Community Power Pack
Real people, real power
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Introduction

About the Community Power Pack

The Community Power Pack has been created by Communities and Local Government with the help of Involve. We hope it will be used by local groups to organise and facilitate discussions to inform government decisions. Government has committed to listening to citizens. Central government runs hundreds of consultations and other engagement events every year on a variety of topics. We know that there are many groups around the UK who feel they need more advice and support in order to take part. We hope that this pack will help more groups to respond to consultations. Although this document has been developed by Communities and Local Government, the advice will also be useful for organisations that are planning to respond to consultations run by other government departments.

The pack itself contains suggestions for the format of the meeting and advice for facilitators and organisers who will run the event. It is reusable and contains a folder at the back to store sheets relating to specific consultations that you use the pack for. Please keep the pack for future use.

About Involve

Involve is a not–for–profit and non–partisan organisation, which specialises in public participation. Involve brings institutions, communities and citizens together to accelerate innovation, understanding, discussion and change.

We breathe new life into institutions and communities in the UK and across the world, by working with senior people in government and business as well as community activists.

Involve provides research, training and practical help, including our free support site people and participation.net.

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Section A
Instructions

A.1 Getting started

The Government is committed to involving and empowering ordinary citizens. Community events are a great way to gather and discuss the things that matter to you locally or nationally. This Power Pack contains information on how you can run an event around the issues that matter to you, either in response to a government consultation or as part of your own work.

If you have been sent this Power Pack as part of an existing consultation you should find some consultation specific sheets in the folder at the back of this document. Instead of reprinting a new consultation guide for each consultation, we have made the Power Pack reusable so that we can simply add new consultation sheets to the back, thus saving money and printing. Please feel free to reuse the Power Pack for future consultations. You can also download copies of the Power Pack and loose consultation specific sheets on the Communities and Local Government website (www.communities.gov.uk).

How to use this pack

Go to:

- **Section A.2** for detailed step–by–step guidance on how to use this pack
- **Section B** for advice on how to set up and run events
- **Section C** for details on suggested activities that you could carry out as part of the consultation
- **Section D** for some suggested event agendas
- **Section E** for checklists and a glossary.

This Power Pack is a collaboration between Communities and Local Government and the independent, not–for–profit organisation Involve, which can provide further advice on how to run your events.

Who is this pack for?

Individuals, local charities and organisations are already shaping communities, contributing to local decisions and equipping ordinary people with the skills and confidence to play a more active role in the community. By sharing your thoughts and experiences, you can contribute to better decisions being made and better services being provided locally and nationally.
This Pack helps you plan and run community events. We want ordinary people and small voluntary and community–based organisations to be able to contribute to government decisions. We also want to hear from youth workers, community development workers, charity workers and citizenship teachers to organise events for the people you work with.

A Power Pack recording sheet, which can be used to give us your feedback, has been produced in conjunction with this Pack. A copy is at the back of this document. You will also find a separate Word version of this sheet on the internet. This can be used to submit your comments electronically.

A.2 Step–by–step guide

Steps to running an event
1. When you get this document read through the pack and any attached consultation sheets and decide:
   • Is this relevant to you?
   • Who are you trying to involve?
   • Why are you trying to involve them?
   • How do you think you can best involve them?
2. Choose event. Start by looking at the menu of practical activities. Determine if you want to run an event, and if so for whom, how long it will run and what focus it will have.
3. Choose questions. Look at the suggested questions in any of the consultation sheets. See if any of them are suitable for the participants and event you had envisaged. You can also develop your own questions. Criteria for good questions may be found in Section B.5.
4. Choose agenda/activities. Look at the suggested activities in Section C. If you do not want to plan an event from scratch you may choose to run one based on the suggested agendas in Section D. You can also choose to mix and match activities to create your own event.
5. Check advice. Section B contains practical advice on how to plan and facilitate consultation events. Once you have decided what form your event will take you can look over these for suggestions.
6. Recruit, plan and run your event. After this you should set up your event and invite your participants. You can find useful checklists for your event in Section E.
7. Follow up. Please send in your results to Communities and Local Government.
A.3 Types of event

This section gives you some ideas about how you could run a community event. There is not a right way to run an event. We have tried to provide simple and more creative activities so that all kinds of groups can use the Pack. We recommend that you try to make your events ‘deliberative’. This means that rather than listening to presentations or asking questions of experts the participants spend most of their time discussing among themselves.

How you run your event is entirely up to you. For example, you might want to run:

- **A small group discussion.** As part of an event that is already planned by local charities or clubs you can run a short discussion for around 10 people that is up to two hours long.

- **A public workshop.** You could recruit outside an existing group via leaflets, posters and networks. Local organisations are often well placed to reach into their local communities. A workshop could have between 10 and 20 people for a half or full day.

- **A large public forum.** A larger event requires more time and effort, probably involving five to ten facilitators and reaching between 50 and 100 people.

- **Drop-in events.** You might choose to hold your event in public spaces where people gather – village halls, religious centres or supermarket parking lots. Events like this allow people to take part as and when they are able.

- **Café conversation.** If you can get access to a local café or similar venue it provides a great environment for an informal conversation. This could also be held in a community location such as a village hall or school.

- **An online discussion.** You can use online forums to involve people on the internet. Online engagement is cheap and convenient but also has its limitations.

**Feeding back**

As far as possible, we would like you to use the feedback forms provided. This will help us gather everyone’s views quickly and effectively.

