may have enough to fill one issue, it may not be easy to secure continued contributions. If your information is the result of a one-off event consider using a different format such as a short, good-looking report, or an article for inclusion in an existing newsletter. A newsletter that closes after an issue or two may create a bad impression.

Electronic or printed?

Electronic and printed newsletters have different strengths.

	Printed	Electronic
Cost	Can be quite expensive, especially in small quantities.	No cost to you (although there is a cost to the recipient who prints it out).

	Printed	Electronic
Impact	Dependent on the quality of design, layout and visual interest, such as photographs and drawings.	Is easier to ignore than a printed newsletter. May be ‘automatically’ deleted from someone’s mailbox.
Distribution	Need to cover the cost of postage, or have access to volunteers who will distribute by hand.	Relatively easy but not everyone has an email address, or the ability to read online. May not reach intended recipients whose mailboxes are full.

Audience

Consider your readers when writing your newsletter, and market it at them. They are not necessarily interested in what your organisation does, but in how they can benefit from it. Your articles should be aimed at them, and contain information they find useful.

It is easy to assume the reader has knowledge about your organisation that they in fact don’t have. Most likely they will know less than you think they do. Using simple language and assuming no knowledge on the part of your reader will make the newsletter understandable to most audiences.

During

Time and resources

Producing a newsletter from beginning to end can be very time consuming, especially if designing and printing the newsletter. Involving people in your editorial team, to help with collecting and writing articles, taking photographs or producing drawings, is important. Many people relish the opportunity to be creative in this way. Make sure everyone involved has time to commit to producing it on a regular basis. If you are sending your newsletter out by post be prepared to spend an afternoon stuffing envelopes.

Writing articles

Articles can take many shapes and sizes. To break up text pull out bullet points and make them into diagrams.

Design tips

- Look at other newsletters for inspiration and copy ideas that work. Think about issues of accessibility (for example, use simple language, strong contrasting colours, and larger font sizes)
- Keeping layout simple has many advantages – it will be easy to make the newsletter consistent, it will be much faster to produce, and it will be easier to understand
- If you choose a simple layout, you can spend more time on making sure it looks professional, for example, by focusing on consistent sizes and fonts for text, correct spacing and alignment
- If you have the money, time can be saved (and impact increased) by getting it professionally designed.

Printing

The two major costs associated with newsletters are printing and distribution. Printing

costs vary depending on the method used. Often outsourcing printing may be cheaper than using an in-house photocopier.

If you use a printer, consider different printing options:

- One colour: black and a colour (dark blues, purples, greens and browns look nice)
- Two colours (try using one colour for headlines and one for text). Cheaper than full colour, you'll still have a bright and professional look to your design
- Full colour. When you are using full colour, be careful because colours that look good on your screen may be completely different when printed. The only way to be sure is with a proof from the printers. Getting them or you to change colours after the proof will incur an extra charge
- Also, consider what colour paper you will use.

Before you start the design work, make sure the printer is compatible with the programmes you are using. Find out what design limitations there are on your print process: printing to the edges of the paper will cost you more, and you will have to insert bleed margins.

Money

Costs of professional printing often don't seem to relate to the amount printed, with a run of 1,000 often not costing substantially more than a run of 100. But costs of distribution are proportional, depending on the size and weight of your newsletter. The overall cost of a normal newsletter should be about 50p for each person you send it to.



Proofreading

Get someone, a colleague or someone in the intended audience, to give you feedback on your newsletter at different stages in the process of making it – they will give you ideas that you hadn't thought of, and will be able to look at it with a fresh pair of eyes – pointing out things that are confused (though you didn't realise because you've been working so closely on it).

Distribution

Who will you send your newsletter to? If you don't have a list of people who you want to send it to, consider asking VAW for a list of organisations in Westminster.

