

Herefordshire engagement toolkit



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Tool 1 : Engagement framework

Engagement is about enabling the community to be involved in local decisions and giving people more control over local issues. A public service should engage with the community as part of their approach to deliver local solutions for local problems, decisions and services. Herefordshire residents should feel that they can influence a local decision and have a say as to how services are run and prioritised. A key factor as to how much local people will feel it can influence a decision is directly proportional to how much they are engaged in the decision making process.

There are five universally recognised levels of community engagement: Informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. On a continuum, these levels have increasing amounts of active engagement. At the most basic level of engagement the community is “informed” and there is no two way dialogue. At the most sophisticated level, the community is “empowered”; i.e. fully involved, taking the lead in the decision making and service design processes, and potentially, taking control of specific local services.

The table on the next page shows these five levels of engagement, with the level increasing from left to right. Underneath each engagement methodology, is the corresponding impact on local people, followed by examples of each methodology.

Five levels of engagement

Increasing level of community engagement >

Informing	Consulting	Involving	Collaborating	Empowering
Providing information to enable people to understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions.	Obtaining feedback to inform decision making. Obtaining feedback on formal proposals.	Working directly with people to ensure that issues, concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Working in partnership with people on all aspects of decision making including development of options and identifying preferred solutions.	Placing final decision making in the hands of local people.

The intention is to...

Keep people informed.	Keep people informed, listen to their views and provide feedback on how their input influenced decision making.	Engage with people to ensure that concerns and aspirations are reflected in decisions and service delivery. Provide feedback to local people on how their input influenced decision making.	Look to local people for advice and innovation to find solutions. Incorporate contributions to the maximum extent.	Facilitate local people to take responsibility for designing and delivering services themselves.
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Techniques...

Brochures, websites, news releases and newsletters to raise awareness. For example: leaflets, websites and Facebook.	Annual surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, telephone, postal or face to face (interview) surveys, using social media, e-mail, website, SMS mobile or Facebook surveys.	User panels e.g. Planning for Real events, public meetings, local member / councillor surgeries or network meetings.	Community needs analysis, focus groups or service user forums.	User led commissioning e.g. delegated budgeting, community asset transfer or direct service delivery.
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Tool 2 : Principles of engagement

In understanding the five levels of engagement, it is helpful to consider the following general principles.

Planning your engagement

1. Identifying the need for local engagement:

- Be clear about the identified need or knowledge gap
- Involve the community at the beginning of the process
- Identify and justify the target audience
- Devise a clear project plan with timescales (including details of when the results and actions will be available). Set indicative deadlines

2. Consider other options / information before engaging people:

- Where possible, look to coordinate engagement with other initiatives
- Identify if there has been recent research in that area / share results
- Share common intelligence
- Is there good practice out there? 'Borrow with pride' and 'don't reinvent the wheel'
- Forward plan. Where possible link with other local consultation opportunities.
- Can another organisation carry out the work?
- Include the cost of the engagement exercise and finalise the budget.

3. Define your purpose and objectives for the engagement:

- Be clear and transparent about the purpose of the engagement exercise
- Only consult on what is achievable, do not raise expectations
- Be clear about individual responsibilities (that is both those asking and those responding).

4. Ensure the method is fit for purpose:

- Give people the chance to get involved in ways that suit them best by offering a range of methods, so they can respond
- Within reason, make sure that everyone who wants to take part can do so
- Give people enough time to take part
- Work within Compact (The Herefordshire Compact) principles, such as 12 weeks consultation, where possible, to allow voluntary and community groups and parish council's time to engage. Undertake robust research that can stand up to scrutiny. Seek advice from the Herefordshire Council Research Team.

Engaging with the community

5. Provide people with access to any relevant information:

- Before the engagement process, ensure consultees have the necessary information and experience to participate in the process
- Communicate using plain English, avoiding jargon and abbreviations
- Make sure the consultation is widely communicated to the target audience
- Make sure information is available on request in large print or other formats (e.g. audio tape) and in both paper and electronic formats

6. Be inclusive and avoid discrimination:

- Give enough time for people to take part in the ways that suit them best (if practical, offering more than one methodology)
- Use inclusive methodologies to address diversity issues. For example, pick a location to carry out a survey where a true demographic sample will be taken
- Where appropriate, offer incentives and recognise the participant's time and expertise

7. Protect the privacy of participants:

- Adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act
- If appropriate, ensure those involved in delivering the engagement are Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked
- Follow ethical frameworks and research governance

Evaluation and feedback

8. Provide regular feedback:

- Let people know how their views will inform the decision making process
- Be clear, accessible and concise with communications

9. Share the results and outcomes:

- Complete the cycle "we asked, you said, we did" and feedback results
- Make the results available to local participants and wider audiences
- If possible, communicate what will or will not happen, as a result of the engagement

10. Provide the opportunity for complaints, compliments or suggestions:

- Give people the chance to comment on the engagement exercise, and suggest improvements where appropriate

11. Evaluate and monitor success:

- Ensure that good quality assurance is in place throughout the engagement process
- Evaluate the engagement process and outcomes to assess the success of the engagement exercise. This will help plan future engagement initiatives

Tool 3 : Proactive and reactive approaches

It is likely that engagement will take place for one of two reasons:

Proactive

Firstly, an engagement process may take place when a community and/or service provider wishes to find out about the views in a community and to engage with them.