The website [peopleandparticipation.net](http://peopleandparticipation.net) (run by Involve and sponsored by Communities and Local Government) has suggestions of ways of running events. If you want to be more creative you may look here for inspiration and advice.

It is easy to be confused by the unusual and difficult terms often used in government consultations. You can look at the glossary at the end of the pack for more information about what different words mean.
A.4 Why should you get involved?

Community empowerment is central to giving people more power over their lives and can help government design and run public services that are better tailored to the people who use them. By contributing to consultations you can help government achieve:

- improved quality of services, e.g. health services, schools and policing
- greater community cohesion and social inclusion (in other words, friendlier neighbourhoods)
- better overall conditions in the most deprived neighbourhoods
- a thriving democracy, where decisions by local and national government are connected more closely with communities and individuals
- a vibrant civic society, with greater community involvement.

What is already happening to promote empowerment?

Empowerment is an ongoing process and much has been done to promote it in central, regional and local government and our communities and neighbourhoods. See the *Community Empowerment Action Plan*, which contains information about the Government’s work in this area.


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1 Available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityempowermentactionplan
Section B

What you can do: practical advice on running events

This section provides practical advice on how to run an event. We have tried to write this guidance in a clear and simple way. It gives you the space to develop your own approach to fit your situation. An important first step is to determine what you want to get out of the event and who you want to include. Once you are clear about this you can consider the advice below.

B.1 Venue

Where you hold the event is important. Think carefully about the venue you choose, and find a space where people will feel comfortable. Sometimes local people have negative associations linked to official venues, like council offices, so you might want to choose a more ‘neutral’ space for your event. When you set up the meeting try to avoid a traditional lecture or classroom style set up with everyone facing the front. This layout often creates a division in the room between ‘important voices’ and ‘the audience’. Instead get participants to sit in a circle or around small tables.

Make the room as inviting as possible by providing teas and coffees, welcome signs and appropriate decorations. Many organisers like to make the room look and feel like a café rather than a meeting room. This creates a less divisive, more relaxing atmosphere, and sets expectations of engaging in conversation rather than listening to speeches.
B.2 Discussion style

Good community events encourage the participants to be as active as possible. We suggest that you try to *facilitate* the meeting rather than get someone to *chair* it. This means the person in charge should avoid dominating the discussions and help the group to take the centre stage.

Facilitation means supporting groups to work effectively together and to involve all participants in a meaningful way. The role of the facilitators is to:

- Explain the tasks
- Keep people to the task and time limits
- Make sure everyone has a say
- Write up notes and feed back views
- Manage expectations so everyone knows what to expect.

Having one facilitator per ten people gives the right balance, but many of these activities are quite easy for groups to do without support, so you can run them even if you don’t have access to trained facilitators.

B.3 Event planning tips

1. It is important to prepare an agenda or time plan for your event in advance. It should contain clear objectives (what you want to achieve) and realistic times for your activities.

2. When you are planning your event try to keep it simple. Complicated processes are more likely to go wrong, especially if you don’t have much experience.

3. If you will be asking your participants to work in small groups without a facilitator be sure to prepare clear written instructions for each session.

4. You should prepare your questions in advance. Good questions are the foundation of a good consultation event. Try to ask open–ended questions, which allow the discussion to keep flowing, for example questions beginning with ‘How’, ‘Where’, ‘What’ or ‘In what ways’. Avoid asking closed or leading questions. See Section B.5 for more on questions.

5. Plan how you will record people’s views and how and when you will feed back your results.
B.4 Facilitation tips

1. Early on the day, make sure to set clear ‘ground rules’ (see Section C.3.1). The ground rules will help you ensure that everyone has the chance to speak and that you keep to your timetable.

2. If the group hasn’t worked together in the past you should run an ‘icebreaker’ exercise (see Section C.3.1) to get discussion going and to encourage a safe atmosphere.

3. As a facilitator you should use probing questions to explore statements that participants make, especially if these statements are broad generalisations. For example you could ask: ‘What experiences make you feel like that?’, ‘Can you give an example?’, ‘What do you mean by …?’, or ‘Do others agree with what was just said?’

4. Facilitators should not pick up on any side of the discussion or make judgments on what is a right or wrong view. You should use questions rather than statements to take the discussion forward. Try to avoid asking leading questions.

5. Actively encourage everyone to speak by asking those who haven’t said anything if they would like to add anything.

6. Your role as a facilitator is to keep your participants to task and time. Don’t be afraid to point out when participants are taking the discussion off track or when the group needs to move on to the next task.

7. Make sure you record the results of the discussions. You can either record publicly, for example on flipcharts, or privately, on note pads to be written up later.

8. Community events should also be fun, both for the participants and the organiser! The best way to ensure that your participants enjoy the event is to make sure that you do as well. Prepare your discussion in advance so that you can feel confident of what you are going to achieve and how you are going to get there.
B.5 Different types of question

One of the most important things you need to think about are what questions you will ask of people. Good questions are really important to make sure that you get useful results from your event. Please choose questions that best apply to you and your audience. In the folder at the back of this document there is space for the most recent current consultation questions from Communities and Local Government.

Good questions should be:

- **Easy to understand.** The questions you use should be straightforward to read and understand. Unclear or complicated questions may be misunderstood.

- **Open ended.** Usually it is best to ask open ended questions that encourage exploration, like ‘What do you think about the sense of community in your area?’ rather than ‘Do you think there is a strong sense of community in your area?’