Involving people in producing the newsletter

Consider using a focus group of service users to direct the content of a newsletter. Your editorial team can include service users, who can also produce copy, photographs and images. Service users can also be involved in distribution. You can also use a newsletter to publicise a wider involvement strategy, involving and informing services users.

Maintenance

Make sure all contributors and volunteers get copies of your newsletter.

Go back to your proofreaders and others for feedback on your newsletter. Did they read it? What did they like? There are many simple questions you can ask that will provide you with valuable information you can use to improve your next issue.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, Information and Communication Worker, 020 7723 1216

More Information

The VAW website (www.vawcvs.org) has examples of *Current*, the VAW newsletter.

Representatives on committees

Representatives from the community or community organisations can assist committees and working groups with improved service planning, delivery, targeting, take-up, and evaluation. Representation on committees can increase shared responsibility and partnership working.

When to use this method

- When you want ongoing input from a group of people on a particular project or set of issues
- When you want to involve people in making the important decisions about a project or organisation.

When not to use this method

- If you cannot commit to supporting the representatives on the committee, including using plain English in meetings and reports and providing induction and on-going support for representatives.

Planning

Before attracting representatives to committees and working groups

- Discuss and reach agreement in your committee about why you wish to involve representatives from the community and how you can make committee meetings truly accessible
- Consider whose views and interests need to be represented
- Consider the skills, knowledge and experience that all members of the committee, including representatives, are expected to bring
- Prepare an information or induction pack for new committee representatives, including background notes, terms of reference for the committee, a list of members with contact details, job description and person specification for the role of representative and minutes of the last two meetings
- Decide, in consultation with the community, whether to recruit representatives through an election or selection process
- Consider how you will make the role of representative attractive to people
- Decide what benefits or rewards representatives or their organisations can receive.
- Consider representatives' training and support needs to enable them to participate effectively
- Specify the time commitment required from representatives, for example, one-

off, limited, on-going

- Consider the number of representatives you want to attract. Always have more than one community representative, for mutual support, on your committee.

Before the first meeting

- Arrange an informal meeting with the representatives to explore any uncertainties, or anxieties they or their organisation may have, or difficulties they may face during the period of representation, for example, no meetings on a Friday
- Brief representatives about the membership, priorities and working style of the committee or working group
- Check if they have any additional needs, for example, access needs, language skills needs
- If the representative is unlikely to know many people on the committee or working group, consider organising a small social event for people to get to know each other, or ask representatives to arrive early for the first meeting to allow some time to feel welcome and settled before everyone else arrives
- If there are other new representatives/members, make sure they are introduced to each other.

Some things to remember:

- The representatives' experience is valuable even if not widely representative
- The involvement of community representatives can often be an opportunity for the committee as a whole to improve the way it functions, for all members.

During

During representation make sure that:

- Community representatives have their own slot on the agenda of every meeting
- Other members of the committee or working group understand whose views and interests are being represented
- The committee recognises that the representatives' experiences are of value even if not formally representative of the wider community
- The working style and pace enable the representative to inform and consult the wider community on decisions taken
- Representatives are supported to feedback to other community members, for example, through providing help with organising meetings, translating or photocopying documents
- All conflicts of interest are declared and openly acknowledged
- Meeting dates and times are arranged to meet the needs of all committee members, including representatives
- The use of language is simple, clear and free of jargon
- All members of the committee, including representatives, are at ease with the style and pace of the work being undertaken.

Maintenance

When the person's period of representation has ended:

- Discuss with the representative her or his experience of being on the committee or working group, for example, what went well, what needs improvement
- Discuss with the committee how this learning can be applied to the recruitment and support of future representatives.

People to contact

Voluntary Action Westminster, User Involvement Project, 020 7723 1216

Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

User forums

User forums are groups of ten to 20 service users who meet on a regular basis to discuss topics of concern to them as users of a project or service. The forum has a recognised mechanism for feeding into the decision-making body of a project or service.