Reactive

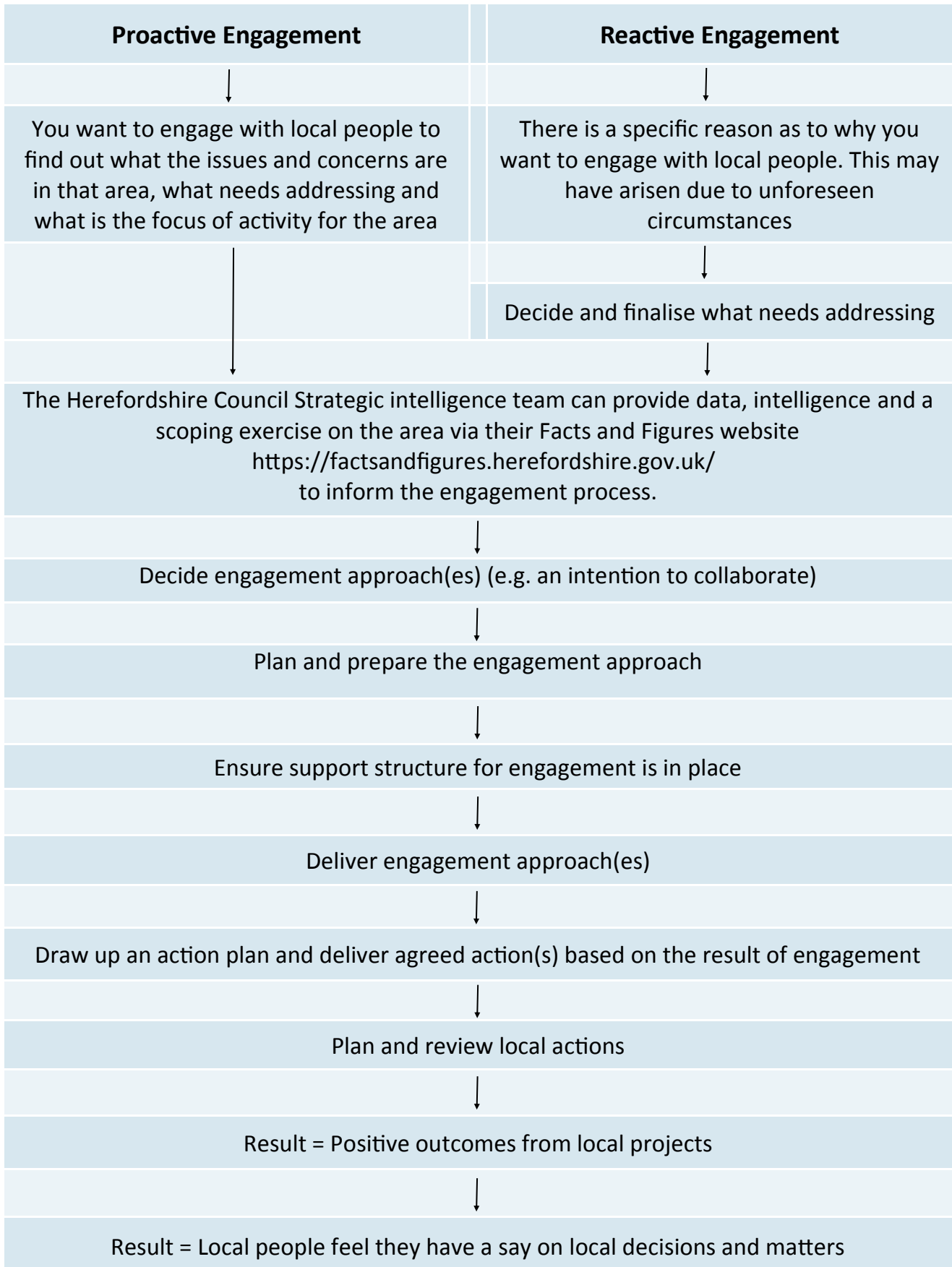
Secondly, the engagement process takes place as a result of a local issue arising. The objective should be to reduce reactive engagement to a minimum by planning and using foresight to anticipate forthcoming challenges for instance and changes in policy.

Diagram showing the proactive & reactive engagement matrix

Proactive	Reactive
<p>A forward thinking Planned, Practical and Proactive approach to local engagement, from issues emerging within the community.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community led parish planning.• Local engagement and intelligence indicates the need to address a particular issue, such as increased activities for young people	<p>As a result of a localised issue, a Reactive and Responsive approach to local engagement, often driven by the actions of a service provider.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus service consultation to consider a potential reduced service following budgetary cuts• Service provider reviewing how they deliver a service, such as services for families with young children

The following pages contain two flow charts, the first maps out the process of engaging from a proactive approach (planned) and a reactive approach (to consider a specific issue or problem). The second provides a practical example of an engagement methodology.

