

Toolkit Guide One:

Ways and means of using the Toolkit

The Toolkit is a series of linked steps that contains activities designed to draw helpful conclusions about your local community facilities. It assesses the usage, gaps and potential of the facilities and explores how to make better use of them

Community involvement is at the core of this activity. In order to encourage this involvement, it is useful to have some common understanding and some agreed ways of working to smooth the way, to encourage participation and ownership of the process.

It aims to create a safe, active and participatory climate in which to work. Consequently, setting out some ways and means of working, in a type of mutual understanding, will speed up the process of building a steering group in a positive way.

Encouraging co-operation within a group can create a sense of trust, safety and openness. It will help to spend some time defining what each of these values means thereby avoiding misunderstandings that can occur later on in the process.

You could get some outside help from New Forest District Council Community Planning Officer or the Community Development Officer at Community First New Forest to help with this activity.

Topic 1 - Confidentiality and Openness

Have a discussion about the limits of confidentiality within the working group. This can have an impact on people's openness. A set of Ground rules can ensure:

- Every participant has a responsibility to speak frankly and clearly and to be heard without interruption
- What will happen when there is a disagreement
- What information will you share with the outside world, what information will you keep in reserve
- Are there issues of data protection?

Topic 2 - Communication

You may want to keep individuals, groups of people or the whole community informed of the progress.

- What will you publicise and when.
- Who will be kept informed
- Will you keep notes,
- How will these be circulated
- Do you need a list of e-mail addresses
- Do you want press coverage

Topic 3 - Participation and accountability

It may help the people on the steering group to understand that the object of this Toolkit is to get things done. Active involvement and taking the initiative are key factors and taking responsibility for decisions is part of that.

- Take time to know who is on your steering group and their strengths
- Are you involved as an individual or representing a group
- Consider taking it in turns to chair the group to spread responsibility and encourage participation
- Have a discussion about the length of the Toolkit process
- What responsibility for your involvement will you take, including working through any disagreements
- There may be negative feeling or unwillingness to get involved. Be prepared to discuss this and find a way forward.
- Accept that not everyone may be enthusiastic, but draw a line at how much criticism the group will tolerate. Identify helpful sources of support
- Can you and are you willing to see the process through to completion
- Do you understand that some tasks may be delegated to you and others for completion
- You will need some way of providing information for people about what is going on
- Do you know when meetings will be held

Topic 4 - Partnership

The success of the Toolkit is based up on partnership working. This means; cooperation between individuals and organisations in the community who work together for a common aim, and who may share resources and responsibilities and agree to work together in a mutually supportive way'.

This means partnership is a way of bringing positive understanding and possible changes to the local community.

People you might want to consider asking to join the steering group are representatives from: the church, local council, community partnerships or liaison groups, community association, education, youth groups, voluntary community groups, disability groups and community facilities.

- List the positives and negatives of partnership working - what will you gain and what will you lose
- Be clear about the end result in relation to the effort and involvement
- Be clear about what you can afford to contribute in time/involvement
- Understand and agree to what is being asked of each other
- Be realistic about what can be achieved
- Decide on your exit strategy. How far will you go and when do you need to stop?

Topic 5 - Support and optimism

Working through the Toolkit will take lots of time and effort. Encouragement and leadership can come from within the group, when you review the working through the different steps. It is not only getting to the end of the process that will bring success, it is also what you learn and understand along the way. Positive feedback can come from sharing results with local support agencies.

On a practical level, there are many sources of support (see Section Three)

