

Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership



Community Engagement Framework

Responses to the Survey of Stakeholders and Partners to the LSP, December – January 2008/9

This report provides information on the responses to the survey of community engagement undertaken by Jez Hall on behalf of LDLSP between December 2008 and January 2009.

The author has attempted to condense the detailed responses received in a way that can be easily understood. The picture painted of community engagement shows that whilst much good work is being done, there is room to improve engagement processes locally.

Alongside this feedback report, there will be a general research report on community engagement with further commentary on the survey responses and proposals for developing a community engagement framework of Lancaster District LSP.

That report will be available soon on the LDLSP website at:
(<http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/Category.asp?cat=785>)

For more information on the Community Engagement Framework project you should contact:

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Prepared February 2009 by



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Section 2: Responses by Stakeholders to LDLSP

(Stakeholders refer to voluntary community and faith sector organisations, business networks and bodies, and also parish councils that responded to the stakeholder questionnaire)

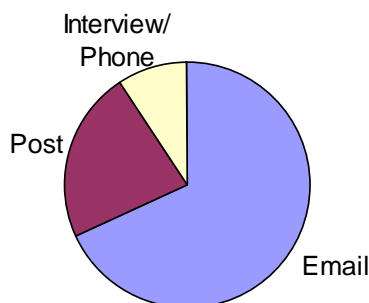
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Section 1: LDLSP CEF Survey - Partnership responses

1.1 About the respondents

How people replied to the survey

Email	15
Post	5
Interview/Phone	2
Total responses	22

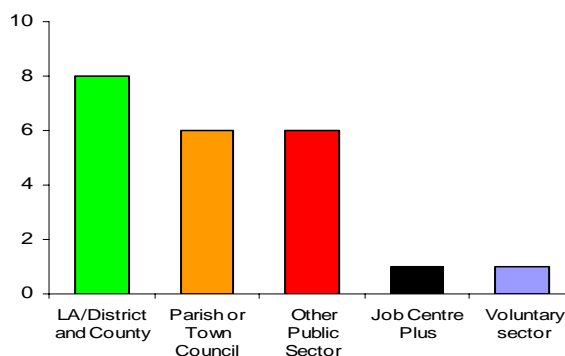


Those that responded included

- Environment Agency
- Lancashire County Council
- Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service
- Lancashire Police
- Lancaster City Council
- NHS North Lancashire
- Adult and Community Services (Older People’s Services)
- Adult and Community Services (Learning Disability)
- Lancaster District CVS
- Jobcentre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council
- Lancaster and Morecambe College
- University of Cumbria
- Youth Offending Team
- Carnforth Town Council
- Arkholme with Cawood Parish Council
- Borwick Parish Meeting
- Halton with Aughton Parish Council
- Slyne with Hest Parish Council
- Thurnham Parish Council
- Yealand Conyers Parish Council

What type of organisations are these?

Local Authority/District and County	8
Parish or Town Council	6
Other Public Sector	6
Voluntary sector	1
	22



Typical services they provide

- The normal functions of local parish councils, setting local precepts, running a local civic hall or community centre, support to local community projects, grass cutting and ground maintenance, environmental improvement, allotments, children’s’ play areas and being an important link between residents and the city and county

- councils, including local planning departments
- Commissioning of health services and providing local primary care, and assessment and commissioning of care services for those needing support
- Policing crime and responding to requests for police assistance from the public
- Supporting the local voluntary sector through information, representation, funding advice and by developing the skills needed to run voluntary and community organisations.
- Protecting and improving the local environment so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.
- Emergency responses to fire, crime, traffic health incidents
- The City Council provides a huge range of services including refuse collection, street cleansing, recycling, parks and open spaces, playgrounds, housing, planning, council tax collection, housing and council tax benefit, economic development and tourism including grant provision and support, property services, environmental health, arts, events and sports etc.
- Support to children, young people and their families, though a wide range of support services and through education and training from early years right through to Higher Education and adult learning.

Their services are focussed on engaging with a range of local people and communities including:

- Local residents, including Older People, Adults with a physical disability, Young people, and those able to claim benefits
- Young offenders, their families and victims of crime and all communities
- The Voluntary, community and faith sector
- Business, black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, travellers, trade unions, councillors, LSP, employees, farmers, landowners etc

1. 2. How partners are currently engaging

Partners engage in a variety of ways including:

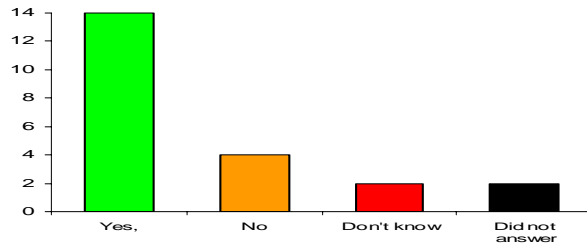
- Public meetings, use of notice-boards, newsletters, individual contact, through the internet, and through user and service networks.
- They often engage with the hardest to help sections of the community
- Some commented that large public meeting don't often reflect the needs of the local community and can be taken over by those individuals who have single issues and with the loudest voice.
- They also favour the community getting involved and driving the activity as well.
- Participatory engagement, and not just consulting, was seen as important to enable people to put forward their own views.

Some partners expressed they were keen to involve people in decisions that affected them as early as possible. Participation however takes time and this means the members of the partnership did sometimes struggle to engage effectively, especially when they don't take the time needed to do it properly.

Engaging also through partners (multi-agency working) was seen as a good way to ensure the best outcomes.

When asked if their service or organisation have a strategy for community engagement most partners felt they did have one

Yes	14
No	4
Don't know	2
Did not answer	2
	22



There were a variety of ways listed that people find out how they can engage

- Through websites, which sometimes also include a strategic plan or notices of meetings and so forth
- Through directly contacting frontline staff and managers
- Joining in strategic meetings, LSP meetings, the local Children's Trust etc

Most partners didn't employ staff specifically to do engagement work, though quite a few of the larger organisations did.

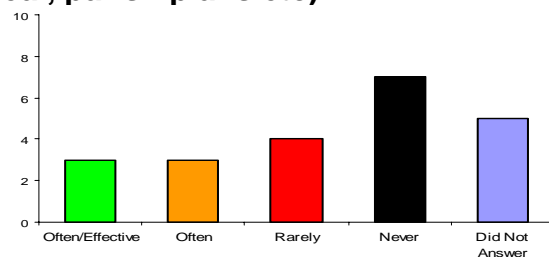
Yes	7
Don't Know	2
No	9
Did Not Answer	4
	22



These were some of the tools and techniques they used, and whether they were felt to be very effective or not.

