COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Contents

Introduction

Diversity within our society is a source of great strength. Engaging diverse groups has a positive impact on the policies and practices of any organisation. The purpose of this toolkit is to show how the Liberal Democrats can more effectively engage with communities and groups from minority backgrounds and, in turn, help more people to 'buy in' to the policies and vision of the Liberal Democrats.

Engagement may be defined as involving and/or collaborating with groups of people with specific affiliations, such as shared characteristics, backgrounds, geography or interests. It is an extremely powerful vehicle to galvanize the support of groups, and can be a catalyst for change, by making use of the influence, relationships and resources of these groups.

Good engagement is about creating clear lines of communication through open discussion and dialogue, and building meaningful relationships that are underpinned by trust and confidence. It can help to identify and address any myths that have built about the Party within specific communities, and to recognise any stereotypes that may exist within the Party.

In our society, there are groups who are disengaged, or whose voices are seldom heard. This is where a focus on inclusive engagement is most needed. With these groups in particular, community engagement works best where relationships are developed over time to build trust. Any engagement activity should be planned and designed with this in mind.

Often, traditional methods of engagement have failed to reach these groups: with engagement 'one size does not fit all'. For example, not everyone will be comfortable attending public meetings or using the internet, and some may not want to fill in a questionnaire. Some may be distrustful of the agenda of those who are trying to engage with them.

For any political party interested in recruitment and building up membership, engagement begins with the basic foundations of good practice and appropriate methods of engagement.

This toolkit outlines good engagement practices that organisations have to think about in order to better reach marginalised groups This can then be built upon to increase the trust and confidence of the communities, which will lead to increased 'buy in' and better representation.

The toolkit has been developed to align with *Whose Vote are you Missing?*, a guidance booklet on equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI), and supports the short training workshops that have been delivered at the Liberal Democrat conference around diversity and engagement.

Community engagement works best when relationships build over time and are underpinned by trust and confidence.

To ensure that the Party gets the most from engagement, diversity must be fully embedded in the Liberal Democrats organisational culture. 'Organisational culture' is a group of shared beliefs, values, behaviours and practices that characterise an organisation. Some behaviours may be written down or formalised in policies, but the majority of them are implied in behaviour. Engagement activity risks becoming tokenistic if it doesn't have a meaningful impact on the organisations culture.

Similarly, if the organisational culture is not inclusive, then people from diverse backgrounds recruited into the Party, either as members or staff, may not be retained because they feel they don't fit in. Thus diversity in organisational culture and community engagement go hand-in-hand.

Positive outcomes will take time, especially as global issues have placed a spotlight on the equality agenda. Some communities will remain sceptical and suspicious about why they are being approached. To make real impact and lasting change, it is important that time and resources are allocated for this work, and that the foundations are laid through basic principles and good practice.

Initial considerations and good practice

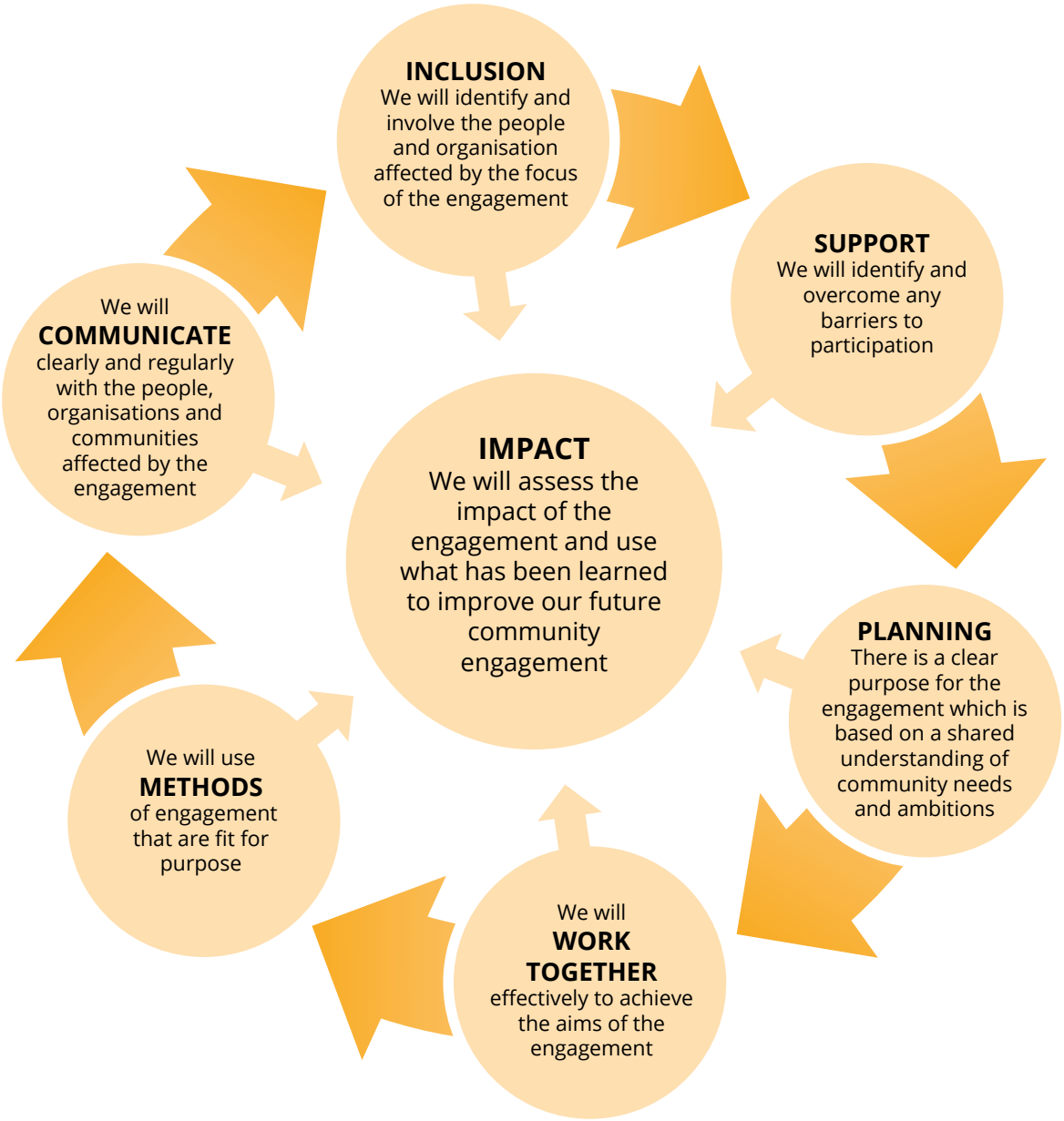
The ladder of participation

Engagement activity may vary, depending on how individuals are approached and how much they wish to participate. Sherry Arnstein (1969) wrote about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States. She described a "ladder of citizen participation" (see diagram below) that ranged from high to low.

The ladder is a guide to show who has power when important decisions are made. Low participation persists where organisations refuse to consider anything beyond the bottom rungs.

The various steps within the ladder are described as:

1. **Informing** – Providing communities with balanced and objective information to help them in understand problems, alternatives, solutions, eg websites, newsletters and press releases.
2. **Consulting** – Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions, eg surveys, door knocking, citizens' panels and focus groups.
3. **Involving** – Working directly with communities to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered, eg partnership boards, reference groups, service users participating in policy groups.
4. **Collaborating** – Working in partnership with communities on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.
5. **Empowering** – Placing decision-making in the hands of the community.



The national standards for engagement

The Scottish Standards for Community Engagement were launched in 2005. They are viewed by engagement specialists across the UK as a good framework, underpinned by good practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement and improve what happens as a result.

The seven principles are:

- Inclusion
- Support
- Planning
- Working together
- Methods
- Communication
- Impact

The process

Purpose and scope

The above models offer a perspective on the principles upon which to base your engagement activity, and the outcomes you may expect or want. However, before embarking on any kind of engagement activity, it is important to consider the purpose and scope, and the anticipated outcomes. With this in mind, consider the following wider questions:

- What level of engagement are you hoping to achieve?
- How will you be identifying the stakeholders or people you engage with?
- What will you need to consider in terms of how you communicate?
- What resources will you require?
- What are your timelines and are they realistic?
- What methodology will you use?
- How will you ensure you close the feedback loop?

