

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION METHODS

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	When used
<p>Survey - face to face (e.g. door to door)</p> <p>Survey - telephone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statistically sound - control of respondents means it will be representative of the 'population' as a whole • results easy to report back • can compare with other surveys (both internal and external), previous findings and future benchmarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quick form of consulting residents - results back swiftly • can target groups which are often excluded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respondent cannot "interact" if questionnaire is rigidly structured • little time for respondents to consider responses/deliberate or add their own thoughts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can seem "distant" from respondents • tightly structured questionnaires can constrain consultees responses • will miss those without telephones - also cannot be used for certain special needs audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when hard figures are needed - trends and benchmarks • when issues are already known but need to be quantified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when quick consultation process needed
<p>Survey - postal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheap • allows you to be seen to consult large numbers of people • good for certain groups who are interested enough to respond to a questionnaire; also for sensitive/confidential subjects • can target groups which are often excluded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often unrepresentative - certain groups more likely to respond • tightly structured questionnaires can constrain consultees responses • possibly poor response rates • no control over who completes the questionnaire, or in which order questions are answered • get produce scant or token responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate that you consult • when little budget available • for treatment of certain sensitive subjects • where high level of interest anticipated
<p><u>Group discussions</u> e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus groups • quality circles • voluntary • learning networks • stakeholder meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enables people to express why, not just what • discussion can follow the mood of the audience - not prescriptive • in groups, respondents can use each other as springboards to generate new ideas • useful for evaluating communications materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot be used to extrapolate results to whole population - not statistically reliable • usually only meet for two hours • more "vocal" people used to meetings may shout others down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for diagnostic research • when you need to understand (reasons for attitudes/ behaviour) and generate new ideas • before a quantity survey, to identify the issues to quantify • after a quantity survey, to investigate any results that are unclear

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • useful for in-depth analysis of how a service is perceived • can help to include groups which are often excluded • may help address conflicts of interest • may be useful for complex issues 		
In-depth interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in depth response - can probe to a greater extent • good for sensitive subjects where people may not respond to a structured questionnaire/group discussion • also good for people confident in one-to-one situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one person may be reluctant to “bare their soul” without backup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting a “feel” for the issues • initial research for sensitive subjects among “senior” people
Citizens’ Jury (small group of people meet for a period of days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enables participants to make an informed judgement • encourages active citizenship • empowers, involves, informs participants • dynamic interactive process (valuable for officers and politicians) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small numbers of citizens are involved • can be difficult to get a truly representative group to give up the time • participants’ views may become unrepresentative of the community they are drawn from as a result of being “informed” about all the facts/issues • recommendations may not be higher quality than those elected Members would make with the same information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when a problem needs informed public input • when there is a specific (relatively small scale) question to answer • when the will exists to action the Jury’s recommendations - whatever they recommend
Citizens’ Workshops (small groups of people meet for one day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-section of public work together for one day • encourages active citizenship • participants develop stronger, more relaxed working relationships than in a focus group - allows more in depth understanding of attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • still qualitative with all its associated problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the public’s input is needed over a day • less expensive than a jury but more in depth than a focus group

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Citizens' Panel (large group recruited via self completion survey or face-to-face interview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> once set up, a cost-effective resource for all types of consultation encourages active citizenship panel members may become "advocates" of the authority a tangible resource for building relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> panel members become "atypical" so tracking is not advisable over a long period panel members may often be self-selecting and unrepresentative without careful checking and weighting of results large amount of administration and maintenance involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involvement without over-expense when different agencies want to work in partnership for encouraging citizenship
Written word - letter/leaflet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can go to all residents since relatively inexpensive can explain the Council's view and rationale for a certain position, but must also invite views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot control responses - they may not focus on the issue upon which you were seeking views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to reach a wide audience whilst also ensuring that the information is clearly and consistently communicated
Public meeting (Issue based - Borough wide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any citizen can attend forum for explanation and discussion gives publicity to the issue can generate new ideas provides opportunity for citizens to "have their say" provides opportunity for Members to publicly share their views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may only attract those affected by the issue activities or those used to public speaking may dominate discussion requires skilled chairing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where the issue needs a public airing and publicity to explain the issue and encourage debate where no "data" is required to provide citizens with the opportunity to have a say
Public meeting (Issue based - neighbourhood level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involves, informs and empowers the local community good indicator of local feeling may provide new information and local knowledge concerning issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be dominated by the most articulate or vocal Contributions may stray onto other issues - officers need to be prepared for this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when the issue requires local community involvement
Public meeting (General - through local assemblies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> will obtain views of local citizens as opposed to customers publicity and feedback mechanisms already in place costs of meetings accommodated by local assemblies budgets chairing of meeting already established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may not give the issue enough profile or time as one item on an agenda 	

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Exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displays/options can be clearly set out and presented all at once • feedback forms/questionnaires can be filled in - cheap fieldwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses may be shaped by presentation of a limited range of options • people who are unable to attend (due to timing or inaccessibility of the venue) will be excluded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when responses needed to visual display materials • when there are specific options to present
Planning for real	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involves, empowers, informs respondents - sense of local ownership • takes respondents through the physical planning process and enables them to visualise options • many residents can take part - no upper limit • catches the interest of those involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes a lot of planning, administration, time and resources! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when physical planning issues are to be explored • when the involvement of the whole community is needed/desirable • when the decision will be actioned/the will is there
Results from previous consultation (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheap and (usually) quick way to get hands on data • if already used, data has "credibility" attached to it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will only contain answers to question that was asked - possibly not the one you want to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when quick and cheap data is needed • when you want to base your research on others' approaches
External Data Sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives external (national?) comparisons/benchmarks - where to aim for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • again, may not ask the questions you want to answer • not at local level unless breakdown can be obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as above
Media e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • press release • radio interview/phone in • TV report/interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quick and responsive • useful when need to "broadcast" information and give a large number of people an opportunity to respond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only goes to established audience - not universal/representative • usually doesn't elicit a broadly based response • media can put their own slant on a story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the story needs to go out! • when the emphasis is on information - will usually need to be used in conjunction with other consultation methods to produce a high level of response

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<p>Less formal consultation views received by elected members</p> <p>via front line staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free-ranging • cost-effective • a relaxed structure can allow new ideas to emerge • taps into knowledge • values staff, builds commitment and involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not statistically reliable • can lead to over statement of a particular point of view is possible - e.g due to concerted lobbying • less formality in terms of timescales and structure may that information is anecdotal and sporadic rather than systematic • scepticism if not “seen to act” on the information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to get a continuing “feel” of local opinion • to complement other processes • where there is strong contact between service users and staff • when there is a firm commitment to act on information provided as appropriate and feed back on this to staff.
Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reaches out to specific interest groups • captive audience • can get feedback through cost effective self completion questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lowish response rates unless completed on site/given time/incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when a specific defined audience is to be consulted
Referenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asking the whole of the population • comprehensive! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expensive - lots of administration • the wording of the question(s) is absolutely crucial. Trying to reduce complex issues to simple questions requiring YES/NO answers can be extremely difficult. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when crucial to ask the whole population of their views - very important issues, but ones with clear cut options!