When to use this method

- You want longer term involvement with people and want them to participate in decision-making
- You want to get input and ideas on a range of projects, plans or services from a user perspective
- You want ongoing involvement with people from specific groups.

When not to use this method

- You do not intend to act upon recommendations and information gained
- You do not have the resources to support a forum
- You want to disseminate information rather than encourage participation.

Planning

Basics

- When establishing a user forum it is important to be clear about the role you envisage for the forum. It is also important to be clear about the benefits the forum can provide to its members, and to service users generally, and to communicate those benefits
- It is essential at all times to be aware that forum members are volunteering their own time and may have specific time commitments that need to be worked around. It may be necessary to hold meetings out of office hours and to use convenient locations that are fully accessible
- All forum members need to have one key contact — any more and members may get confused, work may be duplicated and information lost.

Time

- The amount of time taken to set up and administer user forums is dependent on the scale of the project and on the individuals involved
- It will take approximately two months to set up a forum and about twelve hours should be dedicated to each meeting (including preparation, holding the meeting and follow-up work).

Budget

Basic costs include:

- Room or venue hire
- Refreshments
- Provision of documents (printing and photocopying, for example)
- Training provision
- Meeting access needs – for example, British Sign Language (BSL) and other language interpreters, or a crèche
- Out-of-pocket expenses for forum members.

Setting up a user forum

- Decide on the group of people who need to be involved in decision-making
- Either advertise through posters, newspaper and newsletter articles, community and voluntary groups or by directly inviting individuals
- Provide an information pack for interested users – this should include the purpose of the forum, time commitment required, any previous knowledge or experience required, and any training provided
- Concentrate initially on simply getting people involved. Do not attempt too early to recruit a group that is strictly representative of every single group within the community.

Launch

First meeting of a user forum

- Consult with those invited to find a first date to meet that suits as many people as possible and give adequate notice (one month is good practice)
- Find out the special requirements of those attending and make sure they are met
- Send written notice of the meeting with agenda and map of venue
- The group will need to decide how often they need to meet and then it is a good idea to set dates for the next six months
- Build in opportunities for people to get to know each other in a non-threatening way, through ice-breakers or small group discussions
- Initial meetings of the forum should be used to write a terms of reference document and clarify the goals of the forum
- Refreshments should be provided
- Minutes should be taken at the meeting and then sent out to those present and those who could not attend, no longer than two weeks after the meeting.

Maintenance

Subsequent meetings of a user forum

- Make sure that action points from previous meetings have been attended to before the next meeting
- Provide minutes from the previous meeting and any required documents
- It is a good idea to write reports at regular intervals on ideas, work, and decisions generated from the forum (depending how often the group meets).

People to contact

Westminster PCT, Involving People Team, 020 7150 8000

Voluntary Action Westminster, PPI Forum Support Team, 020 7723 1216

Voluntary Action Westminster, Church Street Children's Centre Outreach Team, 020 7723 1216

More information

Venues

You may be able to use a meeting room in your building for meetings of user groups. However, below are a few venues with rooms suitable for small meetings:

- St Pauls Church Centre, 9 Rothmore Street, NW1 6NJ
£25 per session for smaller rooms (10 people)
Contact Jim Keenlyside on 020 7724 8517.
- Paddington Arts, 32 Woodfield Road, W9 2BE
Small rooms cost £18 for each hour (plus VAT) during the day, and cost an additional £10 for each hour in the evening.
020 7296 2722.
- Regent's Hall, W1R
020 7629 2766
- St Anne's Community Centre, W1D
020 7437 8039
- Tachbrook Peabody Estate, SW1
020 7931 8466
- Voluntary Action Westminster, 37 Chapel Street, NW1
020 7723 1216

Supporting people in involvement

The ladder of involvement

People often talk of the 'ladder' of involvement. This is a term from a model developed by Sherry Arnstein in the late 1960s in the USA. Her model portrayed different types of involvement as a ladder, with each rung representing the degree of power people held through their involvement. The model was critical of the tokenistic way that people were often involved by those in power. In Arnstein's model the ladder stretched from 'manipulation' at the lowest extreme to 'citizen control' at the highest.

