

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Community Engagement Framework

2010

Richmond Local
Upon Strategic
Thames Partnership

1. Introduction

This document outlines our shared vision, objectives and best practice principles as we continue to improve how we engage, and ultimately empower, our community as a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This document is intended to be an overarching Community Engagement Framework that individual partner strategies can sit underneath (see Appendix A). Through the development and implementation of this Framework, the Richmond LSP recognises the value of involving our community in shaping decisions about their area and the services they receive.

Our vision for community engagement in Richmond upon Thames

Working together to foster a shared sense of responsibility for the local area, where local people know that they can have a say, know how to get involved, have opportunities to influence and receive feedback on how their views have been taken into account.

In terms of who we will engage, this Framework covers any engagement with people who live, work, visit or study in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

2. Our Objectives

To enable the planning and delivery of services, strategies and policies that reflect the needs of communities in Richmond upon Thames, the objectives of this framework will seek to ensure that:

- Local people are given a variety of opportunities to get involved and that these opportunities are delivered by LSP partners in a streamlined and coordinated way
- Local people feel confident that they have a voice in the community and that local decisions and outcomes are influenced through community engagement
- Service development, delivery and performance is improved
- There is a clear understanding and commitment to community engagement and shared best practice principles across the LSP partners.

3. Why should we engage our community?

There is a growing recognition that involving citizens in local decision-making and service planning has a number of benefits. It is also a legitimate expectation that our local community should be able to influence the planning and delivery of services and decisions that affect them.

High quality knowledge about our local communities will facilitate the development of joint service delivery, based on issues and priorities that are agreed and owned by partners and communities in Richmond upon Thames.

Community engagement can contribute to a number of outcomes including:

- Local people feeling empowered and that they have a voice
- A greater understanding of the local community and being better able to respond to and meet peoples' needs when designing and delivering services, leading to improvement.
- Better decisions, policies and strategies and ensuring that more efficient and effective services are delivered
- Encouraging a healthy local democracy where voting is not the only way for people to express their views
- Helping people understand how LSP partners work and how decisions that affect them are reached
- Helping to improve the reputation and profile of the LSP partners
- Identifying and avoiding problems caused by service changes by asking for peoples' views and opinions

Furthermore, the local government and Public Involvement in Health Act has placed on all local authorities and best value authorities a new statutory duty (Duty to Involve) to ensure that community engagement informs local services, policies and decision-making.

The LSP's commitment to this approach is demonstrated by the inclusion of National Indicator 4 (the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in the local area) within our Local Area Agreement and the establishment of an Engagement Working Group to drive forward the engagement agenda.

4. What is community engagement?

There are many different words used to describe community engagement, including 'research', 'consultation', 'participation' and 'involvement'. To ensure that there is a common understanding, the LSP has adopted the following definition of engagement.

Community engagement is the process of involving people in decisions that affect them, by giving them the information and the opportunity to influence decisions and, ultimately, local services

This definition supports the broad range of activities that can encompass community engagement from the simple provision of information about a meeting or a service to empowering people to take decisions and make things happen.

It is important to use the appropriate terminology to clearly identify the type of engagement that we are undertaking. This will help to prevent confusion by clarifying the purpose of the activity and the level of influence that local people will have. Outlined below are a number of different ways that effective engagement can be achieved. There are important differences between these activities; each involving different approaches, tools and techniques and aimed at achieving different outcomes. They each have their own vital role and can support and complement one another.

Using the right approach or combination of approaches is essential to ensure that engagement is effective and achieves its intended outcomes. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform or consult on activities, while at other times we will seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth. The engagement wheel below highlights the different types of activities that community engagement may include:

Engagement Wheel

Empowering:

To place the final decision making in the hands of the community and support them to develop and implement their own plans.

Informing:

To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, options and / or solutions



Collaborating:

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solutions

Consulting:

To ask the community for feedback on analysis, alternatives and /or decisions

Involving:

To work directly with the community throughout a process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and taken into consideration

5. Shared principles of engagement

The LSP has agreed the following set of guiding principles that inform the way partners carry out engagement and consultation activity. The LSP aims to continue to improve how we engage and embed a culture of partnership working and co-ordination across our activities.

We will aim to ensure our engagement activities are:

1. **Co-ordinated** – key community engagement activity to be logged on the LSP consultation diary to facilitate improved co-ordination reducing duplication and improving efficiency and effectiveness.
2. **Relevant and necessary** – we will ensure information and knowledge that already exists is reviewed and check if anyone else has already undertaken engagement activity, where the results could be shared and duplication avoided.
3. **Clear, concise and transparent** – we will explain why we're engaging and how we're going to take peoples views into account as part of the decision making process to ensure the process is open and transparent (clearly stating the level of influence, constraints and boundaries). All information will be worded clearly and avoid jargon.
4. **Confidential** – we will ensure that personal data and responses to engagement activities are treated in confidence and in line with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. No results or findings will be produced that are likely to identify an individual, unless this has been specifically agreed with them. We will however encourage sharing of data between our partners, while respecting confidentiality (only anonymised data will be shared).
5. **Inclusive and accessible** – we will involve the widest spectrum of the community in our engagement, including under-represented or marginalised groups. We will consider all six equality strands when undertaking any engagement activity (i.e. disability, race, faith/belief, age, sexual orientation and gender). We will tailor our approach to the needs of the audience, recognising the need to consider accessibility issues and potential barriers to involvement (e.g. language, venue). This approach is not only good practice but also helps to ensure the LSP meets its statutory equalities obligations.
6. **Timely, well planned and appropriate** – we will aim to allow adequate time so that people have a proper chance to get involved. Sufficient time will be given to planning and conducting the engagement and for the results to be collated, analysed and considered. We will also use engagement methods that make best use of our resources and achieve the best results from the target audience. This includes developing new and innovative approaches.