- **Positive.** How you write your questions will influence what kind of a discussion you have. If you have questions which focus on the negative that is what people will talk about. Often it is better to try to direct the discussion towards ideas of what could be improved rather than what is wrong.

- **Relevant.** Make sure that your participants care about the questions you ask.

- **Unbiased.** Participants quickly pick up on questions that have been designed to manipulate them into reaching a particular view. Test the questions on some intended participants before your event.

- **Suitable to the participants.** Make sure that you have considered the education, literacy levels and pre-existing knowledge of your participants when you write your questions.

**Using questions**

Questions are good for clarifying generalisations and assumptions that the participants may bring with them. It is useful to distinguish between ‘closed’ and ‘open’ questions.

**Closed questions** – these are designed to generate choice between a set number of responses, such as a yes/no response. They are often used to close down conversation, but can also be used to get affirmation or commitment.

Examples include:

*Does this make sense?*
*Do you prefer option one or option two?*
*Can you live with this proposal?*

Use a closed question when you want to bring a discussion to a close and get the group to confirm their views or commitments.
Open questions – these stimulate reflection and discussion. It is not possible simply to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to an open question.

Examples include:

What are the issues as you see them?
Why is that important to you?
When did you first encounter this problem?

Use an open question when you want to explore an issue in depth or want to encourage creative thinking.

When should you use which type of question?

Try to avoid closed questions until the end of the discussions when you are trying to bring the conversation to an end. Up until this point try to use open questions that allow the participants to explore issues further.

Try to listen carefully to conversations to find areas where people agree and disagree with each other. If people can’t all agree during the discussion tell them you will record all of their views.

B.6 Inviting people

Getting a diverse group of people to attend will help expose everyone to a wide range of opinions and can improve the quality of the discussion. Try to consider who might most benefit from joining in the event and ask how best to reach those people. This is especially important if you are aiming to reach those who have found it difficult to take part in the past.

Always make it clear what the event is for and what those attending can expect from you, as well as what is expected from them. Try to make the event as fun and relevant as possible to the groups you hope will attend. Ask the relevant people in your community where it is best to advertise and promote your event in order to reach particular groups you would like to include. Also ask them to suggest names of people to invite and to spread the word in their own networks.

It is always good to know what kinds of people took part in local listening exercises. At the start of your event ask everyone to fill in a registration sheet, which includes their name, organisation or community group and an email address if they would like to be kept in touch after the event.
B.7 How to record the conversations

Community events should always record what people said so that the information can be used further on. At the event you can record the conversations on flipcharts or as notes on A4 paper. You can also ask participants to record the conversations, but be sure to ask them to write clearly or to type up their notes for you. Make it clear to participants what will be recorded and whether their responses will be identifiable by name or anonymous.

We have created prepared online forms on which you can record your conversations. These can be found on the Communities and Local Government website. If you are carrying out activities that create pictures as well as words you can photograph them with a digital camera and send them in.

Although it is possible to send documents to Communities and Local Government using the post, it is quicker and cheaper for you to use email.

If you do not understand a question or feel that it is a question you do not want to answer then leave it blank or give us some comments about the question.

B.8 Costs

Community events are not free to run. For each activity listed in Section C we have included a note about time requirements, materials required and how difficult it is. Using this you can create your own event, composed of several activities.

In general the materials you will need are not expensive. They include felt-tip pens, Post-it notes, and A4 and flipchart paper.

If you are running a larger event, or want to start the event with a presentation, you might want to have an audiovisual (AV) projector, a computer and possibly a microphone – however this is not essential.
Section C: Menu of options

C.1 Activities

This section outlines some proposed engagement consultation activities. We don’t believe that there is one correct way to run a community event. We have provided you with this menu of options so that you can pick and choose based on your group.

For those who are new to this or who don’t have time to plan in a lot of detail we have also created two suggested event structures. Feel free to use and adapt these. They can be found in Section D.

Each suggested activity is summarised and includes information on the number of people required, how long it takes to run, how difficult it is and if any extra materials are needed.

C.2 Suggested format

There are many possible formats for a community event, for example after the introduction you could work through various questions (examples of activities in parenthesis), for example:

- Introduction (icebreaker, ground rules)
- What is the situation now? (presentation, brainstorming and clustering)
- What do we want to see in the future? (small group discussions and clustering)
- What do we need to do to get from our current situation to the future we want? (small group discussions)
- Which of the steps and suggestions are most important? (prioritisation)

We have divided the suggested activities into three categories depending on if they are best suited at the start, middle or end of an event.
C.3.1 Starting out

The following approaches are useful for the introductory section of an event.

Introductions
All participants should be introduced to each other at the start. Give a reasonable amount of time for this to help people become more confident about speaking to others in the group. At this stage you should also introduce yourself and outline your neutral role as facilitator (see Section B.4).

The easiest form of introduction is simply to go round the room or table (depending on the size of the group) and ask each participant to say their name, where they are from and what they hope to get from the event. However, if the group hasn’t worked together it is often worth doing a full icebreaker – see below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People needed:</th>
<th>3–30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time needed:</td>
<td>5–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty:</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow this activity with:</td>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Icebreakers
An icebreaker aims to get participants in an event talking to one another. They are very useful when the group is new and where some participants may feel shy or unsure. There are numerous icebreaker activities with varying levels of formality and difficulty. Choose one that is appropriate for your participants and the time you have available. Some examples include:

- **Interview and introduce.** People are randomly paired with each other. They are given a set time to interview each other in turn (say three minutes each) and then afterwards have to introduce their partner to the wider group.