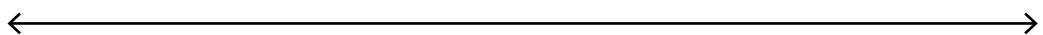
This concept of a ladder has been built on and adapted since. 'Strengthening Accountability', the Department of Health's guide to involvement, shows involvement as a continuum, ranging from 'giving information' at one end, to true 'partnership' at the other, as illustrated below.

The model of a continuum gets away from the idea of a hierarchy of involvement. It is not that one type of involvement is inherently 'better' than another, but rather that different types of involvement are appropriate to different situations.

Involving people continuum

Minimum involvement

Maximum involvement



Giving information	Getting information	Forums for debate	Participation	Partnership
Open days	Questionnaire surveys	Focus groups	Expert patients	Open space events
Leaflets	Structured interviews	Meetings with groups	Citizens juries	Community development
The press	Semi-structured interviews	Public meetings	Health panels	
	Patient diaries	Seminars	Shadowing	
	Open surgeries	Targeting interested people	Storytelling	
	Citizens' panels	Café consultations		
	Radio or live phone-ins			

Involving people project cycle

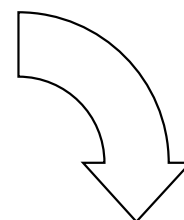
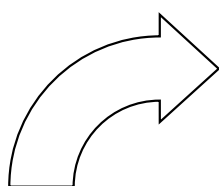
A. PLANNING

What is your aim?

Who are the people you need to hear from?

What information do you need?

What resources do you need and have?



B. GETTING BACKING

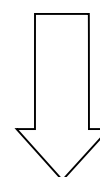
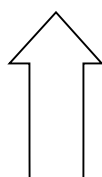
Is there a commitment to respond?

Have you the resources you need?

F. TAKING ACTION

How will you report back to people involved?

How will you report to those who can make changes?



E. PUTTING YOUR METHOD INTO ACTION

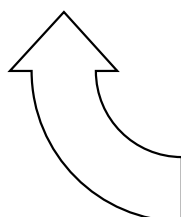
Follow your project plan

Remember to ask for feedback

C. GETTING SUPPORT

Are there any partners you can work with?

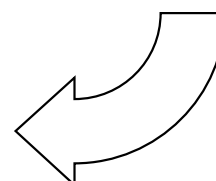
Is there anyone you can go to for advice?



D. CHOOSING YOUR METHOD

Consult the Practical Guide to Involvement

Check the method meets your aims



A. Planning

Other questions you need to ask are:

- How will you deal with unexpected themes and issues?
- Will a service user be included in designing the consultation, in interviewing people or evaluating the research?
- What do you need to do to ensure your process is fully accessible and inclusive?
- Could you train service users to do this?
- How will you manage the feedback?

B. Getting backing

Other questions you need to ask are:

- How can you encourage service managers to listen and act on the issues arising from involvement?
- Do you have the resources and appropriate backing from managers or service providers to effect change?
- How can you encourage staff to work in different ways to promote more user-friendly ways of working?

C. Getting support

Find out if there are other organisations that have involved people, or are considering involving people, in similar ways. It may be possible to work in partnership or at least provide mutual support.

If at all possible, plan the project with one or two members of the community, or service users, from the start.

D. Choosing your method

As well as referring to this Practical Guide, consult with other organisations working with similar groups of people, or offering similar services.