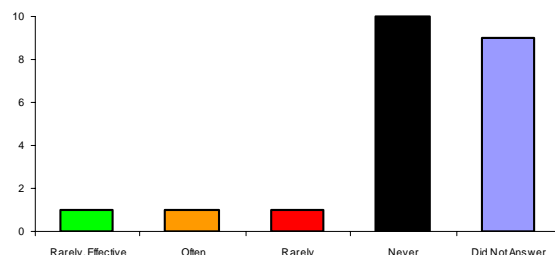
Area based planning (e.g. Planning For Real, parish plans etc)

Often used and Effective	3
Often used	3
Rarely used	4
Never used	7
Did Not Answer	5
	22



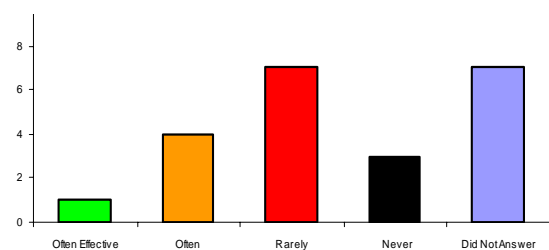
Citizens juries

Rarely used but Effective	1
Often	1
Rarely	1
Never	10
Did Not Answer	9
	22



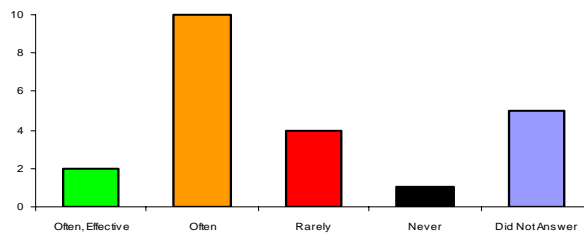
Community profiling and mapping

Often Effective	1
Often	4
Rarely	7
Never	3
Did Not Answer	7
	22



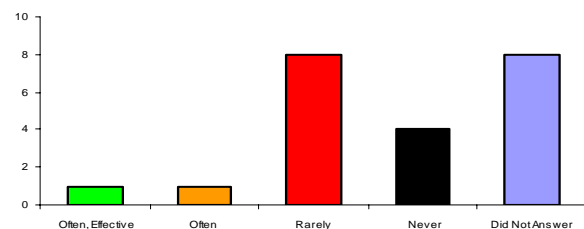
Complaints/suggestions schemes

Often, Effective	2
Often	10
Rarely	4
Never	1
Did Not Answer	5
	22



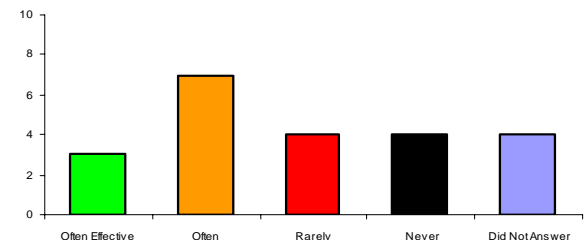
Creative methods (diaries, videos etc)