Flow chart 1

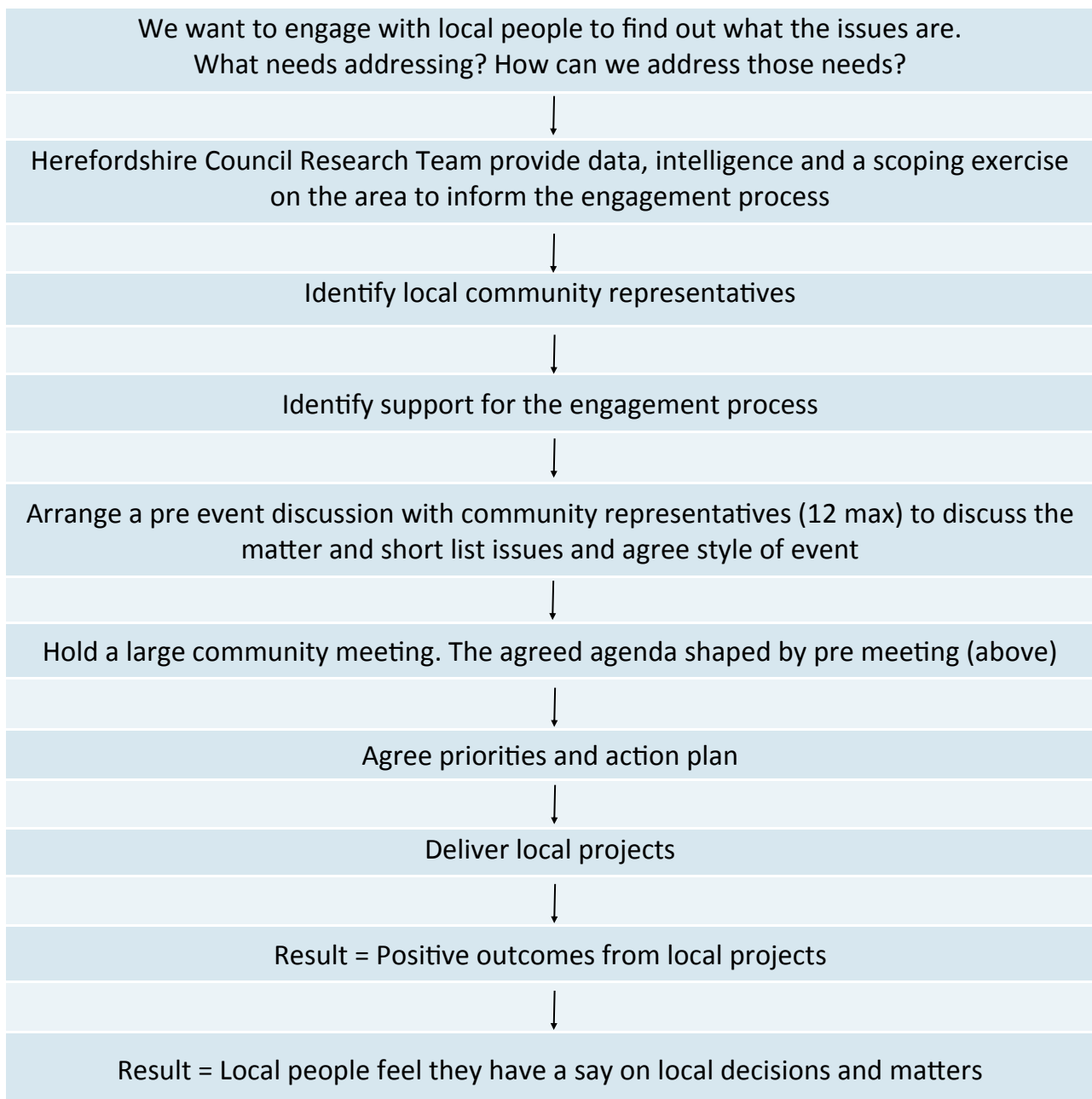


Flow chart 2

This is an example of how the engagement pathway can be implemented:

At the decide engagement approach stage, it was agreed to organise a public meeting to address the issue. This public meeting is to be preceded by inviting community representatives to a pre event discussion on the way forward for the following larger public event.

N.B. This engagement approach was adopted as part of the Reaching the Hearts of Herefordshire initiative.



Tool 4: Engagement Toolkit

This tool provides further detail and stimuli on engagement. It particularly focuses on practical engagement approaches. It can be utilised as a 'pick and mix' help section, to produce effective local engagement and generate thought and innovative approaches.

The format for this section will follow the five levels of engagement;

Informing

- A. Information document - printed material
- B. Information document - electronic media

Consulting

- A. Document consultation
- B. Questionnaire survey paper and electronic
- C. Telephone survey
- D. Face to face interview
- E. Polling / ballots / referenda

Involving

- A. Focus group
- B. Open / public meeting
- C. World café
- D. Planning for Real®
- E. Walkabouts

Collaborating

- A. Service user forum / service user engagement / focus groups

Empowering

- A. Delegated budgets
- B. Regeneration partnerships / development trusts
- C. Community asset transfer
- D. Rural retail initiatives

Informing

The simplest method to inform local people about an issue or course of action is to produce written material

A) Information document – printed material

An information document is a brochure, leaflet or newsletter. The process of informing people within a local area is to provide them with information to enable them to understand a project, action or issue. An example would be the publication of the previous year’s council budget and a break down of how the forthcoming council tax is calculated. This is an annual publication which is distributed to every household in Herefordshire.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Communicate complex information in a simple manner
- ✓ Mail all or specific households

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Council tax and precept information
- ✓ Planning matters e.g. Hereford City developments

Key points to remember:

- Accuracy - Ensure that the information in the document is accurate.
- Simplicity - The document should be easy to understand with no jargon, technical terms or abbreviations.
- Planning - Plan the production of the leaflet with realistic and achievable milestones.
- Target audience - Ensure that the document reaches the target audience through consideration as to how the information is to be promoted and distributed.
- Good production - Avoid typing, spelling or grammatical errors.
- In line with policy - The content should comply within local and national policy.
- Budget - A budget should be prepared, as information campaigns have a cost and in some cases can be expensive.
- Author - work out who is going to write and proof the information.
- Photographs / graphics - Check permission required for use of any photographs or graphics.
- Diversity - Consider, does the leaflet / brochure need to be available in different languages and formats e.g. large print, audio, paper or electronic to encompass target audience.
- Data - Check adherence with the Data Protection Act.

Pros:	Cons:
Can be an effective means of presenting complicated information.	By informing the local community there is little engagement or interaction.
The writer is able to control what information the reader sees and can digest. This guarantees consistency of message.	Whilst informing has its purpose, it does not contribute to Herefordshire residents feeling that they can influence a decision.
Relatively cheap means of communicating.	No guarantee that the information will be read.
	If the document requires updating regularly printed material may be costly.

B. Information document – electronic media

Electronic versions of information documents can be found on websites, as an email or as a page on Facebook for example. This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Communicate information that may change frequently
- ✓ Provide written information, if the cost of production is prohibitive

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Adverse weather school closure listing
- ✓ Planning applications

Key points to remember:

- In addition to the key points for printed material, there is a technical level of expertise required to put the information on to a computer / website etc.

Pros:	Cons:
If the document requires updating regularly, electronic documents are more cost effective.	Not everyone has access to a computer.
Electronic links can be added for readers to click on to gain further information.	Poor internet connection speed can restrict access.
Reduces postage costs.	Home printing quality may affect the quality of the document if printing is required.
Reduces printing costs.	May require training to use hardware / software.
Environmentally friendly.	May require specialist software to use (e.g.