E. Putting your method into action

Following, or during, involvement you will need to:

- Keep records of, and analyse, the responses you receive
- Keep track of the common themes and issues
- Identify gaps that you could fill
- Learn from things you could do better
- Write up what people tell you simply, using graphs and photographs to illustrate the results

F. Taking action

- Feed the information back to managers or funders as effectively as possible. You may want to organise a workshop and support those involved to present their findings and experiences
- Be sure to thank people involved for their responses
- Think how you can respond to any of the identified issues, even if only in a small way
- Approach other organisations and community groups with similar aims and objectives to consider partnership working to share resources.

As soon as possible

- Give people involved a report on the results of the involvement and how you have responded, or intend to respond

- Be clear. For example, say “98 of you asked for this and we have done this in response. 32 of you did not like this and we have done this to change it.”

This lets people know that it is worthwhile to give feedback, that you are listening and responding and it sets up a trusting and respectful working relationship. This positive involvement will be beneficial to your organisation.

Budgets

Whatever costs you incur in involving people, remember the long-term benefits to the organisation.

Costs can be reduced and benefits increased if you work with service users as volunteers on your involvement project. Volunteer interviewers generally get better, more relevant and honest replies than staff members. You may also benefit from volunteers speaking different languages and reaching more isolated people. People you work with as volunteers can become a valuable resource for future involvement projects, and as trainers of new volunteers.

Church Street Children’s Centre Outreach Team have trained parents as evaluators of their services. The parent evaluators receive a certificate and a testimonial to give to future employers. Their training is linked in with the NVQ course in administration and health and social care. Placements are offered in the PCT and Social Services.

Key Contacts

Voluntary Action Westminster, South Westminster and Church Street Children’s Centre Outreach Teams, 020 7723 1216

Getting people involved

Think about who you want to involve

Before trying to get people involved think about your target group. For example, if you are doing some work around children's health you would probably want to involve parents. Think about the best way to contact them (school notice boards, for example), the best times for events (for example, during school hours) and any specific needs they might have as a group (like crèche facilities or a childcare allowance). It is also a good idea to ask one of your target group how they think you should go about getting people involved. You will be much more successful at getting people involved if you are more aware of their particular needs.



How will they make a difference?

The biggest incentive you can provide for people to get involved is to make it clear from the very beginning how they will make a difference. Nobody wants to spend time sharing their opinions if they think nothing will happen as a result.

Be clear

Be realistic and very clear about what kind of involvement you would like. Have a specific amount of time in mind. Make sure written communication is straightforward and as simple and short as possible.

Incentives

You may want to offer people incentives to get involved. This could be in the form of training, a good lunch or even payment for time. Do be careful if offering payments that the people you are involving are not claiming benefits – if so this could affect their claim. (Please see the government's guidance document *Reward & Recognition* which you can download from the Department of Health website at www.dh.gov.uk)

Making sure involvement is accessible

You need to consider all aspects of accessibility:

- Physical accessibility
- Access to information
- General accessibility.

Since it is impossible to anticipate all potential barriers to access, it is good practice when inviting people to an event to ask them, beforehand, whether they have any special requirements. Such requirements might include, for example, special seating, frequent breaks, text provided in specific font sizes and so on.

Here is a list of things you need to consider for each type of accessibility:

Physical accessibility

- Getting to the venue— is it close to public transport and car parking?
- The entrance – is there wheelchair access, a visible doorbell, a security barrier?
- On entering the main building – is there a lift available? How many steps are there?
- Internal layout – how wide are the corridors, is the layout negotiable? Is there sufficient colour-contrast for people with partial sight? Is the building well-signed?

Access to information

- Is information produced in a clear, easy-to-understand form?
- Is information produced in other languages, on tape, in Braille or in large-print?
- Do large documents contain executive summaries?
- Is there an induction loop system available in any of the rooms, and if not, can one be hired? Also be aware of room acoustics.
- Do you need to book an interpreter (British Sign Language or another language)?

General accessibility

- Lip-reading and using interpreters can be tiring, so if you know people are using either of these communication methods, try to include short rest breaks in the agenda.