- **Bingo.** Everyone is given the same list of categories printed on a sheet, e.g. ‘owns a mountain bike’, ‘speaks more than two languages’, ‘has a pet’, ‘knows a recipe to make bread’. The group then have to speak to one another to try and fill in a name for each category. The winner is the first to complete their sheet.

- **All agreed.** The room is divided into teams of three or more and each group has to discuss a given topic – for example ‘local parks’, ‘public transport’ or ‘popular TV shows’ and come up with three statements on this that they all agree on. The teams then feed back their statements to the wider group.

- **Group discussions.** You could also ask groups to discuss a simple question relating to your topic as part of the icebreaker. For example, ‘What is important to you about your local community health and social care services?’
Ground rules

It is a good idea to establish ground rules at the start of your event. This helps everyone understand how they should work together. You can let the group develop the rules at the beginning of the session (ask them to call out suggestions and note them down on a flipchart) or you can set them yourself to save time. Common rules for events include asking people to turn off mobile phones, not allowing more than one person to speak at a time and insisting that participants respect each others’ views. Once you have decided and publicised ground rules, your job as a facilitator will be easier.

Presentations, examples and stories

If the group is not already familiar with the topic of your event it may be helpful for participants if you make a presentation. It should not be too long and should explain clearly what the topic for discussion is and why it is important.

After the background information has been given it is important that the participants are able to talk about the presentation topic. Allow questions if possible and try to find time for a discussion. You might want to get participants to address questions like: ‘How did the presentation relate to my personal experiences?’; ‘Which of the stories/examples did we prefer and why?’ and ‘Does anyone know of other relevant examples that we should know about?’
Voting with your feet

Designate one wall of the room as ‘agree’ and the opposite side as ‘disagree’. The centre of the room represents ‘unsure’. Read out a statement and ask the participants to position themselves along a line between the two sides according to how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement.

Once people have chosen where they want to stand you can ask a few of them to explain why they have chosen to stand where they are. When all sides have been heard you can ask the participants if anyone has changed their mind and wants to move based on the arguments given.

The activity is good for people who aren’t comfortable speaking up in large groups as it allows them to express their views without talking. It can be helpful to start this activity with a test statement on an unrelated topic. Have a pen and paper handy to note down whether your participants generally agreed, disagreed or were divided on each statement.

C.3.2 The central discussion

The following approaches are useful for the main part of an event.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way of generating lots of ideas from a group in a short period of time. The golden rules of any brainstorming exercise are that all contributions are welcome and that contributions should be short and fast paced. The purpose of brainstorming is to create many undeveloped ideas. Only afterwards will the group start criticising the findings or indentifying common themes.
When brainstorming, you can work in the whole group, split the main group into pairs or small teams, or even ask people to think on their own as individuals. The ideas generated are then shared with the central group. A practical way of doing this is to ask people to write as many ideas down as possible in their small groups in a timed exercise and then stick all of the ideas up together on the wall. Each individual item should be recorded on a separate Post–it note. The next step is to looking through the Post–it notes generated as a group and to identify common ground.

| People needed: | 5–30 |
| Time needed: | 10–20 minutes |
| Difficulty: | Easy |
| Materials needed: | Post–it notes, pens, flipchart paper, Blu Tack |
| Follow this activity with: | Clustering, prioritisation, group or plenary discussions |

**Clustering**

When you have developed a large list of ideas, issues or options it is often worthwhile to cluster and group them. Ask participants to write up one Post–it per issue using thick pens and as few words as possible.

Take one Post–it note at a time and put it on a sheet of flipchart paper. Ask for an explanation if you don’t understand what is on the Post–it note. Once a few are on the sheet ask the participants if they can see any that are related. Move the Post–it notes that are related so they are next to each other. Soon you will form groups of related items. Ask the participants to come up with a name for each group and draw a border around each group of Post–it notes.

This activity can either be led by a facilitator or you can let the participants cluster the Post–it notes themselves. Before you end double check that everyone is happy with the grouping you have made.

| People needed: | 5–50 |
| Time needed: | 15–20 minutes |
| Difficulty: | Medium |
| Materials needed: | Post–it notes, pens, flipchart paper, Blu Tack |
| Follow this activity with: | Prioritisation, group discussions |

**Group discussions**

For in depth discussions it is usually best to work in small groups. Groups without facilitators work best if they are formed of up to five people. With facilitators your small groups can be up to eight per group. These sizes allow the participants maximum speaking time and people are less likely to feel intimidated about speaking out in such small groups. If groups are running their discussions without a facilitator, be sure to provide clear written instructions and to ask for a volunteer to take notes and report back from the session. It can be a good idea to mix groups up over the course of an event.
People needed: 3–9 per group
Time needed: 15–30 minutes
Difficulty: Easy
Materials needed: Pens and paper
Follow this activity with: Plenary discussions, brainstorming, clustering

**Plenary discussions**
As well as small group discussions you will also often need sessions where everything is brought together as a whole group. Plenary discussions can become dominated by those who feel comfortable talking in front of large groups. Limit plenary discussions to short reporting-back periods, with most of the time spent discussing in small groups.

People needed: 10–100
Time needed: 20 minutes
Difficulty: Medium
Materials needed: Flipcharts, pens
Follow this activity with: Clustering, small group discussions, prioritisation

**World Café event**
World Café events take place in an informal café, though an imaginary café can be used – a room set up to look like a café, using small tables with paper tablecloths and suitable food for participants to share. Background music and room decorations could also be used to give your event a café-theme.