Consulting

Consulting is about obtaining feedback to inform decision making.

A. Document consultation

“Document consultation” means consulting about a document (e.g. policy document or proposal), that is put before the consultees, and asking for their views. This methodology can seek views on detailed and potentially complex information from interested parties.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Deliver budget consultations
- ✓ Inform on service restructuring proposals

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Relief road proposals with maps

Key points to remember:

- Publicity - Publicise the existence of the document.
- Methods - Consider a face to face or interactive element to consultation.
- Format - Be prepared to provide information in different formats to make it easily accessible, particularly to those with visual or literacy difficulties or who don't speak English. Be aware of requests for the document in other formats and pose specific questions, but allow space for free text.
- Timing - Allow people enough time to reply, taking into account holiday periods and other timing difficulties.
- Reporting - Results need to be carefully analysed and remember to feedback to the consultees.
- Summary - Produce and make available a summary of the views and information collected.
- Feedback - Where respondents ask why their views have been rejected, try to give them a prompt and full explanation.
- Evaluation - Evaluate the effectiveness of the document.

Pros:	Cons:
Can provide people with detailed and comprehensive information.	Can receive a poor response, as written documents will put some people off commenting.
Provides considered views of respondents based on accurate information.	May exclude people with difficulty reading or writing English.
	Costs of printing, distribution and publicity can be significant.
	Timescales will be longer than for some other methods of consultation.
	Analysing responses can be resource intensive.
	The community has no control over the subject, content or methodology.

B. Questionnaire survey paper & electronic

Questionnaires are established methods to seek opinion on local issues. They require professional expertise to design and write the content.

Questionnaires can be in paper form offered to people at a number of opportunities to suit. Electronic questionnaires can be web based or e-formed or mailed to recipients, for example.

The Herefordshire Council Strategic intelligence team has significant expertise and experience in designing questionnaires. They have specialist software for questionnaire design, data entry and analysis. For help or further information contact: researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek yes / no answers
- ✓ Gain customer feedback

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Customer service questionnaire

Key points to remember:

- Sampling - It may be too costly to survey everyone. Consider what sample size you need and who you are going to select to ensure sufficient confidence in results.
- Questions - The survey's usefulness depends on its questions. This can be the most difficult part to ensure you get sensible results. Don't forget to include appropriate demographic questions.
- Uniformity - Paper questionnaires are well suited when asking everyone the same questions, but if you often need to ask different questions depending on answers to other questions, you may need an alternative or balanced method.
- Testing - Pilot your questionnaire on a small group.
- Relevance - Don't ask a question if you can't act on the results.
- Design - Allow plenty of space to write in, clear instructions and questions, in a logical order and not too long.
- Complexity - If you need to ask complex questions, you might need to employ someone to conduct an interview rather than rely on self completion.
- Removing barriers - Translations, interviewer for people who have difficulty reading and writing, large print or audio, include a reply paid envelope, use plain English and a font size of at least 12 points.
- Confidentiality & anonymity - Make it clear that the results will not be published in such a way that individuals can be identified.
- Responses - Response rates will vary according to the survey design, target audience and what you're asking. Generally between 25% and 50%.
- Analysis - Consider how you are going to process the data and analyse it.

Pros:	Cons:
Very good for obtaining reliable statistical information from tick box answers.	A poorly designed survey, with poorly drafted questions, can give misleading results.
Requires a relatively low level of interaction.	If only a small number respond, the results will be unrepresentative.
Can be low cost, particularly if supported by in-house expertise.	Lower response rates from younger age groups, people with literacy difficulties and non-English speakers.
Good method of getting views from non service users.	A lot of time and money can be involved in analysing results.
Good for wide geographical areas.	Difficult to obtain qualitative information.
Respondents can fill in the questionnaire at a convenient time and think about their answers.	Not well suited for very complex questions.
Allows you to analyse large samples quickly and to track changes over time if you use the same questions in later surveys.	Electronic questionnaires could be unrepresentative. It will exclude those who lack confidence using technology and those who do not own or have access to a computer.
Easy to complete if designed properly.	Electronic surveys can raise concerns about being able to track a response back to an individual or e-mail address.
Electronic surveys can be cheap once set up.	
Electronic surveys can be prompted by e-mails if completion rate is poor.	

C. Telephone survey

Telephone surveys are an impersonal conversation and can target specific demographics, if demographic sample data is purchased.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Target specific residents in a demographic or local area
- ✓ Carry out customer satisfaction research

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Service user feedback from an individual that was in receipt of a service, e.g. planning or building control advice

Key points to remember:

- Target group - Phone surveys can target specific groups, but require a database of telephone numbers.
- Costs - Telephone surveys can be costly, if employing specific contractors.
- Expertise - Someone with experience in research is required to design the survey, along with training and briefing those conducting the survey.
- Sampling - It may be too costly to survey everyone. Consider what sample size is required and what attention is required to ensure confidence in results.
- Questions - The survey's usefulness depends on its questions. This can be the most difficult part to ensure you get sensible results. Don't forget to include appropriate demographic questions.
- Testing - Pilot the questionnaire on a small group.
- Relevance - Don't ask a question if you can't act on the results.
- Design - Without the benefit of being able to reread questions and instructions, it is particularly important that questions and instructions are clear, fairly short and in a logical order.
- Complexity - Complex topics may require knowledgeable interviewers, who know the subject matter.
- Removing barriers - Remove barriers by including translations for languages other than English, special telephone arrangements or face to face engagement for people with hearing difficulties. Ensure the timing is convenient for the participant.
- Confidentiality & anonymity - Make it clear that the results will not be published in such a way that individuals can be identified.
- Responses - Response rates will vary according to the survey design, target audience and what you're asking. It may be more appropriate to set a target number of interviews and state the number of responses in the report.
- Analysis - Consider how the data will be processed and analysed.