- Is there provision for personal attendants to be booked and paid for?
- If catering is involved, are special dietary needs catered for and appropriate utensils available?

It is important to consider how accessible meetings are for those not used to attending them, for example, the structure of the meeting and the use of jargon

People's availability to attend meetings should also be considered. For example people with work commitments, child care issues, religious festivals and other cultural events. Good practice will be to consult with attendees on timings of meetings.

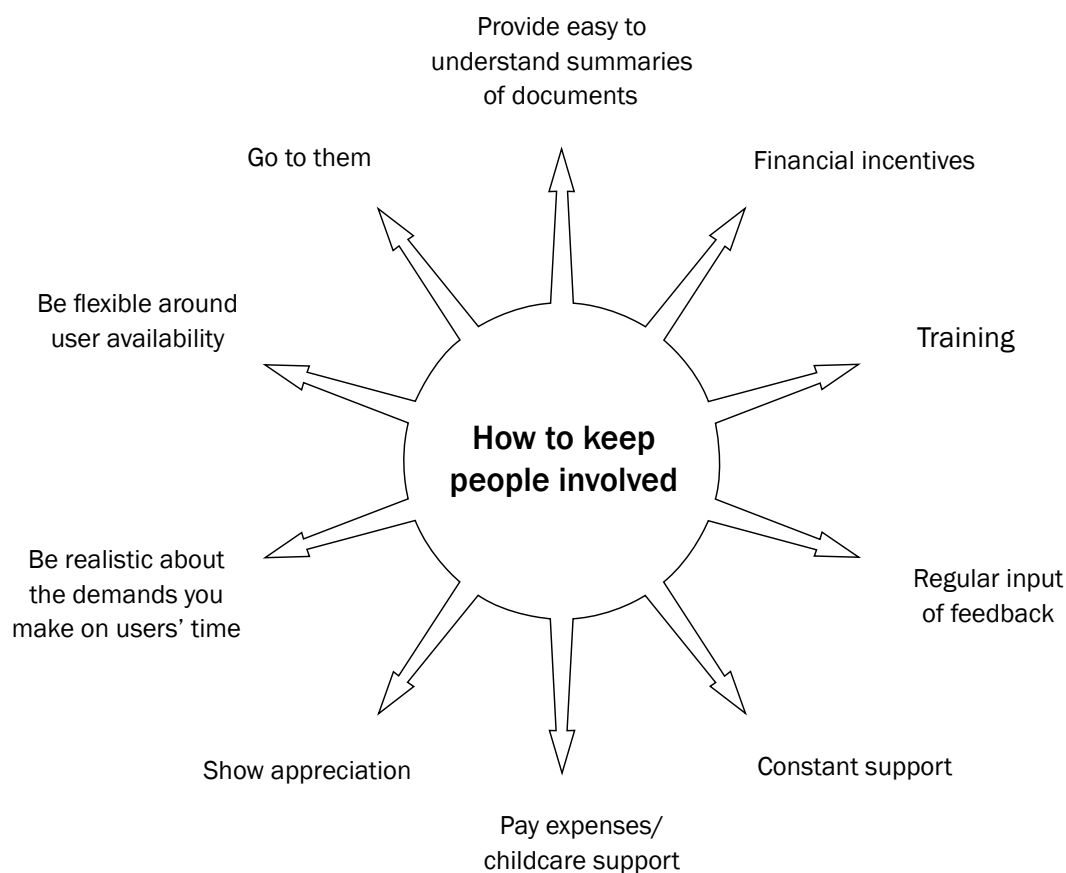
Keeping people involved

Be responsive to individual needs

The easiest way to keep someone involved is to be responsive to their individual needs. For example, find out if there are any particular days and times where they have regular commitments and therefore will be unavailable or find it difficult to attend a meeting and schedule events around this.

Remember they are not members of staff

It is important to remember that the people you are involving are volunteering their time on top of their other commitments or jobs. They might not have regular access, or any access, to email. You will need to give as much time as you can to allow people to complete anything you ask them to do.



