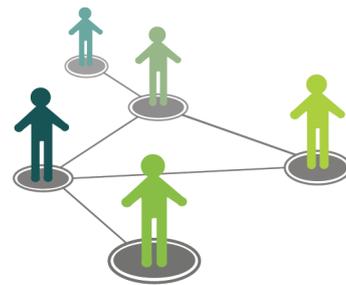# CSP CIC's Notes, Tips and Tools for community groups in developing their Neighbourhood Development Plans

CommunitySpiritPartnership CIC

PAPER 2 of 3 Questionnaires

An Open Source Document produced by Community Spirit Partnership CIC.

More about Basics and Event Planning is given in Hints, Tips and Tools papers 1 and 3 of this series. These are very simple hints and we hope they are helpful.

Neighbourhood Development Plans provide an exciting and unprecedented opportunity to positively shape your surroundings. We wish you every success in developing your Plans.

Clare Wright, Mary-Ann Nossent and the Community Spirit Partnership CIC team

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1. Foreword

To provide a complete story, there is some crossover and repetition in this initial set of Notes, Tips and Tools with national advice. The authors encourage communities to read and shape the advice and templates in this series of 3 Papers to suit their individual circumstances. The resources are a snapshot from some of our own materials and experience. They are based on proven good practice over many years, most recently assisting communities in developing community-led strategies for Neighbourhood Plans and Community Land Trust development. These are additional materials to the excellent guidance and Worksheets provided in the Locality Roadmap, http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/ and the resources and templates in the Community Planning hub, http://www.communityplanning.net/useful/forms.php.

1.1 Copyright/ Copyleft

1.2 About Community Spirit Partnership CIC

The CommunitySpiritPartnership is a Community Interest Company whose purpose is to assist local people in achieving development that they want to see, through different ways including Neighbourhood Development Plans, Community Land Trusts and other mechanisms. We provide a partnership of outside professional skills - focusing on public engagement, design and policy support - with inside local knowledge and expertise to deliver plans and development that will benefit the local community by being inclusive, economically beneficial and environmentally responsible. More information about us may be found at **http://communityspiritpartnershipcic.org/**

1.3 Disclaimer

Materials and comment in this paper are our own, from many years practical experience in public, private and voluntary sectors. Whilst the authors are Planning Aid volunteers and members of Locality's pool of NDP consultants, the materials and comment are our own, without formal endorsement from RTPI or Locality. Direct assistance/ verification of your strategy may be sought via your Locality/RTPI funded advice or other specialist advice from consultants such as ourselves if we are not already engaged on your project.

2. Focusing on Questionnaires

Summative evaluation is often numerical or quantitative and most people are familiar with evaluation questionnaires.

These can be useful tools, but have their limitations. Key points to consider when designing an effective feedback questionnaire:

- What information do you really **want** or **need** to know?
- Engaging the respondents
- Length
- Structure and design
- Maximising responses
- Confidentiality
- Analysis

2.1 Questionnaires: Functional matters

Design the questionnaires so the data can be easily extracted. Stay focused, concentrate on getting key information that you will use. Critical questions that you need to address are likely to include:

- ✓ Who participated and how are you going to capture this data?
- ✓ How many of them were there?
- ✓ How did they participate in the activity/ can you usefully capture data/ how it can feed in to shaping of plan?

2.2 Questionnaire: Length

Keep it focused, simple to complete, and as short as possible (usually 1 or 2 sides of A4). This will maximise the response rate.

Resist temptation to throw in lots of questions. A longer questionnaire reduces people's will to fill it in, and the more likely you will have missing answers. It will also take you longer to analyse the information.

2.3 Making the respondent's experience positive

Make sure the respondent finds the experience straightforward and useful; they may even gain something from the process.

Ensure that your language is appropriate and that for some people English may not be their first language.

Ensure the respondent has an opportunity to say what is on their mind. We suggest you always include a general open ended question at the end.

If possible, pilot the questionnaire on a few people (colleagues, family etc.) before circulating it widely; piloting will help you identify any difficulties with wording or concepts. You'll be using formative evaluation to improve your summative evaluation

2.4 Structure

It is usually best to place sensitive questions towards the end, so that you can build up rapport with the respondent.

Avoid long batteries of questions using scales, as respondents will drift into automatic pilot.

If the questionnaire is long, break up questions into groups visually and into logical, sub-topics.

Demographic data (e.g. facts about age, sex, education, ethnicity) are usually best placed at the end

Do not ask for information that you do not plan to use: it wastes everyone's time

2.5 Maximising the response rate

Distribute questionnaires at the start of the event, and ask people to complete it before they leave.

Make it short, simple and relevant.

Learn from experience and be prepared to make adjustments based on this experience.