Pros:	Cons:
Conducting the survey over the phone gives you the chance to explain questions if necessary, so this format is good for complex information.	If you conduct the survey over the phone, time constraints may result in hurried answers, and there is a danger of the answers reflecting the views of the interviewer.
Can control who responds e.g. particular target groups.	Some respondents find 'cold calling' irritating and inconvenient.
Good for wide geographical areas.	May be unrepresentative.
Telephone survey's can be entered on a computer as the interview takes place.	Can be costly.
Good for individuals with literacy issues or visual impairments.	Removes visual prompts
	Requires interviewing skills.

D. Face to face interview

Face to face interviews can be used when a large amount of open ended information is needed. The interviewer can expand on points and provide more detail. There may be a script but deviation from the script may be allowed within boundaries.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Carry out customer opinion survey
- ✓ Carry out research on local perceptions

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Perceptions on traffic overcrowding
- ✓ Street surveys in town and city centre

Key points to remember:

- Sampling - It may be too costly to survey everyone. Consider what sample size you need and how are you going to arrange selection to ensure sufficient confidence in the results.
- Questions - The survey's usefulness depends on its questions.
- Testing - Pilot your questionnaire on a small group.
- Relevance - Don't ask a question if you can't act on the results.
- Design - The design of the interview script should have clear instructions and questions. There should be a logical order, not too long and not too repetitive.
- Complexity - Consider will the interviewer have the knowledge and skill to cope with complex and technical questions.
- Removing barriers - It is important to consider translations and alternative versions of the questions for minority ethnic groups. The environment and ambience must be suitable. For example, the interview should not be carried out on a noisy street corner. There may be a need to be seated if the interview is lengthy. Consider that people may feel threatened by an approaching stranger, or may assume that the interviewer is selling something.
- Expertise - You need someone with experience in research to design the survey and analyse the results. It is necessary to employ trained people to conduct the interviews.
- Content - Make sure that the issues you want information on are covered in the interview as well as all the new and exciting ideas that may come out.
- Location - You will get differing response rates depending on where you choose to hold the interview. The cross section of people interviewed will vary greatly depending on the time, day, season and location of the interviews. Consider this carefully when designing the survey.
- Representativeness - Feedback from individual interviews may not be typical of the views of all users.
- Time - The maximum time for the interview should be 30-45 minutes. An interview half an hour long would cover about 60 questions, depending on the respondent (e.g. interviewing older people usually takes longer).
- Children - There are special considerations for safeguarding both parties when interviewing under 16 year olds and also for young people aged 16 or 17.
- Confidentiality & anonymity - Make it clear that the results will not be published in such a way that individuals can be identified.
- Responses - Response rates will vary according to the survey design, target audience and what is asked. It may be more appropriate to set a target number of interviews and state the number of responses in the report.
- Analysis - Consider how are you going to process and analyse the data.

Pros:	Cons:
Can help in obtaining wide ranging responses to proposals for new services.	The interview cohort may not be representative.
Good for gaining views of particular groups of individuals excluded from mainstream consultations.	Costs may be high per individual, particularly if a wide geographic area is to be covered.
Flexible enough to allow new issues to be raised that you may not have considered.	Trained interviewers are required.
Can provide more detailed feedback than a group discussion.	Responses can be unwittingly influenced by the views of the interviewer.
Useful for obtaining the views of people who might not feel comfortable speaking in a group.	High costs per individual but you do get a lot of information in return.
May help explore sensitive, personal or painful issues.	It may be difficult to persuade people to give up nearly an hour of their time to complete a survey.
Good for people with literacy difficulties.	

E. Polling / ballots / referenda

This engagement approach sees people vote on their preferred response to an issue.

This engagement method could be used for:

- ✓ Seeking opinion at a public meeting
- ✓ Ballots
- ✓ Referendums

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Neighbourhood development plans
- ✓ Local and national elections

Key points to remember:

- Usage - You will only get a yes / no answer with referenda and ballots, so if the engagement issue doesn't lend itself to a yes or no answer, avoid this approach.
- Context - Polling can provide opportunities to offer information, debate the issues and hear from groups with different opinions.
- Methods - There are a variety of methods available with postal ballots and personal voting being the most common. Electronic systems are increasingly used more often, utilising both telephone and Internet voting from home. Electronic Voting Systems (EVS) can be provided at Herefordshire events to help decide priorities and vote on local issues. To book out the EVS equipment contact Jude Perks on jperks@herefordshire.gov.uk or 01432 383523.

Pros:	Cons:
Easy to interpret results.	No qualitative information.
Increasingly easy for people to participate in the process.	Results can be based on superficial uninformed responses and may be difficult to find out in-depth opinion.
May create a sense of ownership of the process.	Results can be swayed by the amount and quality of information provided by supporters of each option, rather than by the issue itself.
	This approach can often get low turnouts.
	Polling techniques can be very expensive.

Involving

Involving is about working directly with local people to ensure that issues, concerns and aspirations are understood and considered. The process is initiated and facilitated by the service provider, but its subsequent direction can be determined by the input from the community. There are numerous examples of local involvement including neighbourhood planning.

A. Focus group

Focus groups are normally made up of around 8 to 10 people led by a trained facilitator in a one off discussion on a particular issue. Focus groups are particularly useful if you want to find out what specific groups of people think about a service or a local area.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek opinions from a smaller group
- ✓ Seek opinions from a knowledgeable group of people

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Hearts of Herefordshire events
- ✓ Small public meetings

Key points to remember:

- Preparation - Draw up a list of questions / areas that are to be covered at the focus group.
- Composition - It is generally easier for the group to communicate if the members are roughly similar in terms of gender, age and social class.
- Expertise - It is important to use a well briefed and skilled facilitator to run the group to ensure everyone has their say and that discussions stay on the topic.
- Focus - Start with something relatively simple with clear boundaries.
- Valuing participants - Value the contribution of participants by giving clear information about their role and making sure the practical arrangements run smoothly.
- Incentives - It may be appropriate to offer to pay travel expenses and it may be considered appropriate to provide free access to facilities or a service. Note: There may be implications if expenses are paid to those on benefit or income support. There may also be tax implications.
- Recording - Facilities need to be in place to record the discussion / responses.
- Analysis - Care needs to be taken to record accurately and analyse qualitative information.