Give people options

Having a flexible approach to involving people will help keep them involved. Try to accommodate people's personal preferences about the type of things they get involved in and the way they stay involved. This will also help them to feel more in control of their involvement which will encourage them to continue.

Show how they are making a difference

This cannot be overstated. If people can really see how their involvement is improving services or influencing decision-making they will be much more likely to stay involved. Even if you think that this should be obvious, it will always be of benefit to make this clear.

Show your appreciation

If people feel that their contributions are valued they are more likely to stay involved. Anything from a simple thank you to a nice lunch can show your appreciation for their input.

Keep things clear

People are more likely to stay involved if you make it easy for them to do so. Things like having a single point of contact and being very clear about expectations and level of involvement will all have an impact. Try and keep written materials as brief as possible and provide summaries if appropriate.

Useful reading

Strengthening Accountability: Involving Patients and the Public

Produced by the Department of Health in February 2003, this useful publication includes both policy guidance and practical guidance. The publication includes a wide range of helpful information, suggestions and approaches, as well as an overview of the theoretical principals of patient and public involvement.

PCT Best Practice and Procedure for Involving People

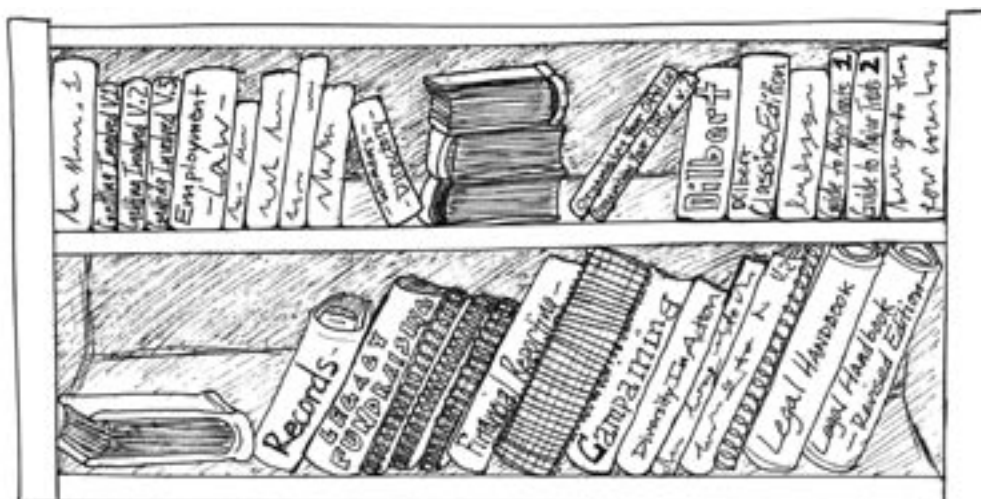
This is a practical guide for Westminster PCT staff on planning and carrying out activities to involve patients and the public in planning, delivering and evaluating PCT services. It should be used for any and all activity involving people. It has been designed as a workbook, to guide staff through the whole process for involving people in the planning and delivery of services. There are templates to fill in at the two main stages of the process, which will help staff to plan, implement and follow up their activity.

Directory of Effective Consultation in Westminster

Produced in March 2000, this document was designed to be a resource to support officers and partners to enhance their skills and knowledge to undertake effective consultation and involvement in Westminster.

Creating a Patient-led NHS

Written in March 2005, this document describes the major changes that are under way in the NHS and how these changes will be carried forward to create a truly patient-led health service.



Useful websites

The following websites regularly contain helpful information on patient and public involvement:

www.kingsfund.org.uk

www.natpact.nhs.uk

www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge

www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

www.cppih.org

www.dh.gov.uk

www.involving.org

www.westminster-pct.nhs.uk

www.westminster.gov.uk

www.vawcvs.org