The facilitator introduces the session and asks the first question. Discussions take place between those in the small table groups. The paper tablecloths are used to scribble and take notes on. At the end of the first question session people report back to the facilitator and wider group.

For each new discussion topic the participants should stand up and move to a different table to ensure that the whole group mixes well. There should always be one person who remains behind at each table to explain what is written on the tablecloths.

People move about for several rounds, each time talking to new people. Sometimes new questions on the same theme are asked. With each round the areas of common agreement become clearer.

Using a World Café setting is a good approach for relatively large groups, and allows for a very lively and creative atmosphere. The choice of question(s) for the café conversation is very important for the success of your event. In general it is useful to phrase the questions in a positive and open-ended way to allow a constructive discussion (see Section B.5). If participants do not find the questions for discussion inspiring, the event is unlikely to be successful. More information on how to run a World Café can be found at [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)
### People needed:
10–100

### Time needed:
Anything from 90 minutes to a full day

### Difficulty:
Medium

### Materials needed:
Café–style venue, music, paper tablecloths, refreshments and pens

### Follow this activity with:
This is an event in itself; you may want to finish by clustering and prioritising the key points

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**Open Space**

Open Space is an event that allows the participants to take complete responsibility. It requires break–out rooms or spaces and at least half a day to run.

Open Space events have a central theme or question, but no fixed agenda. At the start participants stand or sit in a circle, the theme is introduced and participants are invited to identify issues that they are interested in, and asked to take responsibility for running a session on one of them. Once volunteers have stepped forward the sessions are allocated among available rooms and timeslots.

When no more discussion topics are suggested the participants sign up for the sessions they wish to take part in. Participants do not have to stay for the whole session that they choose, but can wander around and dip in and out of sessions as they see fit.

Open Space creates very fluid and interesting conversations held together by mutual enthusiasm for a topic.

The fundamental principles of Open Space are:

- ‘Whoever comes are the right people’ (the best participants are those who feel passionately about the issue and have freely chosen to get involved)
- ‘Whenever it starts is the right time’ (Open Space encourages creativity both during and between formal sessions)
- ‘When it’s over it’s over’ (getting the work done is more important than adhering to rigid schedules)
- ‘Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen’ (let go of your expectations and pay full attention to what is happening here and now)
- There is also one ‘law’: the ‘law of two feet’ (if participants find themselves in a situation where they are not learning or contributing they have a responsibility to go to another session, or take a break for personal reflection).

It is important that there are good written reports from all discussions, complete with action points, available at the end of the day. You will need to encourage people to write their notes up. Open Space events are often very inspiring and energising, but they are impossible to control in detail so if you want to answer very specific questions you should probably use more structured approaches.

More information on how to run an open space event can be found at: [www.openspaceuk.com](http://www.openspaceuk.com)
### People needed:

10–100

### Time needed:

Half–day event – three–day event

### Difficulty:

Medium

### Materials needed:

Venue with break–out rooms, pens, paper, computers for typing up results (optional)

### Follow this activity with:

This is an event in itself; you may want to finish by clustering and prioritising the key points

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**Drop–in/drop–out activities**

Not everyone will be interested in spending several hours at a formal event. Many people do not have much time but still want to have a say.

Drop–in approaches work well when the consultation is taking place as part of a larger community event. Drop–in/drop–out consultation methods are simple and often involve quick activities. Examples include voting on a personal priority using sticky dots on a wall chart, or dropping glass beads into a voting pot. A statement is written on a flipchart and the voting pots or wall charts are marked ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’.

Other options include making postcards or Post–it notes available and inviting people to leave comments and ideas on them around a theme, or creating short and simple questionnaires.

These activities are very simple and quick to participate in, and do not require advanced reading and writing skills. They are best combined with comments slips or video diaries, which will enable people who are interested to go on and have a more detailed say on the issues being discussed.

To make sure that the results of the voting and other drop–in activities are as fair as possible it is best if someone is always available to explain the activity and make sure that everyone is given an equal vote. Someone also needs to count up the results and write them up.

More information on how to run these kinds of activities can be found at [www.involve.org.uk/sayandplay](http://www.involve.org.uk/sayandplay)
Graffiti wall

To set up a graffiti wall or table you will need some large sheets of paper and a variety of art materials. A key question is written up on the paper and participants can write and draw their own responses around it. This leads to lots of creative input and the results are often best captured through photographing the sheets at the end of the day. This is a good way of getting young people to take part in a discussion topic. It can also be a means of getting a response from those who prefer not to write down comments on a formal feedback document, or those who are unable to do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People needed:</th>
<th>10–100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time needed:</td>
<td>Best if left to run for several hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty:</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>Large sheets or rolls of paper, pens, art materials, masking tape, digital camera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow this activity with:</td>
<td>Can be run on its own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online discussions

Participants can be invited to take part in an online discussion using internet forums such as Yahoo! groups or social networking sites like Facebook. These are free and easy to set up online, and can be a good complement to the face-to-face event, allowing participants to meet beforehand or after the event to discuss their ideas. When using online methods you should be particularly wary of excluding certain people who may not be able to engage online, and of any child protection issues.

People needed: Unlimited
Time needed: Best if kept open for several weeks or months
Difficulty: Easy to set up, but it can be hard to attract participants
Materials needed: Internet access, computer
Follow this activity with: Results from online discussions could be discussed at face-to-face events
C.3.3 Ending the event

The following activities are useful to end an event with. At the end of any consultation event you should always make it clear what will happen next and what the participants can expect from you.