These questions form the basis of this toolkit and will be responded to with various options. The section titled Additional considerations for engagement (page 21) will look more deeply at specific considerations that may need to be addressed, especially when engaging marginalised communities and in particular those who are from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community background or have a disability.

Level of engagement

There are a variety of different ways in which stakeholders can participate. As with Arnstein's model their level of engagement will also determine their level of influence and the outcomes.

The other factor that also requires considerable deliberation is the data or information you are going to gather, and how this is going to be used. With the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) now in place, it is even more important that these regulations are factored into your process and adhered to.

Identifying key stakeholders

There are various stakeholder interests in every community. These may include:

- local residents
- groups aligned to the 'protected characteristics', as defined by equality legislation.
- relevant areas not defined within equality legislation such as social mobility
- specific interest groups
- web-based or virtual groups.

While there are a number of different mechanisms that may be used to identify key stakeholders, the Consultation Institute has created an excellent model that helps organisations prioritise who should be engaged with and when.

No community is homogeneous, so tap into the diversity within each.

The model maps out individuals and organisations in one of four quadrants by deciding how influential they are and what their interests may be in relation to the purpose of the engagement. The institute also suggests mapping considers both 'internal' and 'external' stakeholders, ie those within the organisation and those outside.

An important point to note is that many of your members may have personal connections to specific communities, and if they are from a marginalised group they may have a view on the issue you are engaging on, which will be as valid as that of an external stakeholder. When looking to attract new membership they may be a vital resource in helping to achieve this.

When mapping key stakeholders also be mindful of who you deem them to represent. Previously, many organisations may have sought out 'community leaders' who were often male, of a certain age, and who may have had specific and set views. No community is homogeneous, so ensure that you think through whose views you want, and in doing so tap into the diversity within each community, both in terms of individuals and views. You will be able to do this by using some of the methodology outlined later in this toolkit.

Barriers and inclusivity

When planning an engagement process be mindful of any barriers, perceived or otherwise, which may exist. Whilst not an exhaustive list, these may include:

- capacity and capability of stakeholder to engage
- marginalised groups not being able to engage for a variety of reasons
- community infrastructure – which may create barriers
- contested or divided communities
- power base and infrastructure that may exist within a community/group
- rural isolation
- literacy or numeracy levels
- lack of awareness and/or experience on how to navigate the process
- lack of trust from communities in political parties.

In dealing with such issues there are a number of factors which are useful to consider such as:

- the techniques and methodology being used
- the need for independent facilitation
- the number and type of events
- transport requirements
- the format and content of marketing and communications materials and channels
- accessibility and location of venue
- accessibility in terms of additional support (disability, language etc).

Communications

When engaging with communities, it is important that all communications materials are free of jargon (in plain English) and accessible in different formats (such as audio, large print, easy read, British Sign Language or in other languages as appropriate). If information is going to be translated you should ensure it is absolutely necessary. Many individuals, in particular the 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants, may speak various languages but not necessarily read or write them. And if the information is translated, make sure it is understandable; some translation agencies will use academic and high-level language, which can be difficult to understand. It's always useful to get this tested through a cohort of individuals or a focus group established to offer an independent perspective from the relevant community.

It is also important to bear in mind that some communities generally have a stronger oral tradition and therefore discussions that are face-to-face and firsthand will have a greater impact. When looking at format and content, 'lived in' experiences and personal stories relayed through case studies will have maximum effect as they make the information 'real'.

The 'community grapevine' is a useful way to disseminate information, but it isn't currently used to its maximum potential. It allows you to find key individuals within the community/group who have established themselves as the 'go to people' and ask them to disseminate the information on your behalf. Your message will spread

‘Lived in’ experiences and personal stories relayed through case studies help make the information ‘real’.

further and be taken more seriously if it comes from trusted individuals within the community.

Time and resources

The following resources are generally required in most types of engagement activity:

- Member/volunteer resources, in terms of time and input.

  Ensure the appropriate people, with the appropriate skills, abilities and attributes, are chosen to carry out the engagement activities. This is particularly important when formal consultation activities take place.
- Information, setting the context, background, aims and objectives of the activity.
- Facilitation, which is often better if it is independent.

  There are a number of reasons for this:
  - Group members are often more motivated to support decisions if the process is independent.
  - Increased participation within the group increases productivity.
  - Everyone involved has a chance to contribute and feels they are an integral part of the process.
  - People recognise and respect that responsibility for implementing decisions lies with everyone.
  - People are encouraged to think and act for the overall benefit of the group.
  - Higher quality decisions are normally made.
  - A forum for constructively resolving conflicts and clarifying misunderstandings is created.
  - Negative attitudes, low morale, low involvement and withholding of information are less likely in these scenarios.
- Communication and promotion.
- Facilities, whether this is a venue or infrastructure around IT for online engagement.
- Additional support for attendees (accessibility, eg interpreters, transport etc). The section on “Additional considerations for engagement” covers this in more detail (see page 21).
- Provision of feedback and dissemination of information post-event.
- Third sector parties to aid the process by providing support to the attendees, helping them to understanding the information and disseminating information, as appropriate.

From the outset and during the planning phase it is important that the work is scoped out to determine the limitations, if any. These may vary from available resources, to allocation of budget, and there is a possibility that community groups will challenge this so it is important to establish what your response will be from the outset.

Feedback

It is critical that all participants are given a choice on how they wish to receive feedback. This feedback should not be saved for the end of the activity. Continuous and ongoing feedback will help keep the activity 'live' and also ensure the process stays on track, because individuals will support and shape a better way forward if any unforeseen or unexpected issues arise.

During the planning process also factor in and give consideration to:

- the intervals at which feedback will be provided.
- the format in which the feedback will be provided.
- how you will manage issues raised that are outside of your scope.
- other elements or strands of the engagement activity are happening, which may overlap or clash with what you are focusing on.
- how and when decisions will be taken.
- how new opportunities for engagement will be managed, if they arise.
- the stage of the process at which the engagement will begin.

Having clarity and transparency in these areas will ensure trust and confidence of the participants and also encourage continuous, active participation.

Of course it will be equally important to communicate regularly how the stakeholder input has influenced, evolved or supported the overall outcomes of the engagement activity.

Evaluation will provide useful information on what has and has not worked, and will be invaluable for your future engagement processes and activities.

Evaluation

It is important that any engagement process and activity is evaluated on an ongoing basis and upon completion. Evaluation will provide useful information on what has and has not worked, and will be invaluable for your future engagement processes and activities. To help you in the evaluation process you may wish to consider the following checklist:

Objectives

- Were these clearly communicated to the stakeholders?
- Did the activity achieve these objectives?
- Was the method appropriate for the objectives set?
- Did it reach target groups?
- Were the outcomes, from the methods used, as expected?

Process

- Was a clear timescale set out and kept to?
- Was sufficient time allowed for responses?
- Was information accessible to all relevant groups?
- Were costs within budget and proportionate?
- Was feedback given to those who were engaged?

Outcomes

- What has happened since and as a result of the engagement activity?
- Have the results supported and informed subsequent decisions?
- Is there follow-up action which needs consideration or that has been taken?
- Did the process highlight any lessons to be learnt for future activity?
- Were any additional training needs identified for those leading/involved in delivering the engagement/consultation?
- Were any unexpected risks highlighted, which would need to be factored in for future activities?

Methodology

No community or group is homogeneous, as has already been highlighted, therefore in order to ensure maximum take-up of engagement activity it is important that different methods are used.

It would be impossible to look at every single method that may be used, but the tables on pages 14-20 offer a snapshot of the various common ones.

Whilst there is no single technique that will suit every person in a particular community, some of these methods just by the very nature of how they are set up will be more impactful with certain marginalised groups than others. One size does not fit all and it may be beneficial to use a variety of methods to reach communities rather than just one.

As well as diversity within the communities/groups it is equally important to identify areas where views diverge and opinions are divided since these will often be under the most scrutiny during the feedback process and when you share the outcomes of your activity.

You must give a balanced account of the responses you have received and ensure that all responses are accurately recorded. If you have received an organisational response from a local or specific community group, it is especially important that this is clearly attributed in your final analysis. If data has been weighted in any way, this also needs to be clearly communicated. Do not let your own thoughts and ideas influence the way in which you report the findings or plan further activity. Ensure that you think about how to present your information so that it cannot be misinterpreted. You should also clearly identify any priorities or actions that have emerged from your engagement activity and analysis.

