

Advice Sheets

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STEP 1

GETTING STARTED

Purpose

This step outlines how you can 'kick-start' a Community Led Plan in your community.

What's involved

Making contact with people who can help you, organising an initial event to attract wider community interest and ensuring that you have enough support to take the plan forward.

Useful resources

Resource sheet 1/1 - Who might be interested in a Community Led Plan?

Resource sheet 1/2 - Preparing for your first event

Resource sheet 1/3 - Volunteering hints and tips

Resource sheet 1/4 - Feedback and skills form

Local resources - contact your Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) member for details

Introduction

The prospect of starting a Community Led Plan can be daunting. The plan is likely to take up to 18 months to produce and its success will depend largely on your ability to get everyone involved. However, if you follow the 9 'steps' outlined in this toolkit, the whole process should be manageable and hopefully fun too!

It's important that you get your Community Led Plan off to a good start. Some simple preparation can make all the difference. This step provides some pointers about how you can do this.

Making contact with people who can help you

If you are thinking about undertaking a Community Led Plan in your community, it is recommended that you make contact with the following organisations at the earliest possible opportunity:

Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) members

Across England, there are 38 RCAN members – charities which specialise in helping community groups undertake Community Led Plans. You should contact your local RCAN member at the earliest possible opportunity to let them know of your intentions to produce a plan for your community. They will be able to discuss the Community Led Planning process with you in more detail, let you know if you can benefit from funding or support from your local authority and help you with your first event. In some cases, they may also have local resources for Community Led Planning that you may wish to use. Please see the contacts list at the back of this toolkit to find your nearest RCAN member.

Parish/town councils

Most good Community Led Plans are undertaken in partnership with the local parish or town council. Sometimes, they may even be initiated by one. This partnership is often very productive, as the parish or town council can use its position within the community to mobilise resources to make things happen. For this reason, they should be involved in the process from the beginning.

See also: **Information Sheet E - Support for Community Led Planning**

The first event

Having made contact with your nearest RCAN member and parish or town council, it is essential that you attract interest from the wider community in the possibility of producing a plan for the local area. Without enthusiasm and desire from a good cross-section of the community, it will be difficult to gain sufficient momentum to undertake a thorough and inclusive plan.

See: **Resource Sheet 1/1 – Who might be interested in a Community Led Plan?**

A good way to 'launch' a Community Led Plan is at a public event where people can learn about the process and consider getting involved. Often an officer from your RCAN member will be happy to attend this and provide advice and support where needed.

There are several reasons why public events are a good way to launch a Community Led Plan:

- They can be an effective way of getting people's attention, especially if publicised well beforehand
- They are a chance to discuss what a Community Led Plan for your area might involve and the potential benefits it could bring
- They are an opportunity to make contact with other key stakeholders – particularly officers from your local authority who will need to be engaged throughout the process
- They can be used to gather initial ideas about issues that your community may wish to address over the course of the plan
- They allow you to coax people into getting on board and helping out!

To find out how you can plan for your first event, see: **Resource Sheet 1/2 – Preparing for your first event**

Getting people on board

Following your first event, it is important that you keep in touch with everyone that attended and approach potential volunteers of different backgrounds who might be able to help out in many different ways. This will put you in a good position to create your steering group which is considered in Step 2.

See: **Resource Sheet 1/1 – Who might be interested in a Community Led Plan**
Resource Sheet 1/3 – Volunteering hints and tips
Resource Sheet 1/4 – Feedback and skills form

By the end of this stage, it is recommended that you have:

- **Made contact with your nearest RCAN member, parish or town council and local authority**
- **Held an initial event to attract community interest in the plan and explore future action**
- **Made contact with a range of volunteers who might be able to help out in different ways.**