7. **Action focused** – we will act on the findings to improve services, programmes and quality of life for local residents. Where a decision is contrary to the views of those consulted, we will give clear reasons why.
8. **Reported back to the public** – we will report back to the public what they've told us during the engagement and what we've done as a result of it, thereby closing the feed back loop.

LSP partners undertaking engagement activity should also aim to adhere to the Nolan Principles of Public Life (see Appendix A).

6. Next Steps

The LSP Engagement Working Group will be responsible for implementing the LSP Community Engagement Action Plan. It sets out the work we will carry out under four themes, based on the four objectives of this framework.

The LSP Engagement Working group will review the action plan on an annual basis, as well as providing updates on progress to the LSP Improvement Group, LSP Executive Group and Full LSP.

Appendix A – LSP Partner Community Engagement Strategies and Policies

- Engagement Strategy for NHS Richmond 2009-2012
- Richmond upon Thames Police – Borough Community Engagement Strategy 2010/11
- Richmond upon Thames Safer Neighbourhoods Team and Safer Transport Team Community Engagement Plan January 2010
- Richmond CVS – Stocktake: Community involvement in health and social care
- Richmond Housing Partnership Involvement Strategy, Action Plan
- Richmond Housing Partnership Customer Involvement Booklet
- Richmond Housing Partnership Resident Involvement Compact

Appendix B Bibliography

Audit Commission (1999) Listen Up. Effective community consultation Available at:
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/AC-REPORT.asp?CatID=&ProdID=EA01768C-AA8E-4a2f-99DB-83BB58790E34>

Audit Commission (2007) Involving Communities Available at:
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7314494>

Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) Strong and Prosperous Communities (Vol1) Available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1

Sustainable Communities Act 2007
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

Department for Communities and Local Government: An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on success
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityempowermentactionplan>

Appendix C Nolan Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life are:-

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

LSP Engagement Framework Action Plan

Objective	Action	Target date	Lead responsibility
<p>1. To ensure there is a clear understanding of and commitment to community engagement across the LSP partners</p>	<p>1.1. LSP Community Engagement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft Framework and action plan presented to LSP Executive to go out for consultation ● Framework Consultation ● Final approval from LSP Executive ● Implement action plan ● Annual Review of action plan 	<p>April 2010</p> <p>May-Sept 2010</p> <p>Oct 2010</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 2011</p>	<p>LSP CE Working Group</p>
<p>2. Local people are given a variety of opportunities to get involved and that these opportunities are delivered by LSP partners in a way that is streamlined and coordinated</p>	<p>2.1. LSP Engagement Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued commitment from partners to attend the working group and contribute to driving forward the engagement agenda ● Monitor, update and implement the NI4 action plan <p>2.2. LSP Consultation Diary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commitment from all partners to contribute updates to the LSP Engagement Diary ● Explore options for improving accessibility to the diary for partners and the public <p>2.3. Information provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mapping of opportunities for engagement across LSP partners ● Explore options for developing a central hub outlining various ways local people can get involved ● Explore options for a joint Get Involved Campaign to further raise awareness of engagement opportunities in the borough <p>2.4. Identify key projects/initiatives for joint engagement across LSP partners</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April/May 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p> <p>July/Aug 2010</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LBRuT CET</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p>

Objective	Action	Target date	Lead responsibility
<p>3. Local people feel confident that they have a voice in the community and that local decisions and outcomes are influenced through community engagement.</p>	<p>3.1. Partners adhering to best practice principles set out in the LSP Community Engagement Framework.</p> <p>3.2. Partners to share and publicise best practice examples of engagement activities that have influenced services, policies and decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for further developing the LSP Consultation Diary to routinely hold information on results and outcomes of engagement activity • Explore potential joint publicity campaign highlighting example of good practice <p>3.3. Joint working on Engagement Toolkits - recognition that partners may need their own toolkits reflecting individual partner processes and procedures, however exploring potential joint working around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of best practice i.e. different methods of engagement or best practice for engaging with different communities i.e. young people, deaf / hard of hearing (PCT) • Joint approach to use of incentives – payment and recognition • Shared database of external consultants • Explore potential for joint LSP Staff training around engagement <p>3.4. Consider as a partnership new media and technology as a methods of engagement with the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what media partners have, expertise, facilities that potentially could be jointed used / purchase / sharing 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p>
<p>4. Service development, delivery and performance is improved</p>	<p>4.1. Feeding back results and outcomes – partners to share current approaches and channels used for feeding back and explore joint and innovative approaches going forward</p> <p>4.2. Explore developing joint approaches to evaluating community engagement activity</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>LSP CE Working Group</p> <p>LSP CE Working Group</p>