Throughout this toolkit it has been made clear that no community/group is homogeneous. Each one will have segments that are based on geographical, cultural, ethnic,religious and structural differences, among others. It would be impossible to address each of these; in London alone there are more than 60 different religions and nationalities. It is important to give this consideration throughout the engagement process. Even when organisations try to engage sections within a community they still may not be able to manage the needs of every single person. Nevertheless, it is better to ask about the nuances that exist within communities/groups being engaged with, rather than making assumptions.

Whilst this toolkit does not look at each segment, the following section highlights more specific areas to be mindful of when engaging with marginalised people. There is a particular focus and emphasis on individuals from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community and those with disabilities as this has been identified by the Liberal Democrats as the areas where they are currently most underrepresented.

Table of Methods

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1	Community meetings	Face-to-face meetings can be a valuable way of sharing information. The nature of these events provides a great opportunity to demonstrate openness and transparency to stakeholders. It is important to consider what will make your event compelling to stakeholders – and encourage attendance.	• Opportunity to deliver information and gather feedback. Community meetings can be used effectively at the beginning of an initiative to explain processes and outcomes. • The nature of these events provides a great opportunity to demonstrate openness and transparency to stakeholders. It is important to consider what will make your event compelling to stakeholders – and encourage attendance. • Great for meeting stakeholders in person, and to demonstrate transparency. • Can be useful for community outreach or to attract media attention for your overall programme.	• Attendance may be low. Stakeholders are not likely to attend unless they feel personally affected by outcomes related to your project or programme. • If an issue or project is particularly controversial, this may not be the right method for engagement. • Media publicity may be negative if the meeting is confrontational or not handled well.
2	Focus groups	Focus groups encourage discussion and work well when reaching out to smaller or marginalised stakeholder groups. The active dialogue between members is enhanced when they are asked focused questions, and a comfortable environment is created.	• This small group setting is an efficient way to use resources and identify important issues. • Focus groups can be planned and organised to reach a specific group of stakeholders or developed around a particular topic. • If there is conflict, it can be handled more easily in a small group.	• Must involve an experienced facilitator to ensure the process runs smoothly. • Focus groups are not an effective method to ensure all stakeholders and perspectives are represented.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
3	Forums	Forums are regular meetings of people who represent a group, organisation or community. They are usually more formal and are used frequently in civic, political and professional environments but may also be as good in a social or less formal setting.	• Regular events help to maintain momentum, commitment, enthusiasm and they encourage wider participation as the remit of the forum evolves. • Can be an effective way of involving excluded or hard to reach groups by creating an arena directed towards concerns of a specific group or community. • Can be useful to address very localised issues.	• Often comprises of 'the usual suspects' rather than individuals from the wider community. • May become 'talking shops' rather than focusing on outcomes. • There is potential for these to veer away from their initial goals and become too bureaucratic. • Power struggles can become an issue as individuals compete for positions and roles within the group.
4	Roundtable/consensus building	This method can be used as a way of building consensus on an issue. The general principle is that all participants are equal and this can result in multi-stakeholder involvement, operated by consensus, and can generate co-operation to address and promote the issue at hand. A facilitator would lead this process with no more than 24 participants.	• People are brought together as equals. • Open discussion underpins this approach by breaking down barriers. • Issues are confronted instead of individuals. • May produce innovative solutions, with the overarching aim of creating 'win-win' situations.	• The composition normally precludes wider participation. • Requires considerable preparation. • Requires highly skilled facilitators. • Open to dominance by power bases within the group.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
5	Surveys	Surveys or questionnaires often ask yes/no (or scaled) questions to groups of people in order to identify community opinion. They are useful for mass outreach.	• Useful to collect and collate quantitative data. • Data can be used to compare results from another period of time or against different stakeholder groups. • It is a quick and cost-effective way to communicate with large groups of people.	• Surveys are not usually useful to identify reasons behind stakeholder opinions. • Surveys need to be well designed and coded to get 'useable' responses. • They are not as effective in establishing community relationships or developing dialogue. • Response rates may be limited. They are often less than 20%.
6	Interviews	Interviews are a flexible method of gathering information about a particular issue or place. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or by telephone. Interviews can be used to collect either quantitative or qualitative information. Three main formats are generally used: 1. Structured using pre-set questions as prompts 2. Semi-structured, which allows the interviewer to explore issues based on a loose set of questions 3. Unstructured or in-depth interviews, where the interviewer is able to explore a theme without being restricted to a series of questions.	• Very good for qualitative information. • This method has better response rates than mailed questions. • Addresses issues of literacy for some participants. • Experienced interviewer is able to pick up non-verbal cues, as well as verbal data. • Interviewer is in control of order of questions and can probe further if and when appropriate.	• Telephone interviews, especially if 'cold calling', can feel very intrusive and are likely to have less take-up. • This approach can be costly and time-consuming. • Biases can creep in, on part of the interviewer. • Interviews provide less anonymity, which can be a concern for some participants.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
7	Citizens' panels	This involves ongoing panels of around 1,000-2,000 people who are representative of the local community. The panel is surveyed several times a year by post, telephone or online.	• Using the same panel a number of times reduces recruitment costs and builds up a wealth of intelligence. • As participants have agreed to be on the panel the response rates are increased. • This may allow for some measurement of change over time. • A scaled down model would be particularly good for those who traditionally avoid going to meetings. • Those who cannot attend due to physical, social or psychological issues may be more encouraged to participate as this approach will offer consistency and structure.	• People on the panel become more knowledgeable and therefore less representative of the general public. • The 'critical friend' element may ease as relationships strengthen over time, impacting the neutrality and independence of the participant.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
8	Web-based engagement	Online public participation is a useful way to reach and engage with many stakeholders. Outreach via online communications can include using social media, web or cloud-based survey systems, and online discussion platforms.	• Effective in reaching large groups of people and collecting data in an efficient way. • Flexible and convenient for participants, which encourages participation if time or location is a barrier. • It is an opportunity to encourage discussion and reflection about complex topics. • One practice that will improve the outcomes of a consultation initiative is to take time to develop the right set of questions.	• Stakeholders without access to the internet will be excluded unless special accommodation is made for them. • A moderator should be allocated to manage the process and respond to questions promptly. • Privacy concerns should be addressed to encourage participation.
9	Community mapping	Maps and photographs of a specific area or location may be utilised to elicit views on likes/dislikes/improvements participants may wish to see. These ideas generated in small group discussions and recorded on post-its or pre-prepared cards can be used to facilitate discussions on exploration of issues, building consensus and/or identify areas of conflict.	• This is a useful way of engaging people with all levels of capability. • Stimulates discussion. • Can build a sense of community ownership. • Can help participants see and understand their localities and communities from differing perspectives.	• Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement. • There may be difficulties in interpreting complex ideas and perspectives. • Participants will need to be familiar with the local areas and issues beforehand.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
10	Future search	This approach centres on a 2–3 day conference with 'visioning' at its core. The conference explores historical, present and future concepts with the aim of producing a strategic plan. A key aspect of this approach is to establish some common aims and ground which is based upon self-managed discussion and implementation of actions. Crucial stages of the process are: 1. Examining the past 2. Exploring the current 3. Looking at present 'proud' and 'sorry' events 4. Discussing and creating an ideal future or vision 5. Identifying common ground 6. Action planning.	• Meetings can identify large numbers of people. • Participants take ownership of the process. • Power issues are reduced. • A lot can be achieved in one attempt, instead of several meetings between different communities/groups. • Marginalised and seldom heard groups can be specifically targeted.	• The conference may be viewed as an end in itself rather than the beginning of a process. • This approach can be a lot more expensive and requires a lot more planning. • Requires time and commitment in a greater chunk from both organisers and participants. • Participants may require a lot more knowledge and information beforehand to fully participate.