Actions
After the group's ideas and themes of conversation have been gathered together, you can ask for suggested actions. Depending on the number of participants, this can be done as a whole group or in small teams. Actions should be written up on wall charts for everyone to see clearly. Actions should also include details of who will carry them out and by when each action will be done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People needed:</th>
<th>5–50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time needed:</td>
<td>10–30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty:</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>Pen, flipchart paper, Blu Tack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow this activity with:</td>
<td>Prioritisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prioritisation (sticky dots)
Voting on the most important themes or actions is a good way of finishing the meeting. It creates a ranking of the most and least important issues from the discussions. Give the participants a number of sticky dots to vote with. Usually if you have between five and twenty participants, three dots per person is a good number.

Participants can use all dots on one item or spread them across two or three items. The voting creates a visual record of support. In order to make the voting as easy as possible, remember to leave space next to each option where people can place their votes. Count and record the votes on the spot or photograph the flipcharts for later use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People needed:</th>
<th>5–100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time needed:</td>
<td>5–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty:</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>Flipchart paper, pens, sticky dots, Blu Tack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow this activity with:</td>
<td>Small group discussion of the results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

In order to improve the way you run community events in the future you should find out what your participants liked and disliked about the event. Design a simple questionnaire that asks participants if they enjoyed the event, if they learnt anything new, if they felt they had a chance to have a say, what they thought of the quality of the venue and if they would attend a similar event again. The responses you get will give you a lot of really useful information. Be sure to allow participants some text to add any other comments they might have.

If you are short of time you can also ask participants to indicate using a pen or sticky dots how satisfied they are with the event on a scale from 1 to 5. You can also ask people to ‘vote with their feet’ (see Section C.3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People needed:</th>
<th>5–100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time needed:</td>
<td>5–5–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty:</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>Flipchart paper, A4 paper, pens, sticky dots, Blu Tack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow this activity with:</td>
<td>Evaluations usually are at the end of the event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The website [www.peopleandparticipation.net](http://www.peopleandparticipation.net) (run by Involve and sponsored by Communities and Local Government) has many additional suggestions for ways of running events. If you want to be more creative, look at this website for inspiration and advice.
Section D
Suggested event agendas

To make things easier we have prepared two suggested event plans. You can change the details of these agendas in order to make them fit better with your participants. Look at Section B.5 and any consultation documents in the folder at the end of this document and identify the key questions that are likely to be most interesting to your participants and insert them into the programme where appropriate.

Two–hour event – This event is very short and focuses on gathering information about the participants’ general views, without going into details.

Half–day event – This event is longer and allows more time to explore details.

D.1 Two–hour event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30–10.00</td>
<td>Final preparation and briefing for facilitators, participants arrive and register</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10.00–10.10 | Welcome (plenary)  
Facilitator presents:  
• the aims of the day  
• what is going to happen and runs through the agenda in brief  
• details for refreshments, toilets, and health and safety. |
| 10.10–10.20 | Icebreaker (groups)  
Participants gather in groups of ten and pair up with someone they don’t know. They are given three minutes to interview each other and then introduce their partner to the wider group. |
| 10.20–10.30 | Ground rules (plenary)  
The facilitator presents some pre–prepared ground rules to the whole group in plenary and asks if the participants can agree to these and if anyone wants to add anything. |
| 10.30–10.45 | Presentation (plenary)  
Give a ten–minute presentation on the background to the topic you are discussing, followed by five minutes of questions and comments. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10.45–11.15 | **Small group discussion (group work)**  
Participants break into small groups of 4–6 people and look at a question on the topic for discussion. You can use the consultation questions in the folder at the back of this document. At short events the question for discussion should focus on what people want to change around the topic for discussion.  
A volunteer from each group should take notes of the key ideas for change. Each one should be written on a Post–it note (one Post–it note per idea). Someone from each group should also volunteer to present back to the whole group. |
| 11.15–11.25 | **Reporting back (plenary)**  
The groups report back in turn on what they came up with. The Post–it notes are stuck on flipcharts |
| 11.25–11.40 | **Clustering (plenary)**  
The facilitator asks the participants if there are Post–it notes on either of the flipcharts that are related, and suggests that should be grouped together. As clusters of Post–it notes emerge they should be named. Once the points in favour of and against the discussion topic are listed, the titles of the groups should be written on two new flipcharts (one for the positives and one for the negatives). |
| 11.40–11.50 | **Prioritisation (plenary)**  
Each participant is given four sticky dots to mark the items that they think are most significant. All four dots can be used on one item or they can be spread out. |
| 11.50–12.00 | **Conclusions (plenary)**  
The facilitator summarises the key trends and results of the event and explains the next steps. Participants are asked to ‘vote with their feet’ to indicate if they enjoyed the event. |
| 12.00   | **Close**                                                                               |
## D.2 Half–day event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30–10.00</td>
<td>Final preparation and briefing for facilitators, participants arrive and register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00–10.10</td>
<td>Welcome (plenary) As in D.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10–10.20</td>
<td>Icebreaker (groups) As in D.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.20–10.30</td>
<td>Ground rules (plenary) As in D.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30–10.45</td>
<td>Presentation (plenary) As in D.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45–11.00</td>
<td>Voting with your feet (plenary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Following the presentation ask the participants to show if they agree or disagree with statements relating to the topic. Examples might be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The UK’s democracy is in crisis’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘It is important that people have the opportunity to influence public services in my area’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After each vote the facilitator asks for volunteers to explain why they have chosen to stand where they have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00–11.30</td>
<td>Small group discussion (group work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants break into small groups of 4–6 people and look at a question on the topic for discussion. You can use the consultation questions in the folder at the back of this document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your questions might focus on people’s values and aspirations (what they would like to see happen). Different groups could consider different questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A volunteer from each group should take notes of the key ideas for change. Someone from each group should volunteer to present back the top three themes to the whole group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30–11.40</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.40–11.55</td>
<td>Reporting back (plenary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The groups report back in turn and outline what their top themes were. A volunteer writes the findings on a flipchart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there is time the facilitator invites the participants to identify any common views across the different groups. If a comment or viewpoint is shared across groups it should be noted as a point of agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.55–12.20</td>
<td><strong>Small group discussion (group work)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.20–12.30</td>
<td><strong>Reporting back (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30–12.40</td>
<td><strong>Clustering (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.40–12.50</td>
<td><strong>Prioritisation (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.50–13.05</td>
<td><strong>Small group brainstorm (group)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.05–13.15</td>
<td><strong>Reporting back (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15–13.20</td>
<td><strong>Prioritising actions (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.20–13.30</td>
<td><strong>Conclusions (plenary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td><strong>Close</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section E
Checklists