Pros:	Cons:
Enables you find out what's important to people that live and work in a local area.	It is important to use an experienced facilitator, this may incur additional cost.
Users may feel more confident in groups and be encouraged to provide feedback. This is something they wouldn't normally do when on their own.	The outcome may be a group view and not reflect individual views or any 'extreme' opinion.
Groups allow people to spark ideas off one another.	Some participants may be inhibited from saying what they really feel due to group dynamics.
Provides information about what people think and why.	Difficult to prioritise issues.
Can facilitate getting views from non service users.	Cannot generalise results.
Can include people who do not read or write or speak English, if you get an appropriately skilled facilitator.	The approach does not provide statistical information, it gives the 'why' not the 'how many'.
	Expensive but detailed information can be received.

B. Open / public meeting

Open public meetings are effective means of getting a group of individuals together to find out their views and opinions.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek opinions of a larger group of people

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Hearts of Herefordshire events
- ✓ Public meetings

Key points to remember:

- Issue - The issue being discussed will have an impact on attendance with larger numbers attending to discuss a controversial issue e.g. a planned new development.
- Publicity - Publicise as widely as possible and use informal networks, parish councils, community groups etc.
- Practicalities - Prepare seating layouts, presentation aids, etc.
- Reporting - Ensure a note is taken of proceedings.
- Facilitation - Make sure the facilitators are skilled and trained enough to run / manage the meeting effectively.
- Target audience - Organise the meeting at an appropriate time and location for the target audience.
- Collecting information - Find out whether people found this useful via a feedback sheet.

Pros:	Cons:
Public meetings provide local opportunities for people to comment on matters that affect them directly or indirectly.	Public meeting engagement is unlikely to be representative.
It is a convenient and transparent way to demonstrate public consultation and establish good relationships.	Individual and group contributions may be about local, topical or personal concerns.
The approach can be used to inform as well as seek views.	Public meetings can often be taken over by activists.
Enables interaction between participants, so ideas and views can develop.	Public meetings can be costly.

C. World café

People's or world cafés are events that bring local people and / or stakeholders together to discuss a variety of issues in groups. Rather than putting before the participant's scenarios of either / or, particular topics are devised for discussion by the participants amongst themselves.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Provide a relaxed and innovative consultation process for many people

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Regeneration Forums

Key points to remember:

- Expertise - Organising events such as this are complex and require skills to manage the event.
- Grassroots - People's or world cafés originated from the grassroots democracy movement. They are highly interactive, imaginative but not always suitable for yes / no consultations.
- Adaptability - Cafés are highly adaptable; they can be run with the involvement of very few or hundreds of people. They can take place in a variety of public places including cafés, as long as they can be held in a relaxed and friendly environment.
- Skills of facilitators - Experienced facilitators should run café events.
- Materials - Limited resources are required, such as paper, pens, tables and chairs.
- Method - Participants begin by discussing a general issue and move from there to more specific issues, which may have been generated before the session or could come out of the session. Rather than delivering ready solutions, these sessions may generate broader things to consider or priorities for action.
- Location - People's or world cafés need to be held in venues convenient and accessible for local people.
- Publicity - Resources are required to publicise and promote the cafés.

Pros:	Cons:
A relaxed atmosphere for individuals to discuss and engage in local matters.	Heavily reliant on facilitator expertise.
An enjoyable involvement process.	Will not result in a yes / no response.
Event may stimulate ideas and opinions.	Requires attendees to fully participate in the process.

D. Planning for Real®

Planning for Real® is a uniquely engaging hands on process which, by using a 3D model of the local area as a focus, enables local people to put forward suggestions to show how an area can be improved, or to highlight specific problems. The 3D model is usually made by local residents and during the consultation exercise, the model is surrounded by suggestion cards or flags. Residents select the cards to represent their needs. In some cases the cards can be written on to show specific needs and are often colour coded, to show the main priorities at a glance.

The community then review the suggestions and decide the priorities and possible options. This is achieved using 'now, soon, later' charts which enable residents to consider realistic timescales. An action plan is then developed for the local area identifying 'who and how'. (Taken from the Planning for Real® leaflet Shaping the neighbourhoods and communities where you live.)

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek opinions

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Parish and Neighbourhood development planning

Key points to remember:

- Materials - Planning for Real® is distributed in the form of a kit, which is a small box containing basic instructions on how to conduct sessions, a sample model, cut out masters for physical items and non physical attributes. Instruction is provided through four packs: publicity, suggestions menu, priorities and follow up. A large three dimensional model of the neighbourhood will be constructed and assembled within the community prior to the Planning for Real® event.
- Method - Participants move around the model of the area, making their views known by placing pre written and / or self completed suggestion cards on it, indicating what they want to see happen and when. The cards are then sorted and prioritised (now, soon, later) to establish an action plan, that is followed up by working groups.
- Skills - Planning for Real® is a trademarked product. It is therefore essential that an accredited trainer is involved in setting up the session and briefing a community moderator or moderators on the process.
- Location - Planning for Real® events need to be held in venues convenient and accessible for local people.
- Representative research - This depends on publicity / promotion and people actually attending the event.
- Time / preparation - Sufficient time is needed for an effective exercise. Three months is suggested for the initial stage of mobilisation, setting up a steering group, building the model and publicising the sessions. Possibly more than one actual event will need to be planned.
- Publicity - Time and effort is needed to publicise and promote the event.
- Target audience - Participants are largely intended to be from the local area, with government officials, local councillors and professionals present to answer questions, when requested (their role is as a resource rather than a stakeholder).