	METHOD	DESCRIPTION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
11	Open Space Technology (sometimes referred to as 'The Open Circle')	This is essentially a management tool, which tries to address and overcome traditional approaches to engagement and decision-making. The event usually lasts between one and three days and allows engagement to take place with a large number of people sitting in a circle. It is comprised of the following stages: 1. Opening circle 2. Choosing the programme 3. The marketplace 4. Having your say 5. Closing the circle 6. Reporting the proceedings.	• Can be organised quickly, with minimum cost and preparation. • Great for addressing difficult issues involving large numbers of people (this can work with up to 2,000 participants). • Breaks down the traditional 'us and them' barriers. • There are no 'experts' and there is no 'fixed agenda', meaning everyone can have ownership of the process. • The format is moulded by the participants. • Motivation and commitments may emerge in a way that is not usually typical in traditional meetings. • Leadership can emerge from individuals within the community/ group who may not usually have this role assigned to them.	• There is a likelihood that only a small segment of the targeted group will attend. • Because it is an open meeting this may deter some people who are not used to this kind of environment. • As these are 'one-off' events some interested participants may not be available to attend when it takes place. • This event could be viewed as an end in itself.

Additional considerations for engagement

This section of the toolkit goes into further detail on engaging with marginalised groups, with more detailed practical considerations and solutions. It may also be useful as a general guide when thinking about supporting communities and creating a culture that is genuinely inclusive.

Undoubtedly, all engagement activities will be different and not all of the points covered will be relevant, so use this section as a prompt; it is only a guide and it should be used as such.

Length and timings of events

Besides changes that may effect the way engagement is carried out and how events are run, for example a pandemic, there are a number of factors that could impact those communities you are trying to target. With this in mind, consider the following:

- It is always helpful to think about how the timings of an event may affect those with caring responsibilities or family commitments. For some, early start and late finish times, which conflict school pick up times etc, may pose difficulties.
- Factor in regular breaks at events that last more than two hours, as well as ample time for those with health conditions or eat, and prayer time for people from specific religious groups. Those who aren't affected by these circumstances will still benefit in terms of concentration and mental wellness.
- Even if they're on the same grounds, if a number of venues are being considered for breakout and other sessions, be mindful that it may take those with mobility issues longer to get to designated areas.
- It's important to consider which day of the week the event is hosted on. For some people certain days may prove difficult because of its religious significance.
- For internal meetings, consideration should also be given to colleagues who work different hours to the rest of the team.
- If an event is due to run over a number of weeks, be mindful to vary the days and times to allow the greatest opportunity for participation. This is especially relevant for people who have caring responsibilities or family circumstances that mean they are not available during particular hours or on certain days.
- Ensure there is absolute clarity on timings so those individuals who have to make alternative family arrangements can do so.

- Also consider the audience for the event and ensure the date does not clash with significant religious or cultural dates.

Advertising and marketing

When thinking about how you are going to advertise and market the details of your engagement activity, consider the following:

- How to advertise the event so that it has maximum impact and is accessible to as wide a pool of people as possible. A multi-pronged approach may be necessary, eg posters, word of mouth, telephone conversations, online information.
- Ensure that the presentation of the information is accessible. Consider the colours and fonts being used. The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) have some useful information about this.
- Provide information on accessibility prior to the event, so that people can let you know about any additional support they require.
- Think about diversifying the images in your publicity materials so that they are more inclusive. However, make sure that this gesture does not come across as tokenistic and seek advice from trusted individuals within the community, or people from your members group who are from minority backgrounds.
- Online PDFs are not always very accessible, so consider sharing information using Word documents, an accessible PDF or in the body of an email.
- If videos are being used, please provide subtitles and/or a script.
- Ensure that the information in joining instructions are in an accessible format, eg font type and size.
- Ensure language is inclusive and does not negatively impact on any communities. Also ensure the wording is gender-neutral.
- If you specifically want to engage with a particular community, specify this in the promotion and the reasons why.

Location and building access

When choosing a venue be mindful that it needs to be accessible. Consider the following questions:

- Are there parking spaces for disabled people?
- Is the route from the car park to the building accessible for disabled people?
- Are there automatic doors leading into the building or doors that can be left open for easy access?
- Are there handrails or is there a ramp?
- Would someone in a wheelchair or with mobility difficulties be able to independently access the building?
- Is the meeting room/conference hall close to the entrance?
- Is the registration desk accessible to all?
- Are the doors leading into the meeting room/conference hall accessible?
- If the event is on different floors is there a lift wide enough to accommodate a motorised wheelchair and/or a wheelchair user who has an assistant?
- If the speaker has a disability is the speaker area accessible and do they have access to a lectern and microphone which are adjustable?
- Are there accessible toilets? If so, is there sufficient room for a wheelchair user and assistant? Are there sufficient changing facilities? Is there a hoist if one is required? Also consider whether some of the toilets need to be gender-neutral?

Parking

Familiarise yourself with parking for both visitors and staff and whether or not the venue caters for those with disabilities.

Religious facilities

If there are no specified religious or prayer facilities, ensure an appropriate room is allocated for this. Be particularly mindful that the room does not contain anything that may cause offence and, if at all possible, ensure it is close to restrooms where people can carry out their ablutions beforehand, if required.

A number of communities may request separate rooms for men and women , so consider this when booking the space for the event.

Catering

It may be useful to consider the following if you are providing catering at the event:

- If it isn't possible for everyone to take a seat, it helps if the food can be eaten without cutlery.
- You should ask in advance about special dietary requirements. Ensure that any special foods are clearly identified and kept separate from other food or are delivered directly to the person who has requested them. It also important to find out if anyone attending the event has allergies.
- If you are offering a self-service buffet, make sure there is a server who can help wheelchair users or mobility impaired people by bringing food directly to their table.

When choosing a venue be mindful that it needs to be accessible, appropriate, and that it causes no offence.

- Even if you have not received any special requests, it can help to include a relatively high proportion of vegetarian options as this is likely to meet most requirements.
- Good practice from a sustainability point of view is to only order vegetarian food and then ask people to specify other requirements.
- Provide a range of beverages, including water.
- Be mindful that some communities may expect specific options, such as halal or kosher, and that serving alcohol may cause offence if not managed properly. There will also be certain communities with requirements that may not be commonly known. For example, strict Jains may not eat root vegetables and some fruits. Sects within the Hindu community, such as those from the Swaminarayan following, are in the main vegetarian, but will also avoid certain vegetables such as onions, mushrooms and garlic.

Additional support

It is important to ascertain what additional support attendees may require at the event. Here is some suggested wording for this:

'We would like to ensure that our events are accessible to all, therefore if you require additional support (eg a BSL interpreter, information in a bigger font) please let us know in advance.'

Or:

'Should you have any specific requirements or requests, or accessibility needs, please notify [insert contact details] by [date] and we will ensure these are managed.'

If issuing name badges, make sure they are easy to read. Many organisations are now also leaving space for attendees to include their preferred pronoun and the pronunciation of their name.

Adjustments and additional requirements

Some attendees may have specific requirements such as induction loops or screen readers. It's always good to ask in advance, so that additional support can be planned in advance and provided on the day.

It is always useful to go to the venue in advance of the event, so that specific requirements may be discussed and addressed.

People with hearing impairments

The following facilities may benefit those who have hearing impairment:

Induction loop
These are really useful for cutting out background noise and amplifying the sound when using a PA system. These can often be hired or are available at venues.

Palantypist
These are people who type every word the speaker says; a service that is useful for all delegates as they don't need to try to listen and take notes. The palantypists notes will need to be projected on an extra screen. Everything they type can also be saved as a transcript and made available to those unable to attend.

Hi-Linc
This is similar to a palantypist, except the information is available on a laptop that the hearing-impaired person can sit in front of.

British Sign Language Interpreters (BSL)
Interpreters usually stand next to the speaker and translate into sign language. Normally two interpreters are used, and they alternate every 20 minutes. Chairs should be provided, so that they can sit down and have a break when it is not their turn.

It's really important that the speaker is notified if an interpreter is going to be used, so they have some time to familiarise themselves with how the interpreter will work and how they may need to structure their language etc.

Lip reading
It is really important to think about lighting in the room and where the speaker stands/sits. If there are any attendees who are lip readers they need to have a clear visualisation of the speaker's face. So for example, if a speaker is standing in front of a window, without the curtains drawn, it may be difficult to see their face properly.

Relay UK (previously Next Generation Text)
The national relay service helps people with hearing and speech difficulties communicate with anyone over the phone.

People with visual impairments

There are a number of different considerations to ensure visually impaired people are able to fully partake at events:

Ask attendees in advance if they have specific requirements, so that support can be planned.

