



Working together with communities

**A community engagement and
neighbourhood management
framework
for
North Yorkshire**

Foreword

We are committed to improving the quality of our services, making better use of resources and more effectively meeting the needs of our communities.

This Framework sets out our intention as a Partnership to do this by working more closely together to involve our communities in the decisions and practical actions which affect their lives.

We are not starting from scratch. We recognise that there is already considerable good practice, but this is the first time that as a group of public, private, and community and voluntary organisations we have produced a joint approach to engaging the community.

Developing the Framework has raised the profile of community engagement and neighbourhood management principles in our organisations and given us the opportunity to consult widely on our plans, but the production of this document is only the starting point. We see the Framework as a first step. Engaging communities is not a single activity; it is a way of working which is about inclusion, input and influence. As our learning and practice develops so will the Framework.

Executive Summary

This framework has been developed to improve how we as partner organisations in the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) involve communities within North Yorkshire.

It contains a set of shared definitions, principles and standards for engaging with communities.

Community engagement is defined as involving people in decisions that affect them. This includes informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering.

Neighbourhood management is defined as local agencies working together with local people to improve services at neighbourhood level in response to community needs. This can include a wide range of models and needs to be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.

We want to involve *people* in decisions and services which affect them. Sometimes however it is appropriate to involve people as part of a community of place or neighbourhood, or a community of interest or identity, and these terms are more fully explained.

The following principles are identified as the basis of joint working, and are expanded in the full document.

We will:

1. Ensure engaging with communities is a mainstream activity
2. Agree neighbourhoods and communities of interest
3. Develop shared engagement structures
4. Set shared community priorities
5. Develop shared profiling and mapping
6. Share and co-ordinate information
7. Support community development and empowerment
8. Ensure better engagement with voluntary and community organisations
9. Make effective use of community representatives including councillors
10. Provide nominated officers in each agency
11. Identify a neighbourhood co-ordinator where appropriate
12. Develop joint performance measures
13. Provide strong leadership
14. Commit shared resources

We must also ensure the quality of the work we carry out and a list of standards we will aim to meet is included, relating to the following:

- Clarity of Purpose
- Evidence Base
- Timing
- Quality
- Partnership
- Communication
- Inclusion
- Feedback
- Monitoring & Review
- Resources

We have identified a range of actions we need to take to improve our joint working and these are detailed in a separate action plan.

Introduction

We want North Yorkshire to be an even better place for everyone to live, work or visit

This is the vision of the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) and to achieve this vision, we need to make sure that we engage with the communities within North Yorkshire so that the improvements we make and the services we deliver reflect the needs and desires of North Yorkshire residents.

A full list of all NYSP Partnership member organisations is included at the end of the Framework. From 1 April 2009 there is a legal duty on many of these organisations to inform, consult and involve the people they serve.

Through the development and implementation of this Framework, we recognise that we can achieve added value by working together rather than individually. This means that we will place engagement of communities at the heart of service development, planning and delivery.

By taking this approach we will be able to ensure that we base our decisions on community needs and provide feedback to people about the way we used their participation to shape our decisions. We will build on good practice and use existing structures where appropriate. We also recognise that the rurality of the County can present challenges to this approach and will ensure that ways of working reflect this.

This framework has been developed to set out the strategic vision and guiding principles for engaging with communities within North Yorkshire without being prescriptive and stifling innovation at local level. It is designed to supplement and support our statutory responsibilities.

Many of the organisations who make up the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership have developed their own strategies for this area of work and this Framework is designed to complement these and identify work we need to do jointly. Local Strategic Partnerships in the seven district council areas will be instrumental in co-ordinating and progressing these actions at local level.

We need to develop more effective community engagement and models of neighbourhood management which are suitable for our largely rural county. This Framework seeks to define these and other relevant terms in the context of North Yorkshire and to set shared principles and standards for our joint work.

We have identified a range of actions we need to take to improve our joint working and these are detailed in a separate action plan.

What do we want to achieve with this Framework?

- To provide clear guidance on how people and communities can be involved in decision-making, including explaining what is meant by community engagement and neighbourhood management.
- To improve the ways in which people and communities can influence and shape services which will help create better quality services that better meet their needs.
- To recognise the value of providing support to enable people and communities to increase their skills and knowledge and take control over the issues that affect their lives.
- To set a common standard for all community engagement and neighbourhood management activity in the County to which all service providers are signed up.
- To improve joint planning and co-ordination of activity in the County between different agencies and sectors, avoiding duplication of activity.
- To demonstrate that there is collective ownership and recognition of the importance of community engagement and neighbourhood management.

What are community engagement and neighbourhood management and how do they involve local people?