E.1 Venue checklist

Before the event
• Make sure the venue is appropriate for your participants. Avoid venues where participants may feel uncomfortable or defensive.
• Confirm venue booking well in advance.
• Check whether the venue allows you to rearrange the room to suit your event. For example are you allowed to stick flipchart paper to the walls if your activities require this?
• Confirm availability of any speakers, facilitators and workshop leaders well in advance.
• Write up list of invitees; try to be as inclusive as possible.
• Send invitations out by email or post, unless it would be more effective to phone or speak to an invitee in person.
• Confirm places with respondents to invitations.
• Ensure that any presentation or multimedia elements are arranged well in advance and that the venue can accommodate your needs.

Day before event
• Send a reminder email or make a phone call to confirmed attendees the day before the event.
• Print up all background sheets and other resources you require.
• Ensure that everyone involved in the organisation of the process has a clear idea of the roles they will be asked to perform on the day and when.
• Give someone the role of making participants feel welcome at the start and to answer any questions people may have.
• Check technical equipment including recording and sound equipment.
• Ensure that all facilitation materials you may provide are transported to the venue.
• Ensure that the room is set up appropriately for the event.

After the event
• Write thank you letters and emails to all who have helped with the process.
• Once information has been gathered and analysed, inform those who took part what happened after the event.
• Met your team to discuss openly what went well and what could have been improved.
• Materials checklist
• Check the suggested activities that you want to do and see if they require: felt tip pens, post–it notes, biro pens, flipchart paper, large rolls of paper, sticky dots, Blu Tack, a computer, an AV projector.
E.2 Accessibility and diversity checklist

It is important to ensure that no one is left out of your event because they are disabled or have specific needs. Try to think carefully about who may find it difficult to participate and how you might be able to help them join in. The following considerations may be useful:

General considerations

- Ask potential participants directly if they require any particular assistance to enable them to take part fully.
- Try to understand the participants’ cultural and religious situation to make sure they feel comfortable and safe when participating – ask for advice if you are unsure.
- Consider the time of any meetings in consultation with the group you hope to engage.
- Check if it is appropriate to have mixed gender or mixed age groups at meetings – this may hinder participants from putting their views across freely.
- Brief all presenters or facilitators to ensure information is delivered clearly and at a steady pace, so that everyone is able to take that information in fully.
- Set up a group of participants to guide the process as it develops and to give you advice.
- Ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for questions to be asked.
- Ensure that all those running the process are fully briefed on the group’s needs.
- Welcome participants when they arrive and thank them when they leave.

Specific practical considerations

- Ensure any venue is easy to access affordably by public transport – this is particularly important when engaging young people or those with lower incomes.
- Consider whether parking is possible at the venue.
- Consider whether a hearing loop will be needed to help those with hearing aids to take part in conversations.
- Consider whether expenses should be paid, and make it clear to participants whether expenses are being offered. Consider if there will be any effects of paying expenses on the state benefit of your participants.
- Check whether guide dogs will be accompanying any participants – if so, ensure that they are catered for with water and an exercise area if possible.
- Ensure that venues used are well lit and that any writing on flipcharts is clear and in bold contrasting colours.
- Ensure that not only the rooms and building used are accessible but that toilets and communal areas are also accessible for all.
- Consider recording meetings and processes so that participants with communication needs can use audiovisual records as a form of documentation.
• Check whether a space for prayer should be provided at any events.
• Check whether those attending events have specialist dietary requirements such as eating only vegetarian, vegan, kosher and halal foods.
• Check if interpreters need to be used.

E.3 Glossary of key terms

This glossary can help you make sense of some of the terms that are frequently used in government documents.

**Accountable** – When a representative is elected they are held responsible for the decisions they take. They have to provide answers to those they make decisions for. This is being accountable.

**Active citizenship** – Active citizenship is about individuals taking part in the decisions that shape their lives and the well-being of the communities they belong to.

**BME** – Short for ‘black and minority ethnic’.

**Capacity building** – Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and play leading roles.

**Citizenship** – The act of contributing to public life and participating in solving public problems.

**Civic participation** – Relates to participation in state and government affairs. It includes participation in political processes and participation in governance.