- Good colour contrast means people can decipher differences between entrances, doors, walls and floors.
- Apply stickers to full glass doors that attendees will be using
- Send information prior to the event/ meetings as many individuals have reader software on their PCs. A follow-up telephone call, with details of the event/ meeting, may also be helpful.
- Handouts on yellow or off-white paper are helpful for people who are dyslexic.
- People with certain visual impairments may find it easier to read copy in sans serif font. If you are using Ariel in your handouts, 12pt should be the minimum size.
- An 18-20pt font size should be used as a minimum in PowerPoint slides. The colours should also be highly contrasting and you should ensure that each slide doesn't contain too many images or too much text as this may make it more difficult for some groups to follow.

Other adjustments

There are other things to consider when planning an event or meeting:

- Some participants may require a particular type of chair.
- Ensure the lighting does not flicker as this may create an issue for people who have epilepsy, seizures or migraines.
- Seats and tables should be arranged so that everyone can see the screen and/ or speakers. Some disabled people may struggle to twist themselves around, so seats and tables should be arranged so that everyone can easily see the screen and/or speakers.
- Ensure the room is set up so that colleagues who have mobility issues are able to do so without difficulty.
- Some people may benefit from adjustable seats if they are required to sit for a long time.
- Other people may have an assistance dog; such as guide dogs, hearing dogs and some that assist people with physical disabilities. You will need to know numbers and ensure water is provided for the dogs and consider allocating volunteers to walk them during breaks and lunch periods if required. The organiser will also need to inform the venue's estates management so there is a designated place for the dog to defecate. Similarly, a sighted person may need to be assigned to pick up waste if the person bringing the dog is unable to see it.

Additional considerations for engagement with LGBT+ communities

This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives some important considerations:

- Do not use gendered greetings or terminology, such as 'Sir/Madam', in emails. This avoids the risk of misgendering.

- Do not make incorrect assumptions about those you are engaging with, for example about their partner's gender, in email or other communications.
- If you are asking people to provide their gender when signing up, provide an open text option so those who don't identify as male or female can use their own term. To be fully inclusive of non-binary people, you could also provide gender-neutral title options, such as Mx.
- Participants/community members should only be required to inform you of their gender when it is necessary to support you to enhance practice. If you would like to ask for monitoring purposes, this should always be optional, and you should explain why you're asking as well as what will be done with this data.
- Remember to consider issues that relate to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexual orientations (LGBT+) – don't just address one aspect of LGBT+, eg gay men.
- If using imagery in engagement, make sure it is diverse, so LGBT+ people can see themselves represented.
- During the engagement event, visibly signal that the Liberal Democrats is LGBT+ inclusive by, for example, wearing rainbow pin badges or lanyards.

Online engagement

As a starting point, think about the scope of your virtual event and what platform you plan to host it on. Disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed or live in poverty, therefore internet access and devices like laptops, smartphones and tablets can be unaffordable.

If you're hosting an event over video conferencing software like Zoom, Google Hangouts, or GoToMeeting, give attendees the option to dial-in by phone and participate without a computer or the internet.

Also consider the following questions when engaging online:

- If everyone will have internet access, what other technology might attendees need to fully participate?
- If the event is being held on social media (eg, Facebook Live, Instagram Live/ Stories, YouTube), do attendees need to have an account on that platform to take part?
- Have you looked into any accessibility issues inherent to the platform you are using?

In addition to asking the questions highlighted above, also consider the following:

- Use captioning and ensure your virtual event is compatible with assistive technology (platforms such as Zoom have a captioning facility).
- Make sure your events are accessible to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users by offering attendees alternative ways to engage and participate.
- Have an accessibility point person who can provide assistance if someone is having difficulties.

- Allow participants to send questions in advance.
- Provide a glossary of terms that may be used during the activity.
- Consider inclusive design principles in your planning and execution.

During the virtual event:

- Make sure your audio is clear; poor audio quality can make it hard for people to access the event and/or use apps that can help reduce background noise on calls.
- To improve the audio, ask your speakers to use a headset whenever possible and if this is accessible to them.
- Hosts and presenters should use a quiet room where they won't be disturbed whenever possible.
- Mute all attendees but those speaking to keep background noise to a minimum so everyone can easily hear.
- Ask people speaking to say their name every time they speak, so captioners (such as palantypists) and attendees know who is talking.
- If there is a method that will be used for people to vote or flag who can speak next, make sure all participants can access the process.
- Describe live scenarios.
- Describe images, read the text that appears on the screen, and describe anything that you gesture at as if you are explaining it to someone who isn't in the same room as you.

Ongoing learning and awareness

To support engagement activities, it is beneficial to share our learning around engaging with, supporting and working with diverse communities. This should be ongoing and form part of a continuous learning programme. This programme should also include how to manage and deal with difficult conversations, and how to positively challenge and deal with inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour.

Engagement plan template

Introduction

This document outlines an overarching engagement plan for the Liberal Democrats and is supported by the guidance booklet on diversity and inclusion Whose Vote are you Missing?

In summary, there are some overarching principles that should be considered whenever engagement activity takes place. These are:

- Involve your engagement lead, team, appropriate people, eg members and volunteers. If you have a 'participation group', involve them too.
- Leave sufficient time for the activity.
- Consider the levels of influence.
- Make engagement activity accessible.
- Review the engagement process and plans on a regular and consistent basis.

Engagement plan

Project title

The name of the project. Ensure this outlines the salient aspects but is clear and concise.

Starting date

The date the activity will begin.

Completion date

The date you envisage for the project to be completed.

Project lead

Name and contact details of the person leading this activity.

Engagement lead

Name and contact details of the person overseeing all of the engagement activity.

Communications lead

Name and details of the individual from the Communications Team overseeing the activity (if applicable).

Assurance group

Who will be signing off the activities at each stage and who will be assuring that you are on track. This may be an internal board, or an independent group of stakeholders that can hold you to account and provide you with a 'sense check' on your activity.

1. Background

Provide background to the project. Keep this brief and concise. The following areas may be included:
An outline of the project/activity (purpose, who it is going to involve/impact)
How will this align to your overall strategy/objectives etc?
An outline of what may change as a result of this activity
What are the reasons for embarking on this activity?
What will the engagement aim to do?
What changes do you envisage seeing as a result of this activity?

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

2. Level of change and potential influence

Outline the level of change you envisage. If useful you can use Arnstein's model for this (see page 5).
Explain why you have chosen this level and specifically think about the following questions:
What will individuals actually influence?
How many people will this activity affect?
Is it potentially controversial? And if so, why?

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

3. Timescales

Outline the timescales for the project. Ensure these are realistic.
(These could be split in relation to the specific activity that is being undertaken, but they may include the areas listed below).

Activity	Date
Populate engagement plan	
Initiate Equality Impact Analysis process	
Conduct a stakeholder analysis	
Set up a steering group to plan and oversee all activities	
Set up an assurance group	
Draft survey/questions	
Co-ordinate/collate any documents for the activity	
Publish on website	
Develop a communications and implementation plan	
Design/print survey	
Carry out engagement activity (include detail on methodology and timelines)	
Complete analysis	
Write report and distribute	
Use different ways of closing the feedback loop	
Embed learning into core business function/use results to build upon other activity/work	

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

4. Who is impacted by the change?

Clearly outline who is going to be impacted and how the activity will affect them. The following areas may be considered:
What information have you gathered already?
Where is this information from (national data/surveys, internal activity, literature review etc)?
Have you considered the specific impact on those from the protected groups (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)?
What about additional considerations (such as socioeconomic data)? It is always useful to go back to the stakeholder analysis and assurance process to see if things have changed.

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

5. Methodology and mechanisms

Outline the methods you will use to engage. When doing this consider the following:
Ensure you use methodology that will help you realise your intended outcomes and also match your audience.
Describe why you have used your chosen methodology.
How many people do you envisage you will engage with and what have you based this on?
How will you target or focus on specific groups, either as a result of your stakeholder analysis, or because you have established that they have been more adversely affected by an issue that you are addressing?
How will you assess and manage issues of accessibility?

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

6. Partnerships

Outline which partners (if any) you need to involve in the engagement activity and why.

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

7. Engagement questions

Think through the questions that will be asked, and why. When doing this consider the following:
What methodology are you using (this will determine how you frame the questions and what you ask)?
Have you got a draft set that can be provided to a 'reference group' for further input and steer?
Have you included questions on equality monitoring? This is to ensure you can identify any gaps and target specific groups.
How have you 'tested' the questions to make sure that they are easy to understand and elicit responses that relate to what you are asking about?