Often, Effective	1
Often	1
Rarely	8
Never	4
Did Not Answer	8
	22



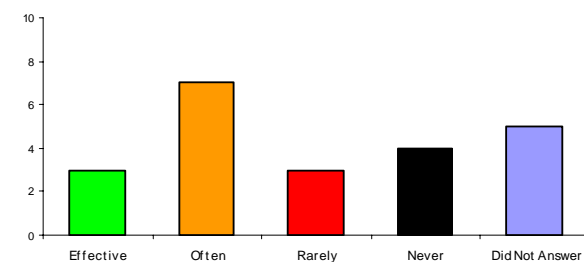
Exhibitions and Open Days

Often Effective	3
Often	7
Rarely	4
Never	4
Did Not Answer	4
	22



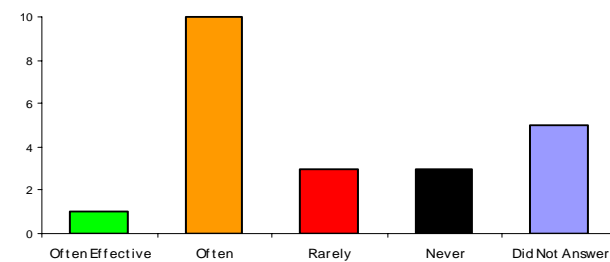
Focus groups

Effective	3
Often	7
Rarely	3
Never	4
Did Not Answer	5
	22



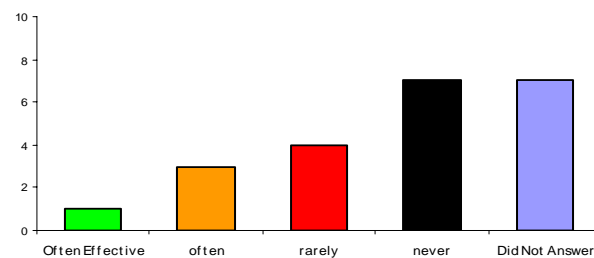
Formal consultations

Often Effective	1
Often	10
Rarely	3
Never	3
Did Not Answer	5
	22



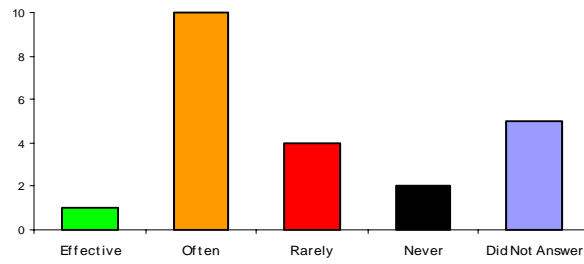
In depth interviews

Often Effective	1
often	3
rarely	4
never	7
Did Not Answer	7
	22



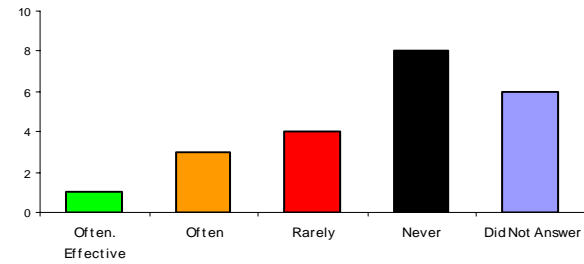
Inviting written comments

Effective	1
Often	10
Rarely	4
Never	2
Did Not Answer	5
	22



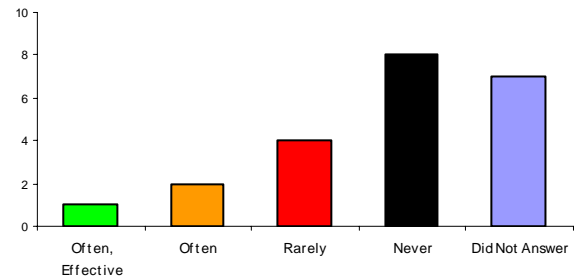
Online forums and e-engagement

Often. Effective	1
Often	3
Rarely	4
Never	8
Did Not Answer	6
	22



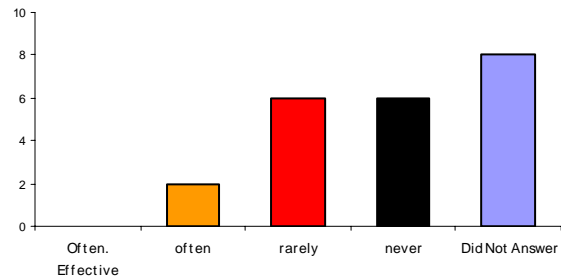
Online surveys

Often, Effective	1
Often	2
Rarely	4
Never	8
Did Not Answer	7
	22



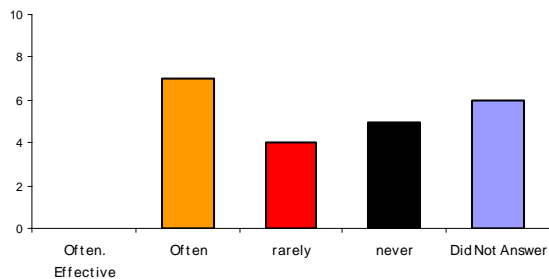
Participatory budgeting

Often. Effective	0
often	2
rarely	6
never	6
Did Not Answer	8
	22



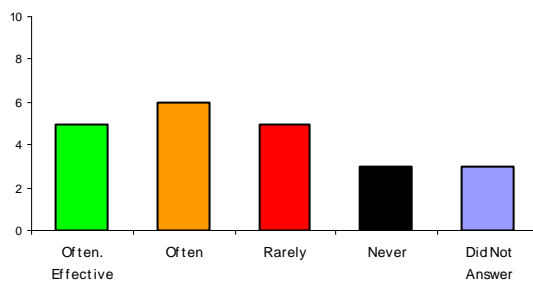
Postal surveys

Often. Effective	0
Often	7
rarely	4
never	5
Did Not Answer	6
	22



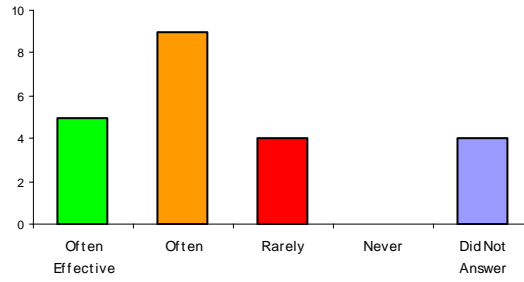
Press and media reports

Often. Effective	5
Often	6
Rarely	5
Never	3
Did Not Answer	3
	22



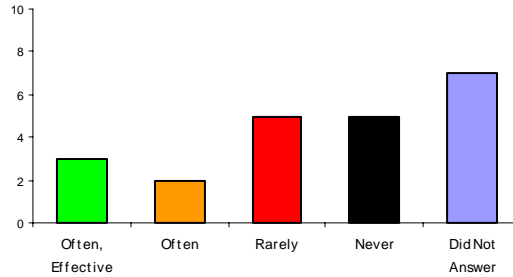
Public Meetings

Often Effective	5
Often	9
Rarely	4
Never	0
Did Not Answer	4
	22



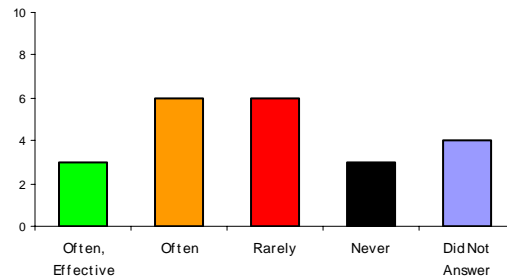
Road Shows

Often, Effective	3
Often	2
Rarely	5
Never	5
Did Not Answer	7
	22



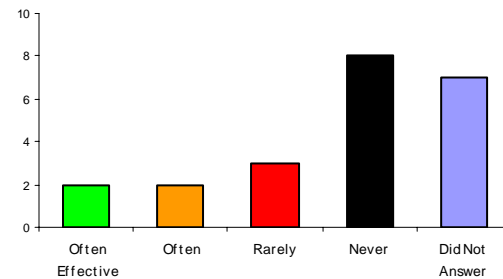
Service newsletters/magazines

Often, Effective	3
Often	6
Rarely	6
Never	3
Did Not Answer	4
	22



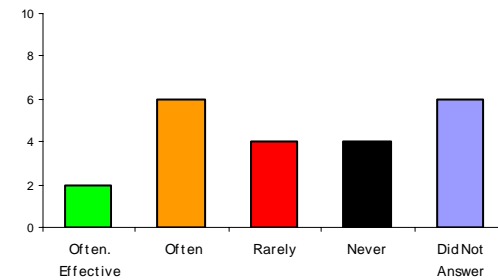
Telephone surveys

Often Effective	2
Often	2
Rarely	3
Never	8
Did Not Answer	7
	22



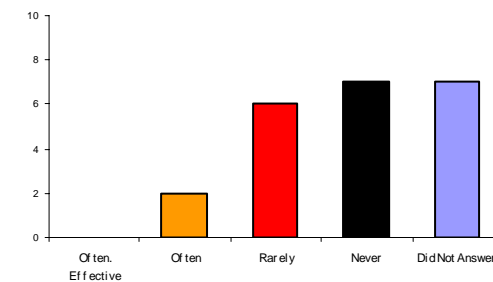
User and stakeholder groups

Often. Effective	2
Often	6
Rarely	4
Never	4
Did Not Answer	6
	22



Visioning days

Often. Effective	0
Often	2
Rarely	6
Never	7
Did Not Answer	7
	22



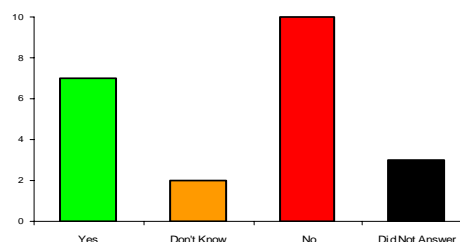
Other engagement methods that were regularly used included