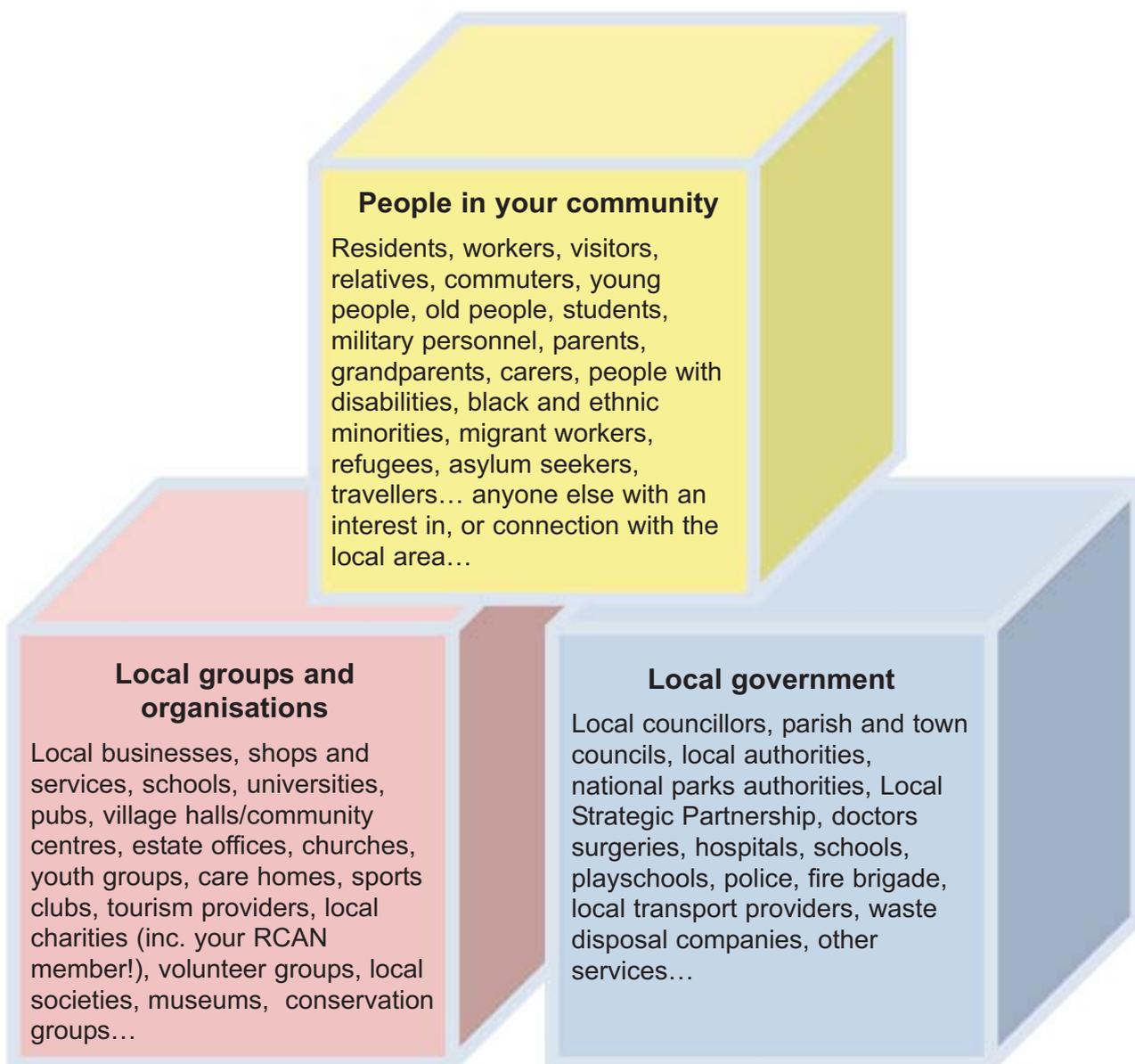
STEP 1

WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN A
COMMUNITY LED PLAN?**Use this for...**

Thinking about who might have an interest in your Community Led Plan and who might be able to help you along the way.

See also...

Information Sheet E - Support for Community Led Planning
Resource Sheet 1/3 – Volunteering hints and tips



STEP 1

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST EVENT

Use this for...

Planning a public event to launch your Community Led Plan.

See also...

Resource Sheet 1/1 – Who might be interested in a Community Led Plan?

Resource Sheet 1/3 – Volunteering hints and tips

Resource Sheet 1/4 – Feedback and skills form

Resource Sheet 3/1 – Funding advice

Start with a bang!

Holding a public event is a great way to launch a Community Led Plan. If you prepare well, it can interest the wider community in the prospect of producing a plan, attract potential volunteers and provide you with the momentum needed to take things forward.