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

8. Ongoing assurance

Outline how you will ensure the project stays on track. Whilst you have the assurance element embedded throughout this process, who will oversee the whole project from conception to completion?
Will you need more resources (for example, staff or IT infrastructure)?
How will budgets be allocated and managed?
Who will be responsible for risk management and for keeping a log of the lessons learned?
How will you ensure you close the feedback loop for all parties involved?
How will you ensure the outcomes from the work will be embedded into business functions and continue to be sustained and scaled?

Assurance

Does the plan clearly outline the background and reasons for the activity?

☐ *Yes (fully assured)* ☐ *Partially (reasonably assured)* ☐ *No (not assured)*

Feedback

Add any feedback in relation to the plan, such as any changes, amendments or other suggestions.

Engagement plan Q&A

1. Why do we need an engagement plan?

This document will enable you to plan any engagement activity and make sure that it aligns with the guidance on diversity and inclusion outlined in Whose Vote are you Missing?

2. Will I need to complete a separate Equality Impact Analysis (EIA)?

Yes. Evidencing the impact of the engagement activity you are initiating will ensure that thought and consideration is given to the people you are be targeting and ensure inclusivity. It will also ensure that you do not further adversely affect groups that are already marginalised.

The EIA should be initiated as soon as the project begins; not be carried out as an afterthought.

3. Who should fill in this plan?

This plan should be populated by whoever is leading the engagement activity, using simple language or plain English, and avoiding acronyms and jargon. As it is a joint plan there should also be input from the engagement lead, equalities lead and communications lead.

4. Who will hold responsibility for seeking assurance on this project and plan?

This must be agreed at the outset and, depending on the activity, they may feed into the Board/Committee encompassing the senior leadership team.

It is good practice to establish a 'reference group' of key stakeholders who can lend an independent voice and be the 'critical friend' to ensure success. This group may also be responsible for championing this work within respective groups and offering support for the project itself, as and when required.

5. When should the plan be completed?

The plan should be viewed as a 'live document' from the outset of the project until all engagement activity is finished and a clear process has been identified for embedding the outcomes from the work into 'business as usual'. Any elements such as surveys and EIA, among others, should be attached as Appendices to this plan.

This is not an exhaustive list of questions and answers and we acknowledge there may be more.

Evaluation of engagement process

Introduction

Evaluation is the systematic assessment of whether an activity, project, programme or policy has merit or worth. There are two types of evaluation, namely:

1. formative: initiated to improve an ongoing activity (ie to learn and modify as you go along)
2. summative: to document the successes and failures of an activity or event after it is finished.

As part of your engagement process, whether you have organised surveys, events, focus groups or used any other methodology, it is always a good idea to get participants to complete an evaluation form. This enables you to learn from the process and may offer the following benefits:

- improving your practice
- assessing the impact of your activity/ event
- helping to attract funding
- providing evidence of the benefits of your activity/event
- a focus on what you set out to achieve and whether you have been successful
- providing a record of the achievements you have gained
- demonstrating return on investment
- can inform and improve future activity
- if shared, aiding others to improve.

What to include

There are evaluation form templates online that you could use or you may choose to create your own, but the following is a guide on the sorts of things you may wish to consider including in the evaluation process;

Introduction and thanks

Offer and share gratitude for the participant; they have given up their time to support and help you gather the information that you need to make your work a success.

You may also outline why you are seeking feedback, how the information will be used, and how any personal data (such as name, equality monitoring data) will be stored.

Multiple events

If you are running various events or using a range of methods, you may wish to segment the answers according to the event.

Overall rating

You may wish to elicit, through a series of questions, how the participant found the event overall.

Many feedback forms use a rating or scoring system (1-10) to make it easy for the participant to fill in, and for purposes of analysis.

You may also wish to ask questions about the joining instructions and any information sent out prior to the event.

Ask participants to complete an evaluation form: you can learn from the process and improve your practice.

Value for money or time

This indicator is valuable in ascertaining whether the participant found the activity valuable in terms of their time, money or other variable.

This may also offer an indication as to whether they will partake again, should you require them to.

Presenter and session

Here you can establish whether the activity was pitched correctly and useful to the participant.

There may be variables in this in relation to the aspects each participant may or may not have found useful. With this in mind, try to design the form so that a participant can easily skip sections if they have little or no relevance to them.

Venue

Ask questions that will determine whether the participant found the venue easily, and what they thought about accessibility, catering and anything else related to the venue.

It is sometimes also helpful to ask specifically what may be improved, so that the participant can offer independent views. This will help you improve future events.

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

A lot of organisations ask participants whether or not they would recommend the event/activity to a friend or colleague. This would allow you to evaluate whether the participant is likely to promote what you do and recommend it to others.

Thoughts and feedback

It's always good to get some qualitative feedback, so leave some space for participants to either expand on what they have already stated or to add further information.

Other things to consider

As with any kind of information ensure that you use plain English. Emojis and pictures can make also improve accessibility.

Also offer participants a choice on how and when they may fill out the evaluation form. Depending on your audience, it is sometimes useful to have people available to fill out forms for participants (in a supportive manner), especially if the participant is illiterate, has learning difficulties or they are not confident in their command of English.

Evaluation plan

Sometimes it can be useful to have an evaluation plan that runs alongside your engagement plan, so that there is alignment between the two. The evaluation plan doesn't have to be long and may include the following:

1. Aim – what do you want to achieve?
2. Objectives – what do you need to do to achieve your aim?
3. Stakeholder/audience
4. Evaluation questions – what do you want to know?
5. Methodology – what strategy will you use?
6. Data collection – what techniques will you use to collect your evidence?
7. Data analysis – how will you analyse your data?
8. Reporting – who will be reading your report?

Making use of your evaluation

It is critical that you learn from the data and information you have collated, and share this learning with others.

If you are writing a report on the engagement activity, ensure you include what you found out in the evaluation and how you will use this information.

If yours is a formal report, you may wish to include the following elements of your evaluation process:

- Summary
- Context of evaluation
- Aims, objectives and evaluation questions
- Description of activity/engagement
- Methodology
- Summary of evidence (data may be attached in appendices)
- Overview of the activity/engagement
- Conclusion and recommendations.

Equality Impact Analysis guidance

Introduction

This guidance is to support people to carry out an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) and ensure they are adhering to their legal obligations whilst doing so.

Previously referred to as an 'Equality Impact Assessment', the change in terminology to 'Analysis' is intended to focus on the quality of analysis and how it is used in the decision-making, rather than the aim to be to simply produce a document for its own sake. Carrying out the analysis will result in an assessment of impact.

The legal context

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is part of the Equality Act 2010 and came into force in April 2011. Section 149 of the Act sets out the main duty and states that authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, "have due regard to the need to" eliminate any conduct that is prohibited by the Act.

This includes discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to the protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment/gender identity
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

While marriage and civil partnership is also a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, it is not covered by the PSED in the same way as the other protected characteristics listed above.

The PSED has three main arms and these are to:

1. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

People who share a protected characteristic will only be able to 'advance equality of opportunity' with those who don't if there is an awareness of the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by them. Public bodies would also have to ensure steps are taken to meet the needs people who share a protected characteristic, when those needs are different from people who do not share that characteristic. They should also encourage them to participate in public life.

What is an EIA?

As an essential part of meeting their PSED, public authorities have to ensure an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) is carried out.

While there is no longer a prescriptive way of doing this, case law has provided guidance. Ensure:

- 'due regard' is exercised before and at the time the policy or function is being considered;
- any decision-making includes consideration of the actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any negative impacts on particular groups;
- decisions made are made based on evidence;
- the decision-making process is more transparent;
- there is a written record of the equality considerations taken into account
- the process is not one of just 'ticking boxes';
- those in the public authority who have to take decisions are made aware of their duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations across all the protected characteristics;
- the duty is exercised in substance, with rigour and an open mind;
- the duty is not delegated and is a continuing one.

Therefore, an EIA is a way of systematically understanding the effects a service is having or is likely to have on the people who experience it, specifically those who belong to a protected characteristic (listed above).

It can be a useful tool to understand and evaluate how every stage of a change or policy development, from conception to implementation, is affecting or likely to affect different people.