- Working groups and panels
- Notice boards
- Deliberative events and face to face meetings are most effective
- Personal contacts
- Texting
- Press and media reports - good news stories were very important

1.3: Improving on current engagement

When asked about how they were improving on their current engagement, most said they hadn't recently tried new methods of community engagement

Yes	7
Don't Know	2
No	10
Did Not Answer	3
	22

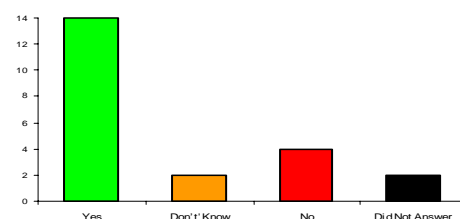


Things they have tried included:

- Getting an old ambulance converted into a "big brother" style diary room.
- Neighbourhood Management – the Participatory Budgeting pilot in Poulton was mentioned as very successful
- Encouraging the creation of a number of new community groups
- Improving websites and sending individual letters to households
- Using social networking sites like Facebook and Bebo – this is particular good at targeting young people as young people don't like formal meetings
- One organisation is planning a project around raising the voice of young people's by getting them to explain the difficult situations they have to live with

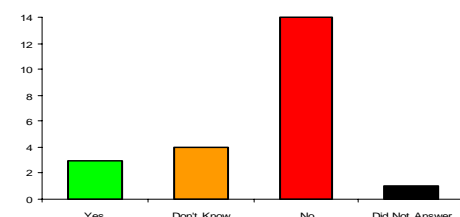
Most partners plan to improve the way they do community engagement

Yes	14
Don't Know	2
No	4
Did Not Answer	2
	22



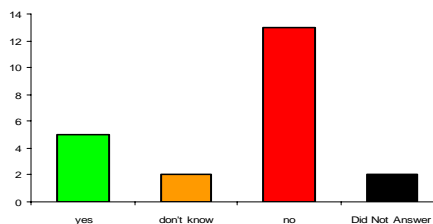
However not many offer frontline staff training in community engagement

Yes	3
Don't Know	4
No	14
Did Not Answer	1
	22



Few said they had a defined budget to enable effective community engagement

Yes	5
Don't Know	2
No	13
Did Not Answer	2
	22



This was how they said they were trying to improve how they engaged

- Building and using internal skills, observing colleagues in other districts, networking, going to conferences or training events.
- Reading appropriate publications and network with other organisations
- Some empower staff by having community engagement champions
- Some look at best practice across the country or see what other organisations are doing.
- Some have a dedicated team to develop and improve community engagement.

Although they sometimes collaborated many felt they could do more and that a shared community engagement framework would help. These are some of the comments

- Certainly there is scope for joint working with other public bodies, charities and third sector organisations and this process is underway
- It's something we are hoping to achieve in 2009
- We work closely with our providers and funding body
- We would collaborate more if we were aware of what was taking place.

Some were able to undertake or support engagement work on behalf of others. However local partners don't always recognise that skills that already existed and weren't being used.

There were lots of different ways suggested to judge the effectiveness of community engagement

- Keeping minutes of meetings and report on the number of members of the public taking part
- The number of cultural activities and community projects underway.
- The outcome of those projects and the support received
- Through service user and carer feedback
- Through surveys
- Verbal feedback to councillors and others

But quite a few didn't have ways of judging whether their engagement was working or not

Feed back was regarded as important but some partners were unsure how good they were giving feedback.

- Some said they always feed back to participants and believe they are good at keeping in touch, either individually, through group meetings or through newsletters.
- The press was an important route by which to feedback- though this depended on the media picking up the story, which didn't always happen.
- Others relied on annual reports or notices posted on their website

- Simple, well maintained notice boards were often surprisingly effective

When asked where they go for information or support concerning community engagement good practice there was a variety of answers.

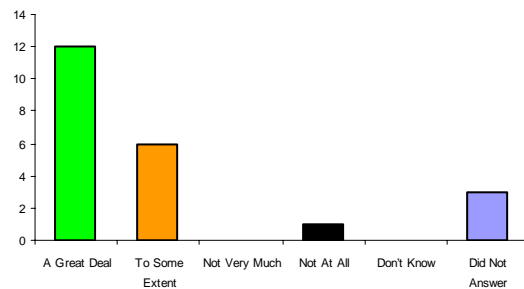
- Most said they would use their existing networks or way of doing things
- The internet was also a well used source of knowledge.
- Some said they would ask partners in the LSP.
- Most weren't using local skills and support, even where they knew it existed

Few mentioned directly talking to local people to find help with how to engage, even though they would probably be the best source of this information

4: Views about engagement

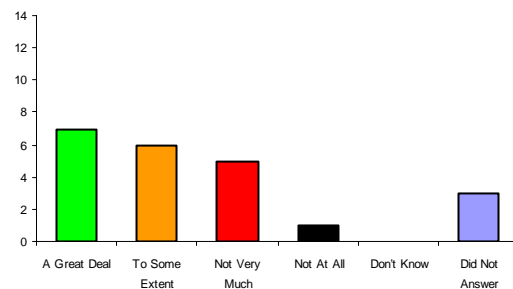
Most felt community engagement could add value to their work

A Great Deal	12
To Some Extent	6
Not Very Much	0
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



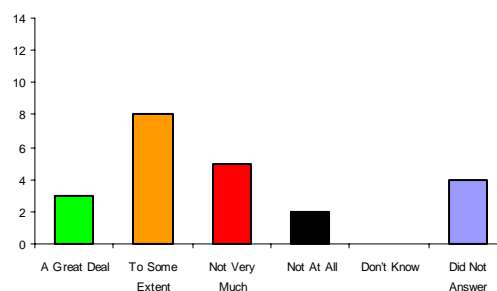
Less were confident when starting or doing community engagement work

A Great Deal	7
To Some Extent	6
Not Very Much	5
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



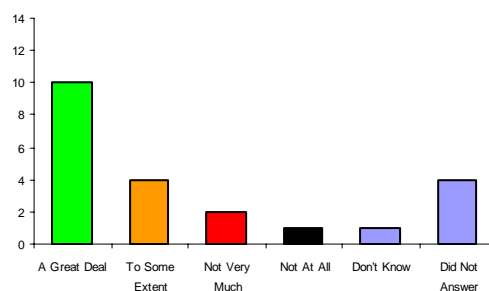
More were less sure they knew where to go for help and support

