

EXERCISE FOUR

Planning for Inclusion

(Estimated time: one hour)

You have been asked to gather local people's views on what to do about a derelict piece of land in your area or village. With good relations it is important that everyone locally who wants to be involved has the chance to take part equally and fairly.

Here are some suggestions about how to consult people:

SESSION:

In groups answer the following questions.

- 1 What is right or wrong about some of the ideas above (choose at least one from each colour)?
- 2 What consultation strategy would you devise?
- 3 What principles are important in your consultation strategy?

There is no correct or single answer here. The purpose is to understand that thinking about good relations, rights and equality is not a paper exercise – they actually affect real decisions.

Key points include:

- It is probably advisable that a range of methods are used to collect people's opinions.
- Some places and activities will likely attract some of the groups you want but not all.
- Not everyone has access to the internet or knows how to use a computer but for some people it is a great way to give views.
- Not everyone can read written English as a first language. Are there other groups of people who may not read English?
- People may be available at different times during the day for meetings depending on their work and childcare arrangements.
- In promoting activities it is important to realise that not everyone gets information from the same places.
- Places where meetings are held should have disability access and should be welcoming of people from all communities.

- Perhaps a range of venues and times could be used.
- People of all ages, languages, abilities and disabilities should be able to participate – so interpretation, translation, sign language etc. do need to be considered if they are affordable.
- Use of plain English is important so that as many people as possible understand the consultation.

After giving each group 30 minutes to answer the three questions ask them in turn to feedback on their answers.

Pick out the common themes from their answers which should include:

- Taking care not to bias activities to better suit some people more than others.
- Principles such as: fairness, equity, accessibility for all, openness.

You may wish to point out that people can get involved in taking decisions in their areas without necessarily getting involved in politics.

DISCUSSION WORKSHEET – PLANNING FOR INCLUSION:

Theme	Lines of Reflection
Public Commitment	Those undertaking the consultation should demonstrate an open and inclusive approach throughout, including a public commitment to seeking everyone's views. Therefore, limiting consultation to certain groups or using venues and events that are likely to be more attractive to people from particular backgrounds, is not living up to a commitment to openness – and is also likely to skew responses.
Trust	The people affected by the issues are not going to trust the process if they feel they are being deliberately or even unconsciously excluded. This can lead to the responses being skewed and misleading results. People might then “vote with their feet” by not taking part or withdrawing from involvement in the process or with the organisation undertaking the consultation.
All Being Heard, Contributions Valued	People should feel confident that they will be fairly included in the consultation and their views heard and taken on board. They should feel they have an equal chance of shaping the final outcome. It requires positive engagement – not just the organisers saying everyone can get involved but taking steps to maximise the chance that people of all backgrounds will be involved.