Remember officers from your Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) member or, in some cases, your local authority may be available to help you facilitate the event.

Content

To make the most out of your first event, you need to think carefully about its purpose and what you hope to achieve. Consider how you will:

- Introduce the Community Led Plan. What is it? What can it do for your community? What is involved?
- Provide everyone with a chance to discuss the prospect of having a Community Led Plan for the area
- Use the event to make contact with key stakeholders, particularly officers from your local authority
- Make a note of people's interest in the plan and what skills they might be able to contribute to any future work.



Format

There is no one particular format of public event that groups should adopt. It is up to you to decide what suits your community best. However, you might like to think about the following possible options. Please treat these as a rough guide rather than an exact template.

Open meeting

Open meetings are more like a traditional meeting, held in a community building at a time during the week when most people can attend.

Groups that use open meetings often ask a number of key people to provide presentations.

Possible speakers could include:

- Officer from your RCAN member (to introduce Community Led Planning)
- Someone from the instigating group (to explain why a plan might benefit the community)
- Parish or town council member (to get their views)
- Someone from another community that has already produced a plan (to talk about their experiences)
- Local authority officer (to explain how they value and support Community Led Planning groups).

At an open meeting, it is still important to get everyone's feedback. You should consider:

- Allowing time for questions after each presentation
- Using break-away discussion groups
- Using more interactive methods, for example 'have your say boards'. Your RCAN member should be able to advise you on such methods.

At the end of the meeting, you may wish to use a feedback and skills form to find out whether people would like to see the Community Led Plan progress and whether they would like to get involved in the future.

See: **Resource Sheet 1/4 – Feedback and skills form**

'Have your say boards'

'Have your say boards' are a quick and easy way of getting a feel for what people think about the local area at the first event.

Display sheets of paper with the following headings: social and community, transport and access, economy and environment.

Give people post-its and ask them to write about their likes, dislikes and suggestions to put on the headed sheets.

Make a note of peoples comments. They will be useful for planning future consultation with the community. See Step 3.



STEP 1

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST EVENT



Open day

Open days are more informal events usually held over a day or half day. The idea is that people can drop-by at a time convenient to them and chat about the prospect of producing a Community Led Plan. This type of event is particularly good for groups looking to 'piggy-back' onto existing events.

In contrast to the open meeting format, it will probably not be possible to provide presentations so you will need to think about presenting information in other ways such as:

- Displays
- Stalls with explainers
- More interactive methods – speak to your RCAN member for ideas.

You will also need to provide opportunities for feedback, for example you may like to use:

- 'Have your say boards'
- Comment boxes
- More interactive methods – speak to your RCAN member for ideas.

To attract people to the event, you may like to organise a parallel activity, for instance a 5 a-side football game for youngsters or anything else you can think of.

As with the open meeting, it is important that you make note of everyone who attended, and whether they would like to get involved in the future.

See: **Resource Sheet 1/4 – Feedback and skills form**

STEP 1

VOLUNTEERING HINTS AND TIPS

Use this for...

Recruiting and retaining volunteers; essential for progressing with any Community Led Plan.

See also...

Resource Sheet 1/1 – Who might be interested in a Community Led Plan?

Resource Sheet 1/2 – Preparing for your first event

Resource Sheet 2/3 – Example terms of reference for working groups

It won't work without volunteers!

To get a Community Led Plan off to a good start, it's important that you recruit and retain volunteers from all walks of life. Indeed, without volunteers it would be very hard to do anything at all!

This resource sheet provides some general pointers about how you can work with volunteers in an effective way.

What kind of volunteers does a Community Led Plan need?

Anyone can volunteer to get involved in a Community Led Plan. This need not be a formal commitment, nor need it take up much of people's time. Ultimately, it is about making the most of the skills, knowledge and interests that people in your community already have, without burdening certain individuals with unwanted levels of responsibility.

Different people should be encouraged to help out in different ways depending on their interests and availability. This might include:

- Acting as a point of contact for all enquiries relating to the plan
- Designing posters for events
- Speaking to people about their views and opinions
- Delivering questionnaires
- Supervising a children's litter-pick competition
- Making tea and cake for meetings
- Counting of votes at meetings
- Babysitting.



In practice however, the list is endless. It is up to your community to decide what needs doing, and who might be able to help.