A Great Deal	3
To Some Extent	8
Not Very Much	5
Not At All	2
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	4



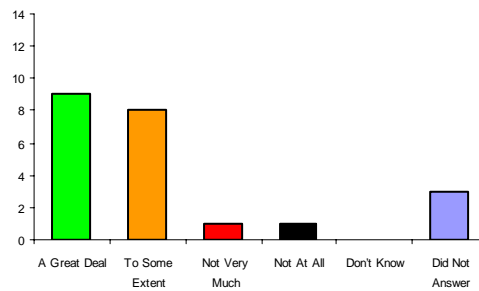
Most felt Community engagement makes a difference

A Great Deal	10
To Some Extent	4
Not Very Much	2
Not At All	1
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	4
	22



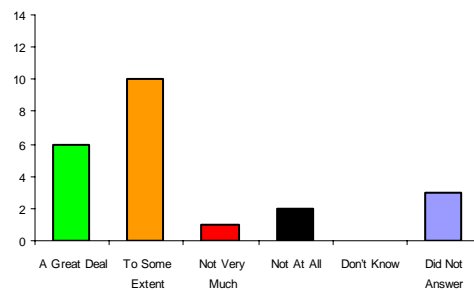
Most felt they were pretty good about informing others about projects, services and facilities already on offer

A Great Deal	9
To Some Extent	8
Not Very Much	1
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



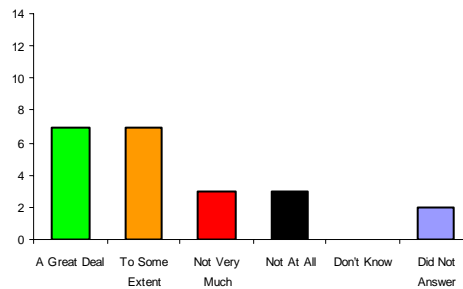
They were less sure they consulted so well about improving the services and facilities already on offer

A Great Deal	6
To Some Extent	10
Not Very Much	1
Not At All	2
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



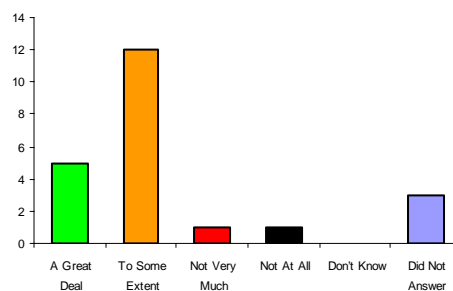
With a similar mixed response about how well they consult with others about the services and facilities they could offer in the future

A Great Deal	7
To Some Extent	7
Not Very Much	3
Not At All	3
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	2
	22



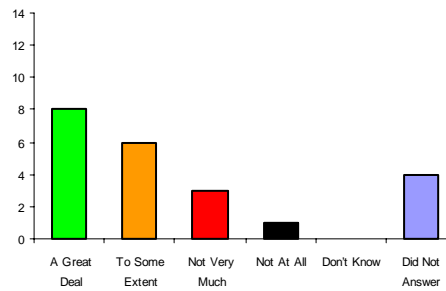
Most felt the consult with others about policies, procedures or strategies only sometimes

A Great Deal	5
To Some Extent	12
Not Very Much	1
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



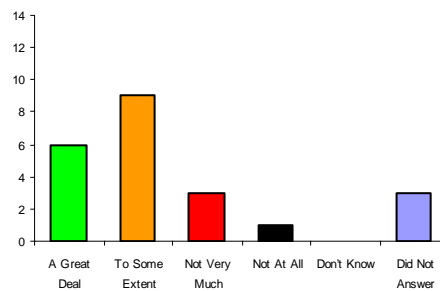
But were slightly more confident consultation processes locally give people clear options to choose from

A Great Deal	8
To Some Extent	6
Not Very Much	3
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	4
	22



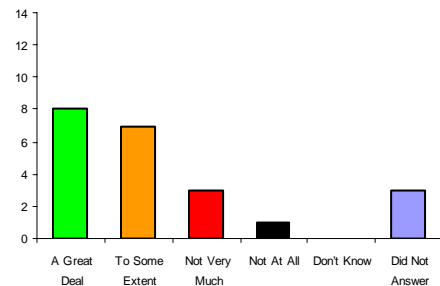
LSP members were not so sure people were actually involved in decision making about which options are chosen

A Great Deal	6
To Some Extent	9
Not Very Much	3
Not At All	1
Don't Know	
Did Not Answer	3
	22



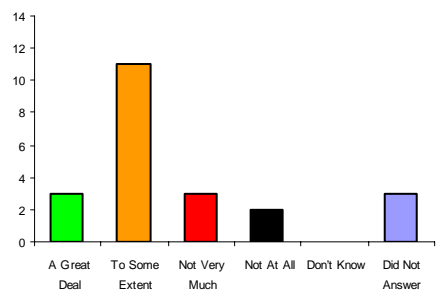
Though they were more confident they could collaborate effectively in partnership with others to deliver services

A Great Deal	8
To Some Extent	7
Not Very Much	3
Not At All	1
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



Commitment to empowerment by providing the community with resources needed to act independently was not so good

A Great Deal	3
To Some Extent	11
Not Very Much	3
Not At All	2
Don't Know	0
Did Not Answer	3
	22



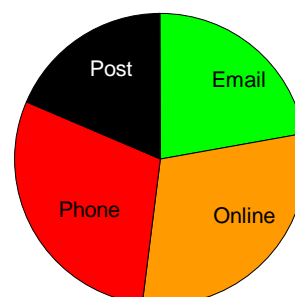
Section 2: Stakeholder responses to the CEF survey

2.1: Who responded

Rather than being sent out randomly the survey was targeted to reflect as wide a cross section of stakeholders as possible. Over half the people we contacted responded, mostly voluntary and community sector organisations, though we did go wider than just that sector.