3. Data Analysis

Plan the time and resources needed for data entry, analysis and reporting. Design these at the same time as the questionnaire to ensure the data sought is in a capturable format.

A simple Excel spreadsheet will allow you to do quite a lot of analysis of the data.

3.1 Confidentiality/data protection

Take all reasonable steps to make sure the respondent is not adversely affected by taking part in evaluation. Keep their responses confidential, unless you have their permission. Do not do anything with their responses that they were not informed about at the time. So unless you made it clear when you gave them the questionnaire or on the questionnaire itself, you cannot use the results to build a database for marketing, for example. Take particular care with children and teenagers.

There are two useful sources of information: the Data Protection website (www.dataprotection.gov.uk), and the Market Research Society, which has various codes of conduct relating to data protection and confidentiality issues: (http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/dp.htm).

3.2 Using scales

The 1-5 Likert scale is the most commonly used form of rating. It is simple to understand and relatively discriminating. The scale is commonly anchored descriptively e.g. 5= Agree strongly, 4= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = disagree strongly. You can also add a "don't know" category, if it seems a likely answer. Other scales that are used include scoring on a line of one to ten or a percentage score.

Another way of differentiating between people's view is to present them with statements that the respondent chooses between. These are often ordered on an implicit scale but you are asking the respondent to tick the one that best fits their view when in fact they may not agree with any of those presented. An example of this type of question is:

Which of the following statements best reflects your feelings about the Plan area today?
a) Our Neighbourhood Plan aims to make our lives safer and better.
b) Our Neighbourhood Plan is changing many things for better, but I wonder how much of it can be achieved.
c) Our Neighbourhood Plan is producing lots of new things but I'm not sure we need them all.
d) Our Neighbourhood Plan is not reflecting the needs of the community. When it comes to the analysis all you can really do is present the percentage of respondents who agree with each statement.

Rank ordering is best avoided – many respondents won't do it properly, unless you stick to asking for first, second and third choices. Otherwise, people get confused and get pushed in to declaring preferences they don't really have.

3.3 Designing open-ended questions
Use broad openers: who, what, where, when, and (especially) why.
Balanced open questions (what did you like, what did you dislike) help the respondent structure an answer without feeling pressured to give a particular reply.
Avoid asking more than one question at the same time.

Afterword

More about Basics and Event planning is given in Hints, Tips and Tools papers 1 and 3 of this series. These are very simple hints and we hope they are helpful.

This is an exciting and unprecedented opportunity to positively shape your surroundings. We wish you every success in developing your Neighbourhood Development Plans.

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Resources

Help is available from: http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/.

Work may be commissioned from consultants such as ourselves, Community Spirit Partnership CIC. Funding may be applied for from the Locality fund http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/

Editable checklists and forms:
http://www.communityplanning.net/useful/forms.php

Planning Aid support for Neighbourhood Plans:http://www.rtpi.org.uk/search?query=neighbourhood%20planning&page=1&cat=documents

Bibliography
The Localism Act: provisions on neighbourhood planning -
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/6/chapter/3
DCLG's Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning (recently updated) -
https://www.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning
Planning Advisory Service Planning reform page - including FAQs (though not all the answers are endorsed by DCLG) -
http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=1089058
Locality's Roadmap - http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/

The first two Neighbourhood plans and Examiner Reports:

Thame - http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/thame-neighbourhood-pl

Upper Eden - http://uecp.org.uk/upper-eden-neighbourhood-development-plan/uendp-referedum-version/ and also Upper Eden - http://uecp.org.uk/upper-eden-neighbourhood-development-plan/upper-eden-development-plan-examination-proposal_examiners-final-report-2/

Use this link to find more: http://www.communityplanning.net/pub-film/pubfilm.php#the%20guide%20to%20effective%20participation

The Community Planning Event Manual: How to use Collaborative Planning and Urban Design events to improve your environment, Nick Wates, Earthscan, 2008, 978-1-84407-492-1. Explains why and how to organize community planning events. With lots of illustrations, sample documents and checklists to help save you time.

Community Planning Handbook: How people can shape their cities, town and villages in any part of the world, Nick Wates, Earthscan, 2000, 978-1-85383-654-1. Features an accessible how-to-do-it style, best practice information on effective methods, and international scope and relevance.

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The underlying premise and purpose of CSP's Open Source public engagement materials contained in this pack is to make them freely and openly available to others working on Neighbourhood Development Plans for non-commercial purposes. Through this, CSP grants the right to anyone to use the materials, either "as is," and preferably in a modified form. There is no restriction on how a user can modify the materials for the user's purpose. Materials may be edited, translated, combined with someone else's materials, reformatted, or changed in any other way. However, there are three requirements that a CSP OpenSourceWare user must meet to use the materials:

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