It is also worth thinking about what local businesses, clubs and other organisations can contribute to your plan. For example, a local company might be able to provide printing at cost or the local scout group might be happy to deliver leaflets and questionnaires. Remember that they too are likely to benefit from the process!

Things to consider

Recruitment

It may be appropriate to recruit volunteers throughout the course of a plan, as and when specific tasks arise. However, if you have a good understanding about the skills, knowledge and interests that exist in your community from the start, it will be much easier to approach potential volunteers at a later stage. Using a feedback and skills form at the first event is a good way of documenting this. You may choose to recruit volunteers via word of mouth, local advertising (e.g. community newsletter, posters etc) or even by approaching existing community groups and organisations.

See: *Resource Sheet 1/4 –Feedback and skills form*

Diversity

Recruit volunteers from all walks of life. Remember that people can contribute in many different ways, however big or small. Encouraging a mix of volunteers to get involved will allow you to make the most of the different skills, knowledge and interests that exist in your community and will result in a stronger plan.

Task specification

When working with volunteers, it is important that everyone knows what they are doing and the levels of responsibility involved. This should be open to negotiation with individual volunteers. Clarity at the start will avoid confusion later!

Induction

Make sure that volunteers know how their efforts contribute to the overall plan and that they are confident in the task they have chosen to undertake. If possible, introduce them to other people who are working on the plan, especially those working on related tasks or with similar interests.

Training

Think about whether specific volunteers need training to help them with any given task. This may be formal or informal. Speak to your nearest RCAN member to find out whether there are any existing training opportunities you can take advantage of.

Health and safety

Take all reasonable steps to minimise health and safety risks to volunteers. Look after each other!

Insurance

It is not normally necessary for volunteers undertaking a Community Led Plan to take out insurance. However, in some situations you may wish to consider taking out public liability cover. This protects groups against claims from members of the public for death, illness, loss and injury caused by negligence. See <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk> for further information and speak to your local RCAN member officer.

Involve volunteers in decision making

It is likely that volunteers will want to have a say in how the plan progresses. Make sure that you listen to them and appreciate their views and comments or otherwise they may not get involved again!

Recognition and praise

It is important that volunteers are given both recognition and praise. If this is carried out in a genuine way people will feel valued and proud of what they are doing and more likely to continue doing it.

FEEDBACK AND SKILLS FORM

Use this for...

Producing a handout to use at your first event that will allow you to ascertain support for the plan and identify potential volunteers.

See also...

Resource Sheet 1/2 – Preparing your first event

Resource Sheet 1/3 – Volunteering hints and tips

Suggested template:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

1. Do you think a Community Led Plan for [name of community] is a good idea?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

2. Are there any particular issues that you think a Community Led Plan for [name of community] should address? Please specify below

3. Would you like to get involved in this Community Led Plan (in any capacity)?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

4. The success of this Community Led Plan will rely on the efforts of everyone in your community regardless of prior experience/background. If you would like to get involved in this Community Led Plan, it would be very helpful if you could indicate any skills/knowledge that you might be able to contribute below:

Skills/ Knowledge/Interests	A little	A lot
Keeping people informed (chatting, asking for help, telephoning)		
Local knowledge (local contacts, knowledge of local history)		
Organising events (administration, delegating, planning)		
Publicity (dealing with the media, writing articles)		
Audio visual (photography, video, film)		
Artistic skills (graphic design, making displays)		
Office skills (typing, data entry, letter writing, photocopying, minute taking)		
Contact point (member of another local group/organisation)		
Children and young people (understanding of young people, contact at school/club etc, babysitting)		
Catering (cooking, mobilising volunteers)		
Analysing information (e.g. questionnaire and interview data)		
Project management (setting timescales and targets)		
Chairing (helping meetings run smoothly)		
Book keeping (keeping accounts, setting a budget)		
Distribution (knocking on doors, delivering flyers)		
Listening to people (interviewing, reporting peoples ideas, facilitating group sessions)		
Finance (securing funding, budgeting)		
Presentation skills (visiting groups, public speaking)		
Anything else? Please tell us!		

5. Would you like to be kept informed about developments relating to this Community Led Plan?
- Yes please
- No thanks

Thank you for attending the event today and for completing this form