How the responses were received

Email	6
Online	8
Phone	8
Post	5
Total replies	27



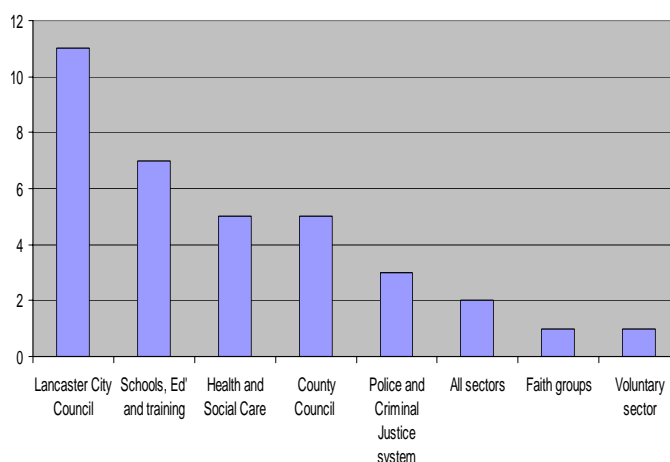
The types of organisation that responded

- Voluntary Community And Faith Sector
- Business Membership, Training or Support Organisations
- Parish Councils
- Education providers, arts and culture organisations

Respondants were asked which public services or agencies they engage with most often. This is what they said:

- Lancaster City Council 11
- Schools, Education and training 7
- County Council and its departments 5
- Health and Social Care 5
- Police and Criminal Justice system 3
- All sectors 2
- Faith groups 1
- Voluntary sector 1

No. of different replies 40

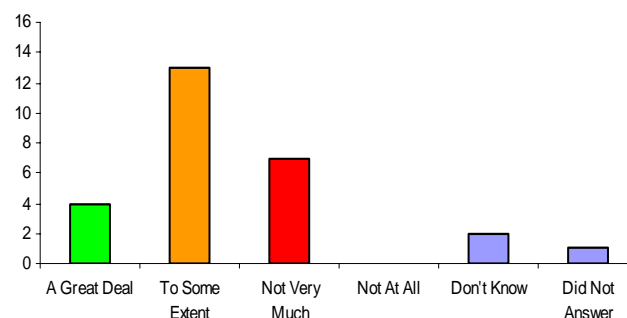


2: Views about engagement locally

When asked if public bodies locally inform local people about their projects and services this is what they said:

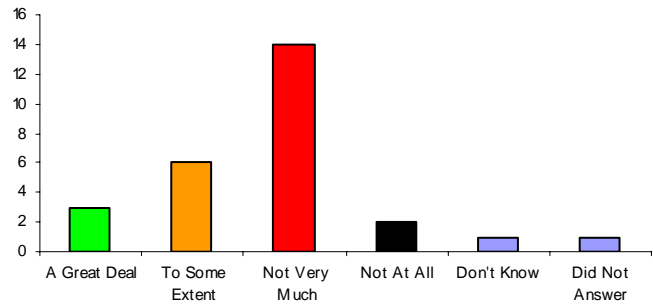
A Great Deal	4
To Some Extent	13
Not Very Much	7
Not At All	0
Don't Know	2
Did Not Answer	1

27



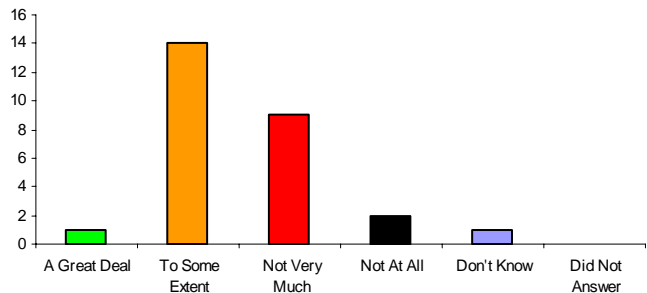
When asked if Public bodies locally consult with people about the services they could offer in the future they said:

A Great Deal	3
To Some Extent	6
Not Very Much	14
Not At All	2
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	1
	27



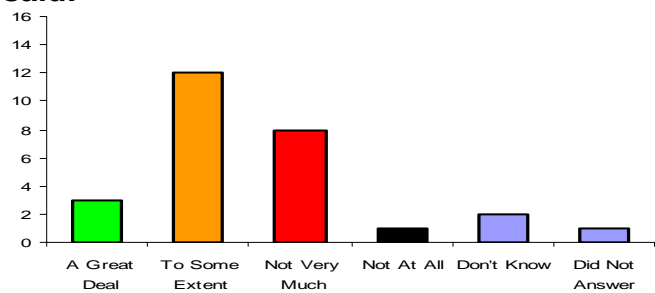
When asked if public bodies locally engage with people about the services they already offer they said:

A Great Deal	1
To Some Extent	14
Not Very Much	9
Not At All	2
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	0
	27



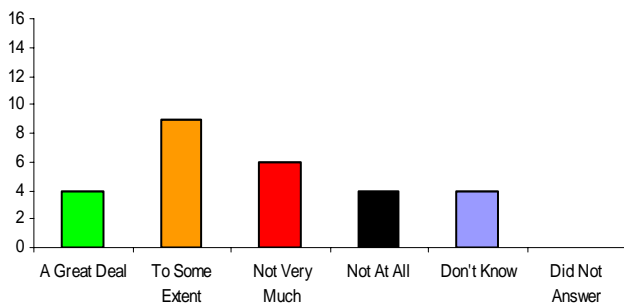
When asked if consultation processes locally give people options about the future services public bodies will offer they said:

A Great Deal	3
To Some Extent	12
Not Very Much	8
Not At All	1
Don't Know	2
Did Not Answer	1
	27



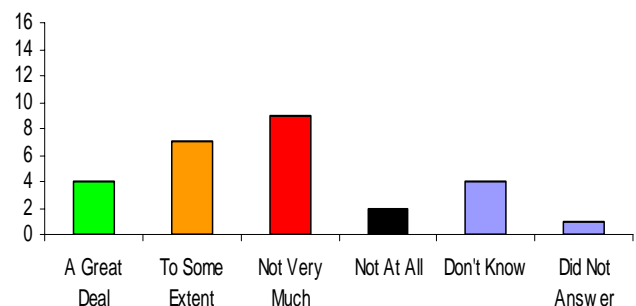
When asked if public bodies locally feedback the results of consultations to those that took part they said:

A Great Deal	4
To Some Extent	9
Not Very Much	6
Not At All	4
Don't Know	4
Did Not Answer	0
	27



When asked if public bodies locally also consult about the policies, procedures or strategies they adopt they said:

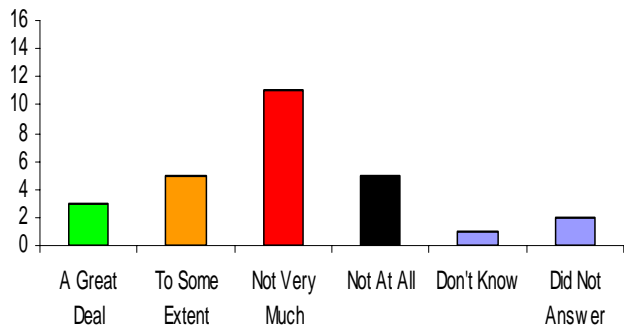
A Great Deal	4
To Some Extent	7
Not Very Much	9
Not At All	2
Don't Know	4
Did Not Answer	1
	27