With this in mind, in simple terms the EIA involves:

- collecting and analysing information to highlight the actual or potential impact on people and current levels of public satisfaction and/or confidence in the way the service is provided;
- investigating the underlying causes of any adverse impact or inequality; and
- making improvements in the way services are delivered with the aim of improving public satisfaction and/or confidence and removing or reducing adverse impact or unfairness.

What is the purpose of an EIA?

EIAs offer us an opportunity to think through the impact our working practices have on the people we serve in a methodical way. It is a process which allows us to consider how to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to all our constituents/communities.

Completing an EIA means there is an audit trail to evidence that issues of equality and diversity have been systematically considered. The assessments also help to ensure the organisation is compliant with any legal obligations to promote equality, and even more importantly, that they are also thinking about their moral and ethical duties in relation to this agenda.

The overall analysis enables us to examine the different ways that the various social groups that make up our communities perceive, use and experience the services we provide. This analysis provides us with a solid basis to 'equality-proof' our services, identifying potential or actual barriers to access and pinpointing any areas of institutional discrimination.

What should be assessed?

All functions and policies should be subjected to impact analysis.

'Functions', in this instance, refers to any internal or external activity carried out by the organisation.

'Policies' refers to any course of action, strategy or plan that directs how our functions are to be carried out.

Depending on how stringently these definitions are interpreted, services could end up carrying out more assessments than they have the capacity for, or conversely, so few that the assessments are too broad to be of use. Services are expected to take a common-sense approach in breaking down their functions, balancing the capacity of the service to carry out assessments with the need to drill down to an appropriate level to be able to identify any problems.

In many cases policies will cover the work of a single function in its entirety. Services are not expected to carry out separate assessments for a policy and a function that would essentially be assessing the same thing. Again, a common-sense approach is required by services. Policies that impact upon the running of a number of functions (for example policies and plans) should always be assessed separately.

When should an EIA be carried out?

A function or policy should be assessed under the following circumstances:

- New functions or policies should be assessed prior to implementation.
- Functions or policies that are significantly altered should be assessed prior to implementation.
- All existing functions/policies should be assessed if they have not been subject to assessment over the previous three years.

Assessing new or significantly altered functions/policies

It is intended that all new or altered functions/policies will now be assessed before implementation. This will be ensured by building a requirement for impact analysis into the processes for clearing Board reports and/or key decisions.

Maintaining existing EIAs

Services should create and maintain both an EIA schedule (outlining the assessments it intends to carry out over the following three years, and when they must be completed by) and an EIA register (containing all current assessments).

In creating their EIA schedules, services should consider the relative risks attached to each of their policies and functions in terms of equality and diversity issues. Each

policy and function should be designated as high, medium or low risk.

High risk functions and policies must be prioritised when populating the schedule. Completion of high risk assessments is required in order for the organisation to have a robust grip on its equality function.

Services are expected to take a common sense approach to designating policies and functions as high, medium or low risk. Policies and functions that have a significant impact on service delivery or employment, attract higher levels of public interest or publicity, or relate to issues of community trust and confidence, are likely to be high risk. Those policies and functions that do not directly impact on communities/ constituents or employment are likely to be low risk.

Considerations when carrying out an EIA

The EIA template requires assessors to consider what the function/policy aims to achieve, identify potential areas of discrimination or inequality, collect relevant data, engage and/or consult stakeholders, and analyse both the data and feedback from stakeholders to identify actual inequalities or areas of discrimination.

It is also really important to note here that the expectation should not be that the EEDI lead/manager will conduct all EIAs. Firstly, this is not good practice as they will not be familiar with all of the functions and policies. Secondly the whole purpose of this work is to embed the EEDI agenda into core business functions and so the work in this area should not sit with one individual or team. Thirdly the EEDI lead will already have their full-time role and to expect them to carry out all EIAs would not be appropriate or feasible. Their role should be to support and train relevant members and offer advice as appropriate.

Engagement with relevant stakeholders

There are various ways in which the organisation can engage with stakeholders when carrying out an EIA. These may include talking to relevant community or voluntary organisations and Members (if it is a Membership organisations), and 'piggybacking' EIA-relevant questions onto broader engagement exercises. Services should try to identify methods of engagement and involvement that collect useful information but are not unnecessarily onerous for either the service or those being engaged. The level of engagement should be proportionate to the risk and severity of discrimination or inequality.

Throughout the process it is also important that members work with people from the protected characteristic groups to regularly test the relevancy of any potential or likely impacts on those who will be affected.

In any kind of change, one cannot assume who will be affected, or how and why. Therefore, a one-to-one or group discussion or dialogue needs to take place with members of the protected characteristics groups, along the lines of: "This is what we are planning to do, what are your thoughts?" or "How do you envisage this may affect you and why?"

This kind of dialogue needs to continue as a loop throughout the process, where the groups are spoken to on a regular basis to 'test out' any change as the project evolves.

Equality monitoring

Various organisations collect a wealth of data from a wide range of sources and for a number of purposes. Generally speaking, it should not be necessary to create new data collection systems. However, it may be necessary to review existing departmental systems to ensure that the data we already collect can be analysed by the nine protected characteristics.

Existing systems, including stakeholder satisfaction surveys, complaints monitoring statistics, census and other demographic information, or service user profiles could be used. Services may also wish to consider contacting other local organisations or public bodies that have carried out their own EIAs of similar or related policies/ functions.

Action and publication

Having completed an EIA, consideration should be given to any areas of discrimination and inequalities raised, and a decision should be made on the appropriate action to resolve them. These should then be built into business plans and the EIAs published on the website.

To ensure EIAs are fully implemented into the process, a sign-off and review process needs to be agreed, along with the appropriate people to do this, ie those who are knowledgeable about equality, equity, diversity and inclusive practice.

What might be contained in an EIA report document

(taken as good practice from the Consultation Institute)

No two situations are the same in change management. The requirements for an EIA/Due Regard Statement should be evaluated for each situation to decide what is appropriate.

- Introduction – set the scene and the objectives.
- Reaffirm your legal duty and how you intend to meet it – map out what is in the PSED and the actions you will take in relation to each requirement 149: 1, 2 (if relevant), 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- Confirm the work area/function (name and brief description).
- Clarify whether anyone else has a shared responsibility for this work area/function, and, if so, state how they have been involved in the screening process.
- Who has authority to make changes to the work area/function?
- Identify aims of the work area.
- Explain what level of EIA priority will be given to this work area and why.
- Decide if the work area is relevant to the individuals or groups with protected characteristics – detail processes of, and evidence from, relevancy testing.
- Clarify at which stages of the exercise the EIA will be updated.
- Summarise the 'Issues' – opening Risk Assessment.
- Summarise the business case.
- Explain the engagement and/or consultation taking place (stages
- Confirm the demographics, stats and profiles for the area affected:
  a. Public now
  b. Members now
  c. Public post-decision
  d. Members post-decision.
- Explain the methods you've employed to engage with a proportionate number of equalities characteristics (Equalities Engagement Plan).
- Publish the timeline of qualitative events to engage with characteristics.
- Explain how equalities information and participation will be/has been captured from non-equalities specific consultation events/surveys/questionnaires etc.
- Specify what research/surveys/ questionnaires will be/have been undertaken.
- Specify how often information will be updated and made public.
- Specify how information will be evaluated, analysed and published.
- Specify where EIA updates will be published for public viewing.
- Specify how the analysis will be fed back to decision-makers.
- Specify how decisions will be made and how the analysis might influence decision-makers.
- Confirm how data was collected at events.
- Confirm what events were run and any extras that were added (and why).
- Confirm participation levels and compare with area profiles.
- Clarify what has been learned through dialogue with groups of each equality characteristic, and how you have verified claims of impact.

- Clarify what has been learned from surveys/questionnaires etc.
- Identify risks to characteristics from negative impacts.
- Identify the benefit to equality characteristics from positive impacts.
- Confirm the mitigation options available to compensate/counter negative impacts and risks.
- Summarise what is learned and how it meets the duty.
- Publish analysis, and information about who undertook it.
- Explain any other considerations decision-makers should take into account.
- Confirm how that feedback and analysis will be/has been fed back to decision-makers.
- Confirm what the influencing process will be, and post-decision, how the information did or did not influence thinking and decisions.
- Publish decisions including the actions you have taken or intend to take to address the issues arising from this exercise.
- Publish how you will deal with issues and challenges.
- Provide an overview of how impacts will be monitored during implementation, and what actions will be taken if impacts are identified.
- Get the assessment approved and signed off by the appropriate manager/director/executive member.
- Add date of approval.