Whilst they are not the same thing, community engagement and neighbourhood management share many common characteristics. Both are processes not projects, both have an increased chance of success if all local agencies work together rather than in isolation, and both need to be mainstreamed.

Community engagement can be carried out without neighbourhood management, but neighbourhood management, if it is to be at all successful, has community engagement at its heart.

Community engagement

Involving people in decisions that affect them.

Engagement will deliver effective two way communication with the community and increase community empowerment through active participation in identifying priorities and, where appropriate, joint problem resolution, building confidence and satisfaction through improved service delivery.

It can also encourage a sense of commitment and belonging to a place and encourage people to become further involved in their communities.

Community engagement can take many forms:

Informing - Providing the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. For example, websites, newsletters and press releases.

Local examples:

The North Yorkshire local food producers' database, website and booklet is produced annually by the Economic Development Unit of North Yorkshire County Council. The aim is to provide the public with information about where to buy local food in North Yorkshire.

Your Craven is Craven District Council's annual newsletter for residents. It was launched in 2004 and is distributed to every household in Craven.

Consulting - Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. For example, surveys, door knocking, focus groups, citizens' panels.

Local examples:

Ryedale District Council conducts a satisfaction survey with its residents every three years covering all aspects of life in the area. The most recent survey was completed in 2006 and questionnaires were sent to over 2,500 households.

Richmondshire District Council carried out a major survey to inform their review of the availability of public transport for people in Richmondshire to get to hospital appointments outside the district.

It is now possible to log onto the Selby District Council website and complete surveys electronically via Snap Internet Survey Software.

Involving - Working directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. For example, providing communities with the opportunity to communicate and influence service providers through structures such as representative forums, service user panels and steering groups. This is often underpinned by community development and/or community participation activity.

Local examples:

No Cold Calling Zones help local residents or communities have the confidence to say "No" to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are not welcome. These zones are set up by North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards service and North Yorkshire police working with a community group. Currently zones have been created in over 200 locations, right across North Yorkshire, in response to requests from local residents.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service work closely with Parishes in support of their Parish Plans around speeding and other road safety issue, and as a result have deployed speed matrix signs in areas of historical accident problems and where there is wider community concern.

Collaborating - Working in partnership with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives

and the identification of the preferred solution. For example, a neighbourhood partnership where all stakeholders have an equal voice and ownership of decision making. This is underpinned by community development or participation activity.

Local examples:

Ryedale District Council in partnership with the Ryedale Strategic Partnership developed a comprehensive programme of community led planning. The vision for this programme is of 'A Plan for Every Parish'. The total coverage of our community led planning activity has so far been that 77% of the total population of Ryedale have had access to a community planning project, with average response rates being 80%.

The Harrogate Library Management Board includes community representatives to ensure community involvement in strategic planning and decision-making. This will be supported by a Liaison Committee of local interested individuals who will meet twice a year to develop wider community engagement.

Empowering - Placing decision making in the hands of the community. For example, community kitties, where the final decision on how a budget is spent is in the hands of a community led forum/structure. This is underpinned by community development activity. Another example is voting as part of the democratic process, such as in local or national elections.

Local examples:

The 'Voice Your Choice' Participatory Budgeting (PB) Pilot in Eastfield aims to empower the local community by supporting them in allocating a defined public budget towards community safety projects. The Police Authority are the accountable body for this pilot, with the County Council, Police, Borough Council and elected Members from Parish, Borough and County Councils forming a steering group to support community members in determining how the PB process should develop in Eastfield. The pilot is very much resident-led, with a steering group Chair from within the local community and the involvement of schools and other local groups in key decision-making; from agreeing on a logo to developing ideas for public voting events.

Richmondshire District Youth Council has more than twenty members, all aged between 12 and 19, whose job it is to represent the views of young people across the district. The Council also has fundraising powers and its own budget, and distributes grants to clubs and organisations involving young people.

Neighbourhood management

Local agencies working together with local people to improve services at neighbourhood level in response to community needs.

Neighbourhood management tackles the community needs, highlighted through community engagement activities. It aims to change the way that mainstream services are delivered through more effective multi-agency partnership working including partnerships with local people. Whilst national pilots were developed on an urban model, there are clear benefits to a broader, principle based approach, being adopted within North Yorkshire. This approach will need to reflect existing partnership activity, and the varied, predominantly rural nature of our communities.

Some partners will be able to focus and manage their resources at the neighbourhood level across all parts of North Yorkshire, but this is not an effective or efficient way of working for all partners. Particular circumstances in a minority of neighbourhoods may warrant a neighbourhood management approach being taken involving all partners, generally for a fixed period of time or until agreed outcomes have been achieved.