When asked if public bodies locally enable others to be involved in the decision making they said:

A Great Deal	3
To Some Extent	5
Not Very Much	11
Not At All	5
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	2

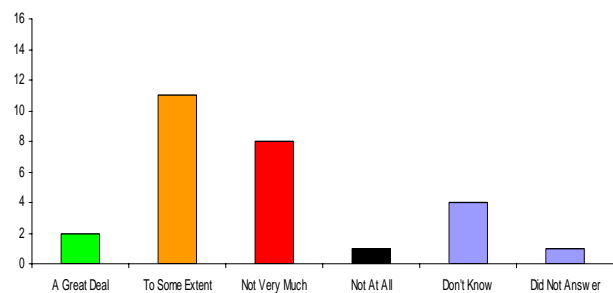
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When asked if consultation processes have an affect on services that will be offered in future they said

A Great Deal	2
To Some Extent	11
Not Very Much	8
Not At All	1
Don't Know	4
Did Not Answer	1

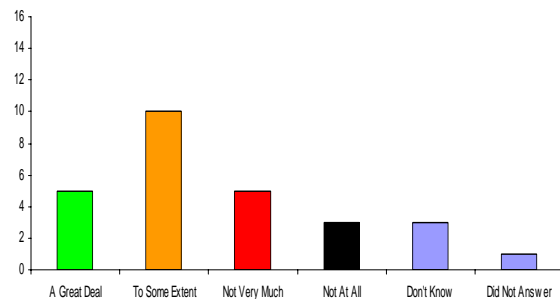
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When asked if public bodies work effectively in partnership with others to deliver services they said

A Great Deal	5
To Some Extent	10
Not Very Much	5
Not At All	3
Don't Know	3
Did Not Answer	1

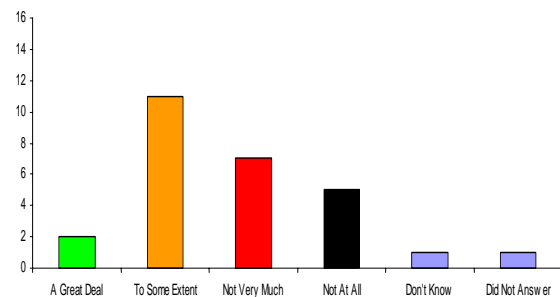
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When asked if public bodies in the Lancaster district are good at community engagement they said:

A Great Deal	2
To Some Extent	11
Not Very Much	7
Not At All	5
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	1

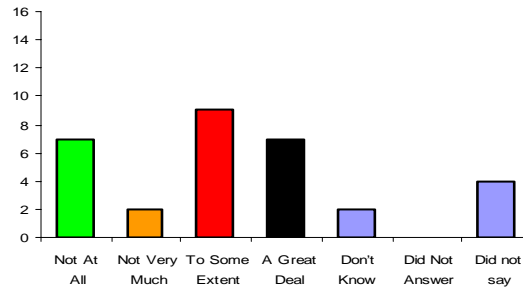
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When asked if they regularly encounter problems when trying to engage with public bodies they said: (Note changed ordering of responses)

Not At All	7
Not Very Much	2
To Some Extent	9
A Great Deal	7
Don't Know	2
Did Not Answer	0

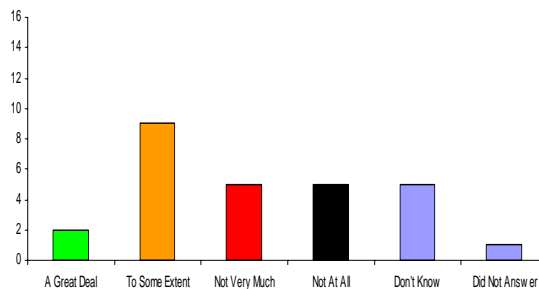
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When asked if public bodies empower others by providing them with resources needed to act independently to improve local services they said:

A Great Deal	2
To Some Extent	9
Not Very Much	5
Not At All	5
Don't Know	5
Did Not Answer	1

27

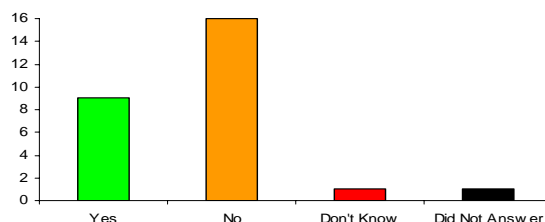


3: Experiences of engagement

When asked if they had recently be asked to contribute to the development of local services or consulted about a change to the way services are delivered they said:

Yes	9
No	16
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	1

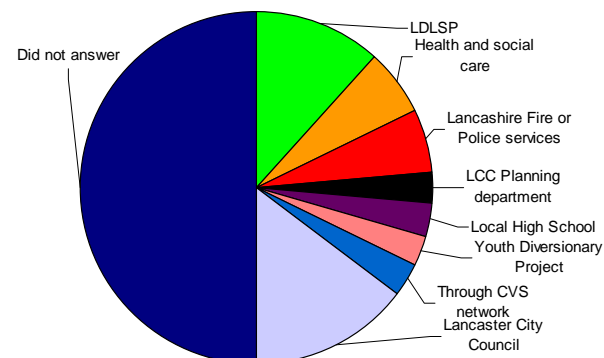
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When asked which organisation or service invited their contribution they said:

LDLSP	4
Health and social care	2
Lancashire Fire or Police services	2
LCC Planning department	1
Local High School	1
Youth Diversionary Project	1
Through CVS network	1
Lancaster City Council	5
Did not answer	17

34



When asked how they were asked to be involved they most often said they

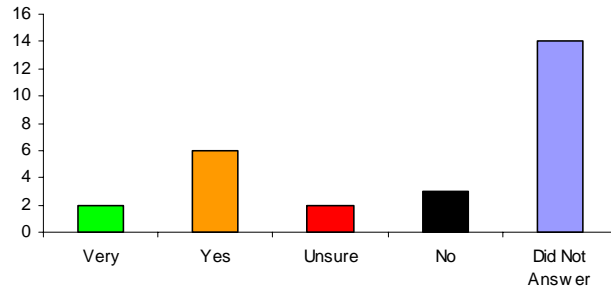
- Contacted by post or email with an invitation to comment on proposed service plans
- Engaged in user networks or other networks
- Asked to be part of a project

Most respondents did not answer this question.