Important considerations

- Good methods to collect information, including confirmation of the Equalities Questionnaire always covering all characteristics and relevant sub-characteristics.
- Confirmation of the questions asked: whether you have asked about impacts; the rationale for impact claims; have discrimination, equality of opportunity and fostering good relations been addressed.
- Identification of positive and negative impacts.
- Verification of impacts (investigation).
- Options for mitigation of negative impacts.
- Recommendations to decision-makers.

Impact table

(taken as good practice from the Consultation Institute)

IMP NO.	CHARACTERISTIC(S) SUB-CHARACTERISTIC	IMPACT CATEGORY	POSITIVE NEGATIVE	IMPACT SOURCE	IMPACT DETAILS	RATIONALE	EVIDENCE
1	Age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; and any others you choose to add.	Discrimination; harassment; victimisation; equality of opportunity (remove/ minimise disadvantages; meeting needs; participation); good relations (prejudice; understanding); disabilities; favourable treatment; and any others you choose to add.	Is it a positive or negative impact?	How have you become aware of an impact or potential impact? Is it from research, have you been advised by another party, has a member of the public or a stakeholder made you aware, did someone from this or another characteristic make an impact claim?	What is the impact that has been identified? What is the frequency of claim for this impact?	What is the rationale behind the impact claimed?	Is there any evidence to support or deny the claimed impact? Provide full details. Has the claimed impact been tested with people from the relevant characteristic? Have you researched the claimed impact? If yes, what has been learned and from what source(s)?
2							
3 etc							

Impact mitigation table

(taken as good practice from the Consultation Institute)

IMP NO.*	IMPACT SUMMARY	SUGGESTED MITIGATION	SOURCE OF SUGGESTION	RATIONALE FOR SUGGESTION	EVIDENCE FOR SOLUTION	FEASIBILITY
	Give a brief summary of the impact claimed and evidence for it	What is being suggested to mitigate for this? (one line per suggestion)	Where does this suggestion come from? Have you consulted the characteristic(s) impacted for solutions?	What is the rationale behind the suggestion?	What evidence is there that the suggestion would solve the problem? How have you learned this?	Within the financial envelope, how feasible is this solution? What are the cost implications? Can any other body help with the solution? If yes, how?

* should relate to an item in the Impact table

Equality Impact Analysis action plan

This table will help you to plan appropriate actions that may arise as an outcome of your analysis:

	TICK THE ONE THAT APPLIES	**PLEASE PROVIDE A FULL EXPLANATION** INCLUDE ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ADDRESS ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS
No major change ***LOW/NO RELEVANCE*** The activity is robust and there is no potential for discrimination and you have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance and foster relations between groups.	☐	*Please state if no further action is required:*
Adjust the policy ***MEDIUM RELEVANCE*** This involves taking steps to remove barriers or to better advance equality. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential effect.	☐	*Action/s required (include target dates):*
Continue the policy ***MEDIUM RELEVANCE*** This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to advance equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not unlawfully discriminate.	☐	*Action/s required (include target dates):*
Stop and remove the activity, eg policy, service, function, project ***HIGH RELEVANCE*** If there are adverse affects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you will want to consider stopping the policy/project altogether. If the activity shows unlawful discrimination, it must be removed or changed.	☐	*Action/s required (include target dates):*

Events and inclusion checklist

This is a checklist of things to consider when organising events (internal, external and online) to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

Event title:

Date/times

1	Does the event take place on a religious/belief celebratory day? Consider whether or not the event should take place if the proposed date on a religiously significant day. www.reonline.org.uk/supporting/festivals-calendar/	☐

Venue

2	Have you ensured that the venue location does not hold any negative implications for those you are aiming to engage - consider their protected characteristics, eg LGBT+, race, religion, gender?	☐
3	Is there accessible public transport?	☐
4	Is parking designated for disabled people available on site?	☐
	If so, is it clearly signposted?	☐
5	What assistance can be provided to visitors with mobility impairments if they are dropped off at the entrance?	☐
6	Does the venue have wheelchair access?	☐
7	Are there accessible toilets designed for people with a disability on the same floor as the main event and any other rooms used for the event?	☐
	Are gender-neutral toilets also available? If not, private gender-neutral spaces should be incorporated into gendered facilities.	☐
8	Are lift doors (including lifts from the car park) wide enough for a wheelchair? Is the lift big enough for a large wheelchair and at least one other person?	☐
9	Are there controls at a height suitable for wheelchair users? Are there Braille or tactile buttons?	☐
10	Are there fire alarms that are audible/visible to all?	☐
11	Are there procedures in place for evacuating disabled people, including wheelchair users, in an emergency? Ask for a copy of the procedures in advance of the event.	☐
	Will there be venue staff available to help evacuate disabled delegates and facilitators, and have staff had appropriate training on this?	☐
12	Have you considered adjustments for attendees with disabilities that are not immediately visible, eg autism, dyslexia, diabetes, cancer, asthma, chronic illnesses?	☐
13	Is there a separate room, should the need arise, for:	
	(a) changing facilities and for breastfeeding?	☐

	(b) baby and children (if required)?	☐
	(c) prayer?	☐
	(d) people who may become unwell?	☐
14	Does the venue provide catering for all dietary requirements, eg allergies, religious, vegetarian, vegan, pregnancy and maternity?	☐

Speakers

15	When selecting speakers, have you been mindful to organise a balance/variety of speakers to ensure diverse representation and intersectionality, eg race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity?	☐
16	Have all the speakers been given appropriate information/guidance to fully participate in the event?	☐

Communications

17	Does the invitation/pre-information to your event ask attendees to outline any access requirements – visible and non-easily visible disabilities (including those which are not related to a disability i.e. prayer room, menopause, parents' requirements)?	☐
18	Do you offer a number of ways for delegates to book on to your event or contact you about their booking (ie by phone, email, text etc)?	☐
19	Does the invitation to your event ask attendees to outline dietary requirements?	☐
20	Have a range of promotional methods been used to ensure people who may not use electronic communications also receive information about the event (if applicable)?	☐
21	Is language support required (both spoken language and BSL)? If yes, has this been agreed and is it ready for delivery of the event?	☐

Documents/presentations

22	Has the content of documents or presentations been checked to ensure it does not include offensive references, inappropriate stereotypes or exclude any participants due to their protected characteristics?	☐
23	Is the visual and audio equipment viewer-friendly for anyone with a disability, eg subtitles options, script provided?	☐
24	Are presentations prepared sufficiently in advance to provide alternative formats or digital versions ahead of the event?	☐
25	Are your presentations and handouts user-friendly for people with colour blindness and/or impaired vision?	☐
26	Do you provide a printed copy of any information displayed on a screen, or ask if any participants need this?	☐
27	Do you have text or audio explanations of complex diagrams or images?	☐
28	Have speakers been briefed to read aloud any large sections of text that delegates will be required to read?	☐
29	If a presentation or video contains strobe light effects, is there a clear warning in advance?	☐
30	Have name tags been checked to ensure all names are spelt correctly?	☐

Inclusiveness

31	Have you made it clear that dress codes do not prevent people from wearing religious or traditional dress, or clothes that prevent their gender expression?	☐
32	Have you ensured that the programme is inclusive and does not incorporate aspects that only resonate with one particular group of people, eg saying a prayer before a meal (which may exclude people who do not have a faith/religion)?	☐

Webinars

33	Do you have a named contact responsible for the ongoing accessibility of the event?	☐
34	Are participants asked if they require any adjustments prior to attending webinars?	☐
35	If requested, is it possible to send recordings to clients/participants, supported with scripts/subtitles?	☐
36	If people are asked for feedback, are they told that alternative formats are available, eg large print, verbally?	☐
37	Is there an option for attendees who do not have an computer or internet access to dial in by phone and participate?	☐

On the day – at a venue

38	Do you have a named contact responsible for the ongoing accessibility of the event?	☐
39	Do you know where accessible facilities are?	☐
40	If step-free access is via an alternative route, do members know where this is?	☐
41	Have you discussed Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) with any delegate who might require one?	☐
42	Do you ask for feedback on accessibility after the event?	☐

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Note: It may not be possible for events to meet all of the requirements above, but you should try to ensure that the majority of the above criteria are met.

Actions required to address above criteria	Date completed

Liberal Democrats

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