Neighbourhood Management can involve a variety of elements, including:

Sharing information

Improving information sharing makes it easier to work together to problem solve and deliver services. It also helps give all of our communities information on the issues that are important to them.

Local example:

In York partner organisations hold a secure joint graffiti database in order to share information and work together more effectively to reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime.

Joint community meetings

Regular meetings between communities and the organisations who are responsible for delivering local services can look at key issues

arising from community engagement and other sources and agree ways to tackle them.

Problem solving

This involves identifying the root causes of problems and setting realistic aims to overcome them.

Local examples:

The Tadcaster and villages Community Engagement Forum pilot project addresses concerns through a number of mechanisms, including forwarding issues to a practitioner group to develop solutions. The group has representatives from Selby District Council, North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, Parish Councils and the community. Progress is reported to the community as a whole at the next public meeting to ensure accountability. Particular issues have also been passed to community led task and finish groups to recommend solutions. These groups are supported by officers from the relevant partner organisation.

Problem Solving Groups (PSGs) have been established in the Hambleton district in areas where anti-social behaviour has been identified as a problem. The PSGs bring together a range of partners to work together to tackle local issues.

Co-location

Where there are clear benefits to organisations working more closely together in order to deliver an even better service to the local community a decision can be made to locate them within the same workplace.

Local example:

North Yorkshire Police hold weekly surgeries in local schools in the Hambleton district. School management has assisted the project by placing a compulsory questionnaire on the school website.

Resourcing

Organisations can agree to contribute appropriate resources to support joint work at a local level. This is not about new money, but about committing existing resources to work in a new way in support of community engagement and neighbourhood management principles.

Local example:

A Neighbourhood Management project is underway in the Eastfield area of Scarborough where a number of agencies from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors are working with the local community to identify and deliver against specific initiatives in Eastfield under the "cleaner, greener and safer" agenda.

What do we mean by community, neighbourhood and area?

We want to involve *people* in decisions and services which affect them. The opinions and experiences of individuals are therefore of great importance and relevance. Sometimes however it is appropriate to involve people as part of a 'community', 'neighbourhood' or 'area' and it is important to be clear what we mean by the terms.

Community of place or neighbourhood

A community linked to a particular geographical location such as a ward, village, market town and hinterland or a housing estate. This location will usually have physical boundaries although they are not always obvious to people who do not live or work there.

Area

Neighbourhood is generally understood as a small geographical area and in many cases organisations will need to engage with people on an 'area' basis which would include a number of places or neighbourhoods.

Community of interest

A group of people with a shared interest or experience. A community of interest includes service users (for example, patients registered with a particular GP, library users, pupils of a school etc) as well as people interested in a particular issue (eg climate change).

Community of identity

A community that is defined by how people identify themselves or how they are identified by society, usually by demographic characteristics (for example, young people, faith groups, older people, Black and Minority Ethnic people, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people).

Local example:

Craven and Harrogate Self Advocacy Consultation Group is run for and by people with learning disabilities with support from a voluntary organisation. It aims to help people become more confident about speaking up for themselves and making service providers aware of their needs. It is part of the Craven and Harrogate Learning Disabilities Partnership.

The Voice, Influence and Participation (VIP) Group is a long-standing multi-agency group in North Yorkshire to co-ordinate engagement with children and young people. A specific VIP group is being developed for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

People may see themselves as belonging to more than one community of place and/or interest or identity. This means that communities can be very diverse and we must give due consideration to this when we approach different communities to plan, deliver and review services.

We should also remember that people from a defined community may not consider themselves to be a member of that community.

For example some individuals may not consider themselves to be a member of a community of interest or identity despite sharing similar characteristics with other members of that community.

Our principles

As building blocks towards better engaging with the communities of North Yorkshire, we will:

1. Ensure that all partner organisations engage with communities as a mainstream activity and not as an afterthought.
2. Develop clearly defined and agreed neighbourhoods, areas and communities of interest, allowing partners to engage at the most local level that is appropriate and agreed at the time for that purpose.
3. Develop shared engagement structures, building on existing structures where these are working well and ensuring co-ordination through district local strategic partnerships. We will recognise and accommodate differences between areas across the County.

4. Use joint engagement structures and processes to set shared community priorities, identify problems and deliver effective and proportionate solutions, including joint problem solving where appropriate.
5. Develop shared profiling, mapping and prioritisation of neighbourhoods, areas and communities of interest with evidence-based deployment of resources.
6. Develop processes which allow us to share and co-ordinate information, analysis, resource allocation, feedback and communication.
7. Support community development and empowerment which underpin and strengthen community engagement at all levels.
8. Ensure better engagement with voluntary and community organisations, in particular those that can facilitate the involvement of groups and individuals who are seldom heard.
9. Make effective use of community representatives including councillors.
10. Provide nominated officers in each agency to act as contact points for joint action.
11. Where appropriate for specific areas or neighbourhoods, identify a neighbourhood manager or co-ordinator within a multi-agency team.
12. Develop joint performance measures, monitoring and improvement processes.
13. Provide strong local and thematic leadership at strategic level to support this work.
14. Commit resources contributed by all partners, where possible and appropriate, to support shared outcomes.