When asked did you feel this was a successful experience they said

Very successful	2
Yes	6
Unsure	2
No	3
Did Not Answer	14

27



When asked why they say this there were a variety of positive responses including:

- Produced results beyond our expectations, and viewed as a success in having an impact by local community.
- They noted our comments and acted upon some of the proposals
- We are seen as experts
- It was well organised

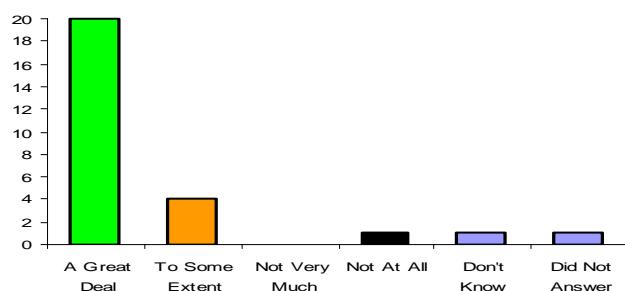
However there were negative comments too:

- Complaints when feedback wasn't good or no chance to respond
- Frustrations with trying to work through local partnerships (including LDLSP)
- Not reaching the right people

Most people felt good community engagement can improve public services

A Great Deal	20
To Some Extent	4
Not Very Much	0
Not At All	1
Don't Know	1
Did Not Answer	1

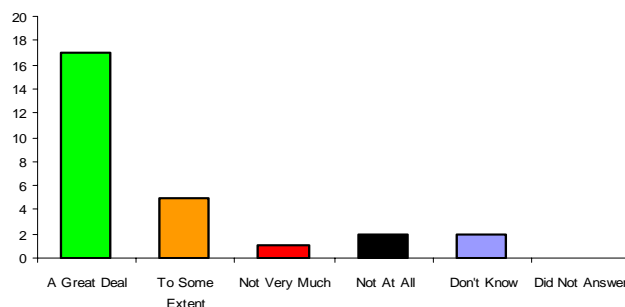
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In general, it was felt good engagement also made a difference to how their organisation could do its work

A Great Deal	17
To Some Extent	5
Not Very Much	1
Not At All	2
Don't Know	2
Did Not Answer	0

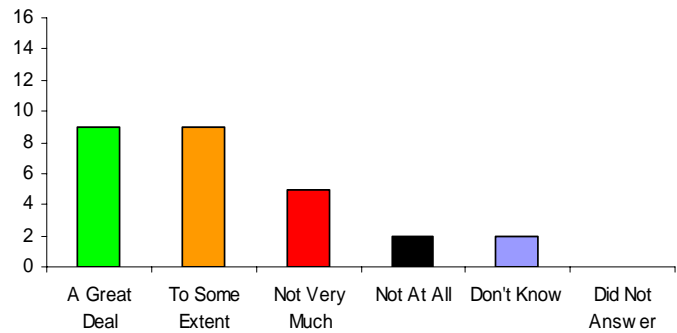
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They were more mixed about if they were positive about their experience of community engagement locally

A Great Deal	9
To Some Extent	9
Not Very Much	5
Not At All	2
Don't Know	2
Did Not Answer	0

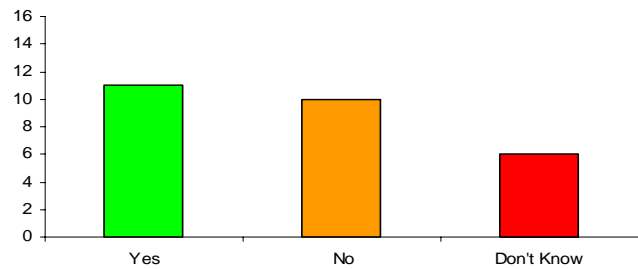
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It was fairly evenly balanced about whether engagement was getting better

Yes	11
No	10
Don't Know	6

27



This is a summary of the feedback from comments received

- Public agencies are engaging more with the public. Some experiences of engaging with public bodies have been regarded as good to excellent.
- There were some positive comments about agency workers and their proactive and dynamic approach to community engagement.
- Lancaster has a lot of proactive groups that together with new guidelines can produce a good partnership for the future.
- There seems to be an increase in understanding that the voluntary sector has expertise.

On a more negative side people said:

- Engagement is improving slightly but has a long way to go
- City Councillors and city and county services must do more to get on the ground and gauge the views of local people.
- There are some concerns over engagement levels and the approach taken when working in partnership with the voluntary sector, and there is a need for a more proactive approach to ensure there is better engagement with the public sector.
- Certain experiences would indicate that despite input from the community public bodies in the Lancaster district do what they want.
- There were complaints of poor feedback, and communication and too much bureaucracy.
- There is a need to clarify the role of the third sector and what is expected from them.

Other comments we received about experiences of community engagement within the Lancaster District and how it could be improved

- The development of parish and ward plans throughout Lancaster District would be one means of improving community engagement.
- There is a need to continue to build trust and openness between groups and for more actual working together.
- There are some agencies that appear to pay 'lip service' towards residents about their problems and concerns. This can sometimes unravel the good work done by other agencies or partnerships.
- It would be useful to develop mechanisms to offer support to smaller organisations to work collaboratively to deliver services and to allow small third sector organisations to compete with larger, more established organisations.
- There is a perception that that only some groups can have influence and LDLSP needs to be talking to and directly involving community groups.
- We should all be using more accessible language when communicating with people.
- So much good work can be achieved if we work in partnership. LDLSP members need to ensure that consultation involves actively listening.
- It was recognised that community consultation needs to be looked at and there is a need to ensure that we benefit from the best practices of the local voluntary and community networks that already engage with LDLSP.

2.4. Thank you to respondents from the CEF project board

The LDLSP Community Engagement Framework Project Board would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who took part in this valuable piece of research.

The results of this research will be used to take forward the next stages of the project with a view to the Lancaster district having its own Community Engagement Framework in place later this year.

This feedback tells us that there is some good work going on in the district already but helps us to recognise that we have still much more work to do to ensure that community engagement in the Lancaster district strengthens our links with the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. With this information we are closer to identifying the sector's vision for community engagement and to putting the right tools in place to make that vision a reality.

Chief Inspector Tracie O'Gara

On behalf of the LDLSP Community Engagement Framework Project Board