**Civil participation** – Relates to participation in community activities and in less formal types of association. It includes participation in residents’ associations, sports clubs, faith groups etc.

**Civil society** – Voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public importance. It is different from the public activities of government because it is voluntary, and different from private sector activities because it seeks common ground and is not for profit. It is often described as the ‘third sector’.

**Community** – A community is a specific group of people who all hold something in common. Community often refers to either people who live in the same geographical place or people who are communities of interest. **Communities of interest** are groups of people who share an identity – for example Afro–Caribbean people – or who share an experience – for example people with a particular disability.
Community cohesion – Cohesion is not just about race equality and social inclusion. Community cohesion is a situation where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Community development – The process of providing help and advice to communities to bring about social change and justice by working with them to identify their needs, plan their next steps, take action and evaluate the results, all in ways that challenge oppression and tackle inequalities.

Deliberation – Careful consideration or discussion of reasons for and against a proposition; discussions where people talk among themselves and hear and consider different views on a topic.

Deliberative decision–making – Ways in which citizens can become involved in decision–making processes.

E–democracy – The improvement of traditional democratic processes between elected representatives and citizens over the internet.

E–government – The use of information technology to provide citizens with access to government information and services over the internet.

Empowerment – Citizens and communities developing the confidence, skills and power that helps them to shape and influence decisions and services in their local area either by themselves or with the support of government.

Facilitation – A (preferably independent) third party who helps participants explore their ideas and move towards desired goals.

Ground rules – Also known as ‘agreements’ or ‘guidelines’, ground rules are guidelines for discussion that participants agree to try to abide by during an event. Ground rules are meant to create a safe space for all participants.

Localism – Making services more locally accountable and devolving power to local communities.

LSP or local strategic partnership – A single non–statutory, multi–agency body, which matches local authority boundaries, and aims to bring together the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors at a local level. Local partners working through a LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities and funding for their local area.

Manifesto – A public declaration of principles, policies or intentions, which all candidates issue before an election. This gives citizens information on what the candidate will do if elected.

Neighbourhood renewal – Reversing decline in the most disadvantaged communities through working from the grassroots.
**PCT or primary care trust** – Organisations that are part of the National Health Service, and that are responsible for delivering health care and health improvements to their local area.

**Public consultation** – A process involving two-way communication between a government and the public, through which both become informed about different perspectives on issues and proposals, providing the public with the opportunity to influence decisions to be made by the government.

**Social capital** – The norms and networks of social relations that build trust among community residents, social organisations and government. Can be bonding, bridging and linking, and is fundamental to the quality of life in communities.

**Social exclusion** – A combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, unfair discrimination, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown, which can lead to people or places being excluded from the outcomes and opportunities enjoyed by mainstream society.

**Voluntary sector** – Groups whose activities are carried out other than for profit but which are not public or local authorities. These organisations would normally be formally constituted and employ paid professional and administrative staff. They may or may not use volunteer help.

**White Paper** – A document created by the government laying out policy, or proposed actions, on a topic of current concern. A White Paper sometimes signifies a government’s intention to propose, where appropriate, new laws to Parliament on a specific subject in the future. Submitting evidence to government at the White Paper stage gives you a better chance of influencing further on.

**Worklessness** – Worklessness is used to describe all those who are out of work but who would like a job.

More terms can be found at [http://groups.involving.org/display/glos/Home](http://groups.involving.org/display/glos/Home)
Power Pack recording sheet

This sheet is part of the Community Power Pack consultation set produced by Communities and Local Government and Involve, originally as part of the development of the Community Empowerment White Paper. You can make additional copies of this sheet as needed.

Please use this sheet to record your information about your consultation event. Please do not use one sheet to summarise several events. This form can be filled in electronically and sent to Communities and Local Government at: unlockingtalent@communities.gsi.gov.uk

You can also send a hard copy to:

Communities and Local Government
Zone 5/C6
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Communities and Local Government is committed to keeping everyone informed about the results of our consultations.

Communities and Local Government will treat the information you provide us with in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1988. We will not contact you except to update you on the White Paper and the consultation. If you do not wish us to contact you please tick this box. ☐
About you
1. What is your name?
2. What is your organisation? (If any)
3. How can we best keep in touch with you?

About your event
4. When did your event take place? (Date and time)
5. Where did your event take place?
7. Who attended and how did they find out about the event?

Results of your event
Please complete this section in as much detail as you can.
8. What questions did your participants look at?
9. What did your participants agree on?
10. What did your participants disagree on?
11. What were the key messages that your participants wanted to give to Communities and Local Government?
Your views can make a difference!

Your experience is important.
Across Britain millions of citizens hold the key to better public services, more accountable government and a vibrant democracy. The government needs to hear from these citizens and to encourage them to play active roles in improving their communities.

The Community Power Pack is a simple and practical guide for community and voluntary groups (and those who work with them). It tells you how to run informative, engaging and, most importantly, fun events in your community. These events can help shape government decisions around the issues that matter to you.

For a long time the government has only heard from a limited group of people. This pack empowers smaller groups with the knowledge necessary to run events that will influence decisions at the local and national level.

This pack will be useful to community volunteers, youth workers, citizenship teachers, community development workers and others who want to make a difference.

To order more copies of the Community Power Pack please go to:
www.communities.gov.uk

involve
The Community Power Pack has been produced by Communities and Local Government and Involve.
www.involve.org.uk