Pros:	Cons:
A highly visible and hands on approach.	Constructing models can be time consuming if starting from scratch.
Easy and enjoyable for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.	Time and effort is required to ensure all relevant groups are represented.
Promotes discussion of real issues and allows local people to suggest solutions.	There is a possibility that the activity could be led by certain individuals and their agenda.
	May be expensive, main costs include materials for the model(s), hire of facilities (meeting room, refreshments etc.), facilitator time and promotional materials.

E. Walkabouts

Walkabouts can take different forms; they can be a number of people from one organisation looking at a particular issue or a number of organisations working together to look at any issues which may need to be tackled. Walkabouts give participants a greater knowledge of the area and also provide a visible presence for local residents. This can be a very powerful image of partners working together, and it can also be a way of inviting residents to discuss local issues and what matters to them.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek opinions from individuals
- ✓ Seek views and opinions related to a particular place
- ✓ Gain the views of those who might not attend more formal engagement
- ✓ Gain practical knowledge of the physical area and the tangible / visible issues.

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Balfour Beatty Living Places ward walks

Key points to remember:

- Expertise - No real expertise required, but to get the most from a walkabout, you need someone with knowledge of the area. This would provide a good vehicle for engaging with ward councillors, parish and town councillors and other community representatives.
- Materials - Limited resources are required, but will be useful to capture visually any issues as well as taking written notes.
- Method - A number of participants gather in a specified location to familiarise themselves with the area, capturing views and identifying the key issues that need improving.
- Location - Most suitable locations are towns and larger villages.
- Time / preparation - Minimal preparation required, but should include familiarisation with existing information and intelligence on the area. Allow sufficient time for the exercise itself and for feedback afterwards.
- Publicity - A more participative approach would include actively inviting residents to join in, which would require greater publicity beforehand and promotion on the day. Otherwise limited publicity required.
- Target audience - Participants are largely intended to be from the local area and could include ward members, parish and town councillors, other community representatives and other service providers. During the walkabout it will be beneficial to engage with local residents to get their views.

Pros:	Cons:
A highly visible and practical approach.	Mainly limited to focussing on the physical and visible issues in a local area.
Good method of engaging with people where they live.	Less suitable for large rural locations.
A more informal engagement method which may encourage greater participation especially from those who may traditionally not engage.	

Collaborating

Collaborating is about working in partnership with local people on all aspects of decision making including development of options and identifying preferred solutions.

A. Service user forum / service user engagement / focus groups

This is about specifically engaging with targeted service users. It enables discussion on general and specific issues of relevance to particular groups of people.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Seek opinions of service users
- ✓ Seek views / opinions from service user groups that may be knowledgeable and in some circumstances have technical expertise
- ✓ Seek specific views from the local area / community at parish council meetings

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Patient involvement
- ✓ Parish council meetings
- ✓ Annual parish meetings (open public meetings)

Key points to remember:

- Representative - The group should represent what is required and must be bona fide users of a particular service. This could be recipients of a service or more broadly residents or stakeholders in a local area.
- Involving the group - Discuss with the service users as to how best you can work together.
- Objectives - Clearly set agreed objectives for the forum and each meeting / session.
- Cost - There may be a cost to encourage service users to engage. This incentive could offset travel expenses, child care costs, compensate for loss of income or simply to act a sweetener to encourage attendance.
- Timing - Give individuals and voluntary organisations time to respond.

Pros:	Cons:
Relatively low numbers are invited allowing the event to be more manageable.	Depending on the type of organisation, the group may contain particularly motivated people who aren't fully representative of users.
Very targeted and specific engagement.	May not provide statistical information.
If the service user group is representative of the broader population, this method is a very effective method of collaboration.	Groups may require a considerable amount of time to respond.
	Individual engagement may be sporadic and unreliable.

Empowering

In this ultimate scenario the community (with professional assistance and facilitation) is encouraged to take control of the engagement and consultation agenda, to identify its service needs, and even design, control and deliver those services. Examples of this are community led planning, managing delegated budgets and setting up a social enterprise.

A. Delegated budgets

Delegated budgets involves a decision making process where empowered communities can decide how to spend and allocate public finances. In this case, delegating budgets allows local people to identify, discuss and prioritise public expenditure on local projects and services. It enables people to purchase local services and respond to local issues.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Decide on budget priorities

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Budget planning meetings
- ✓ A bus service commissioned by Fownhope and Dormington and Mordiford Parish Councils

Key points to remember:

- Political will - Local elected representatives should recognise that delegated budgeting provides local solutions to local issues.
- A degree of acceptance - Traditional budget holders need to embrace the delegated budget approach. Commissioners should be prepared to delegate sums locally for localised commissioning decisions.

Pros:	Cons:
Delegated budgeting can empower people and encourage ownership of decisions.	The process may create sporadic and variable service provision across larger geographic areas.
People feel that they have influence on local decisions.	Commissioning services may be influenced by specific views / opinion that may not be representative of the local area.
Local people understand the financial pressures placed on public service budgets.	Funding may reflect local issues that are in the public eye at any one particular time.
	Funding could be short term by nature.

B. Regeneration partnerships / development trusts

Local partnerships such as regeneration partnerships and development trusts can be made up of representatives from the public sector, private sector and voluntary and community organisations. The partnership may receive substantial grants to deliver local solutions to local problems. Often they are supported and facilitated by local authorities, parish councils and third sector organisations. As such these represented and constituted organisations can be empowered to deliver locally.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Regenerate the local area

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ South Wye Regeneration Partnership
- ✓ Leominster Area Regeneration Company (LARC)

Key points to remember:

- The organisation should be representative of the community and have a constitution or terms of reference.
- These organisations should regularly consult and involve their area on local matters.
- Often these organisations are accountable as a Trust or Company Limited by Guarantee or a Community Interest Company.
- These organisations are often managed by volunteers, although some may have a salaried manager.
- There are numerous examples of best practice.
- These organisations are used to dealing with public sector organisations.
- Most organisations will have large pools of expertise available to them.

