

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Community Consultation and Involvement

There are three main reasons for consulting and involving the community as part of the Community Safety Planning and Delivery Process:

- To ensure the priorities of the Strategy relate to the problems and concerns of the local community.

- To determine levels of crime, incidents and accidents that are not reported and do not appear in official statistics.

- To encourage community involvement in the whole Community Safety process, from Audit to action and beyond.

There are ways of consulting and involving the community; the following are some examples of methods currently used in Aberdeenshire:

Planning for Real

“Planning for Real” is an engagement technique first used in the late 1970’s. It gives local people a ‘voice’, and professionals an idea of people’s needs, which helps bring about improvements to their community. It can be used to deal with problems such as traffic, condition of housing stock and environmental issues.

“Planning for Real” is an imaginative hands-on approach to community consultation. Community participants build a model of their area and then use it with local service providers to identify the areas of concern or that need improving. It helps people to identify and prioritise the issues of their community, and in so doing breaks down the communication barriers that often exist between professional bodies and communities.

“Planning for Real” has been utilized by 4-5 rural partnerships in Aberdeenshire as part of the community planning process. Construction of the model can be approached in a number of ways: one partnership used aerial photographs and computer technology, an approach that helped the community to identify the areas that need changes to be made in them.

Citizen’s Panel

A citizen’s panel is a group of people that have been selected to represent of the population of the area they live in. These people have expressed their wishes to be consulted on a range of issues and can be asked to participate in smaller discussions or focus groups. The sampling should be designed to ensure that all major demographic groups are represented.

A Panel allows regular large-scale consultation to be carried out at a lower cost than if done individually and also achieves a higher response rate than other types of survey. It is a means of sampling public opinion or perception and identifies how views, knowledge or behaviour change over time and what factors contribute to this potential change.

The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership has established a Citizens Panel covering the local authority area for a pilot period of 18 months, which began in late 2003. The overall aim of the Panel is to provide a means to engage communities in decisions about the provision of local services. It is planned that over the 18-month period of the panel, 5 surveys will be conducted.

The Panel has the following objectives:

- ② to provide feedback on services provided by the Aberdeenshire Community Planning partners.
- ② to identify priorities for the community planning partnership in relation to the 4 themes of the Community Plan: wellbeing, learning, sustaining the environment and jobs and the economy
- ② to illicit information on the experiences of local residents or citizens in dealing with the Community Planning partners
- ② to create a sounding board to consult on policies and practice
- ② to identify a baseline against which future research can be developed.

‘Have Your Say’ Initiative

Have Your Say has been operating in Central Aberdeenshire (Garioch area) since 2002. The project aims to help frail older people who are not already making their voices heard to have their say on the development of health, local authority (council) and voluntary sector services.

Age Concern Scotland, Gordon Rural Action, NHS Grampian, the Local Health Council, Aberdeenshire Council and interested local people are all involved in the “Have Your Say” project. Trained volunteers visit older people at a place of their choosing, often their own home. Older people have the opportunity to give their views and opinions on council, health and voluntary sector services. These views are anonymous and are fed back into the community care planning process to help inform the development of services. Age Concern Scotland collates the completed forms, which are filled out by the volunteers and include the older person’s comments, this assures anonymity.

Plans are in hand for a similar project to operate in Fraserburgh.

Participants in the project are invited to give their views on community safety issues and to identify the issues important to them. The intention is to hear the views of older people, so that their concerns can be reflected in Aberdeenshire’s response to community safety.