It is important to note that the above principles are about good practice and some of this is already happening in some places. There is no intention to change what currently works well.

Local example:

Joint engagement structures

Through the North Yorkshire Coast Community Partnership, four Area Forums have been developed across Scarborough Borough to allow the public, service delivery organisations (such as the Police and NHS North Yorkshire and York) and elected Members to work together to address issues of concern in each Forum area and for local people to influence the work of these LSP partners. Meetings are held quarterly on topics selected and prioritised by the wider community. Forums are managed by steering groups consisting of agency representatives, elected Members (including Parish and Town Councillors) and community representatives. They are also chaired by an elected community-based representative.

Our standards

Clarity of Purpose

Before beginning any engagement activity, we will be clear about why it is happening, what the relevance is to the people we are involving, what we want to achieve, which engagement activity we will use, what the community can and cannot influence, and how we will use the information gathered through the engagement activity.

Evidence Base

We will use all available research, knowledge and community intelligence including qualitative information to help us plan engagement activities. We will not carry out engagement activities if the information we need is already available. However, we recognise that sometimes the process of involving people is an end in itself to ensure that everyone is committed to the outcomes.

Timing

We will allow sufficient time to design and carry out engagement activities that are inclusive and encourage participation from all affected communities. We will also allow sufficient time to ensure that the results of engagement activities can shape our policies, plans and services to meet the needs of our communities.

Quality

We will work to ensure that staff responsible for engagement have the skills and capacity to achieve high quality engagement. We will ensure that they are aware of the barriers there can be to engagement and how they can be overcome. Equally, we will work

to ensure that communities have the opportunity to develop their skills and capacity to engage if they wish.

Partnership

We will identify the appropriate partners, with particular recognition of the knowledge and expertise of the voluntary and community sector, and carry out engagement activities in partnership where appropriate. This will allow us to appropriately target engagement activities and to avoid duplication of effort (this will help us to avoid 'consultation fatigue' in our communities).

Communication

We will always be open, honest, and accountable when sharing information and responding to contributions from all participants. We will also communicate between partners to create joined-up engagement activities and avoid duplication of effort. We will ensure there are clear referral routes for issues which arise during engagement activities.

Inclusion

We will support a variety of engagement activities to reflect the diversity of our communities and will be responsive to the ways that the community wants to engage with us. We will carry out equality impact assessments and endeavour to involve people in a way which meets their needs rather than ours, ensuring that there are accessible ways for them to initiate engagement.

We will recognise the complexity of engaging with seldom heard groups and vulnerable groups, and people who face additional barriers to engagement, such as accessibility and transport issues.

Feedback

We will provide feedback to the community about the engagement activities we carry out and will explain how the community's input contributed to the decision-making process. We will explain how and when we will provide feedback to the community at the same time as we carry out the community engagement exercise. We will also make the feedback as widely available as possible.

Monitoring & Review

In partnership with stakeholders, we will monitor and review the engagement activities we carry out to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to engage should they choose to, particularly those whose voices are often not heard, and change our practices accordingly. We will evaluate effectiveness and share learning.

Resources

We will plan engagement activity and underpinning community development activity carefully in the light of what those activities seek to achieve and in the context of available resources and will communicate any constraints clearly.

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Member organisations – NYSP Partnership

North Yorkshire County Council
Craven District Council
Hambleton District Council
Harrogate Borough Council
Richmondshire District Council
Ryedale District Council
Scarborough Borough Council
Selby District Council
North Yorkshire Police Authority
North Yorkshire Police
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
NHS North Yorkshire and York
Environment Agency
Yorkshire Forward
Jobcentre Plus
Learning and Skills Council
Probation Service
Youth Offending Team
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
North York Moors National Park Authority
NHS Foundation Trusts
NHS Health Trusts
Natural England
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Arts Council
Health and Safety Executive
Highways Agency
Craven Strategic Partnership
Harrogate District Strategic Partnership
Hambleton Strategic Partnership
Richmondshire Strategic Partnership
Ryedale Strategic Partnership
North Yorkshire Coast Community Partnership
Selby District Strategic Partnership
Country Land and Business Association

Federation of Small Businesses
Yorkshire Local Councils Association
National Farmers Union
North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations
Rural Action Yorkshire
Additional VCS representation (up to four in total)
York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
Ministry of Defence
Sport England
English Heritage