Pros:	Cons:
These organisations can be empowered to deliver local solutions.	The organisation can be constrained by concerns regarding their sustainability.
They are representative.	Organisations are often reliant on grants.
They have the intention to deliver local solutions and more often experience in delivery and influencing local decisions.	Potential high turnover of volunteers.
A useful organisation in which to empower local solutions.	May be steered by or reliant on one 'dynamic' individual.

C. Community asset transfer

By transferring an asset to a local area, people become fully engaged in the provision of that service. They become empowered to provide a local solution.

This engagement method could be used for:

- ✓ Addressing a poor existing service provision
- ✓ Budget cuts in lead authority
- ✓ Saving an at risk service or facility

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ Tudorville Youth Centre in Ross-on-Wye
- ✓ Grange Court in Leominster

Key points to remember:

- There must be local support for the asset transfer.
- Asset transfers often receive support from parish councils, local ward members, community enterprise experts and local businessmen and entrepreneurs.
- This is empowered local working in its purest form.

Pros:	Cons:
A cost effective transfer of capital and service provision liability.	Patchy service provision.
Empowered local working in its purest form.	Possibly over reliant on volunteers.
Voluntary and community sector organisations can apply for grant funding to invest in community assets.	Approach may restrict investment and expose limited capital resources.
Can often have substantial local interest / support if the community asset is well known.	

D. Rural retail initiatives

A common issue in rural communities is the lack of rural retail provision. If a village shop, pub or key service becomes at risk of closure, often there is considerable effort to save or even create a local retail enterprise. During this engagement process local people become empowered to address the issue from within and often support the provision themselves. In rural isolated areas a village shop, pub or service station play a very important role. As private small village retail businesses become unsustainable, shops and pubs begin to close, leaving a void in rural life.

Communities are beginning to recognise this trend and are increasingly valuing their shops and pubs. In some areas, a tremendous community effort has been put in to saving or reopening a rural business. Community interest companies, cooperatives and parish / private business partnerships have been created to provide the retail service. The Saving Rural Retail Services booklet provides examples of successful Herefordshire rural enterprises and tips on how to save or create a village retail opportunity. It can be downloaded at: www.herefordshire.gov.uk/parishcouncils

In Herefordshire, there are numerous examples of rural communities empowered to create their own village shop or rural enterprise. Often, it is an individual or group of individuals that come together, fully empowered, to secure a village shop. This truly is a local solution to a local need.

This engagement method could be used to:

- ✓ Save and provide an essential rural community service, including: shop, pub, service station / garage

Herefordshire examples:

- ✓ The Kilpeck Inn
- ✓ Wellington Delights Shop & Post Office
- ✓ Yarpole Village Shop
- ✓ Eardisland Community Shop
- ✓ Dorstone's Front Room
- ✓ Mortimer Country Stores
- ✓ Colwell Post Office

Key points to remember:

- For a village retail business to survive and thrive there must be community support for that particular service.
- These organisations are often managed by volunteers, although some may also have a salaried manager.
- Rural retail projects often receive support from parish councils, local ward members, community enterprise experts and local businessmen and entrepreneurs.
- Rural retail projects can become community interest companies, cooperatives or industrial and provident societies.
- This is empowered local working in its purest form.

Pros:	Cons:
A local solution to address a local need for a retail service. Empowered local engagement in its purest form.	A very intensive local project.
Often receives local parish council support.	Heavily reliant on volunteers. Often one individual with a core group of supporters.
When faced with the possible closure of a rural service, empowerment may be the best engagement approach to facilitate a resolution.	Questionable long term sustainability, although time will tell.
	All the risk is taken on by the local area.

Tool 5: 'Grasp the Opportunity' tools for Local engagement

The list below is a brief overview of the consultation and engagement opportunities available within a local area. Sometimes the more informal approaches to engage with the community are the most effective. The list is not exhaustive and can be added to with some imagination and 'lateral thinking'.

School gate interaction School's out	Talk to parents of children and students attending school. It may offer an opportunity to engage with groups that normally don't engage.
Community event involvement Special event - special opportunity	Any community event is an opportunity to engage with new individuals.
Flu jab season. Get to the point	A flu jab clinic is often an opportunity to engage with retired people and perhaps those that do not normally engage in the usual manner.
Age concern. Community concern	Use the charity to engage with their client group.
Market day Only bargains to be had...	An ideal opportunity to engage with a significant number of people. The target audience will vary depending on the type of event.
Supermarket foyer Supermarket sweep	Effective means to engage with a significant footfall.
Knock on door Neighbourhood Watch	An approach adopted by local councillors. MOSAIC data can be used to specifically target a preferred audience, roads and neighbourhoods.
Sports events Know the score	An informal means of engaging with a population that may otherwise be difficult to contact. Consider sponsorship of sporting events to get engagement opportunities.
Play group / parent and baby or toddler group. Teething problems	An opportunity to discuss matters / issues with a parent.
Women's Institute sales Conversation over tea and cake	An opportunity to engage with a group of significance.
Leisure centre Fit for business	A wide cross section of users visit leisure centres and swimming pools.
Drama productions / Flicks in the sticks. Get the picture	Pick the event carefully and this could be a valuable exercise. Consider sponsorship of events.
Apple fair / May fair Get to the core of the community	A specific target audience.
School events / parents evening School report	Select the event and the school.
Church events Congregate with your community	Churches can have a significant sample of a community.
Community action (e.g. In Bloom) Action planning	A great way to engage with community action oriented individuals.
Post office / village shop Stamp of approval / opinion shopping	Local views gained from the local environment.
Civic society Know your environment	Significant views on the built environment and open spaces.
Business forum/ Chamber of Commerce Know your business	A key sector to engage with in the locality. Go to their events as they are less likely to come to you.
Fundraising (Lions Club, Round Table, Rotary Club). Raising the bar!	Community activists.

All of the above are 'thinking out of the box' opportunities to engage with a locality. They do however require skills to engage with people in an informal manner.