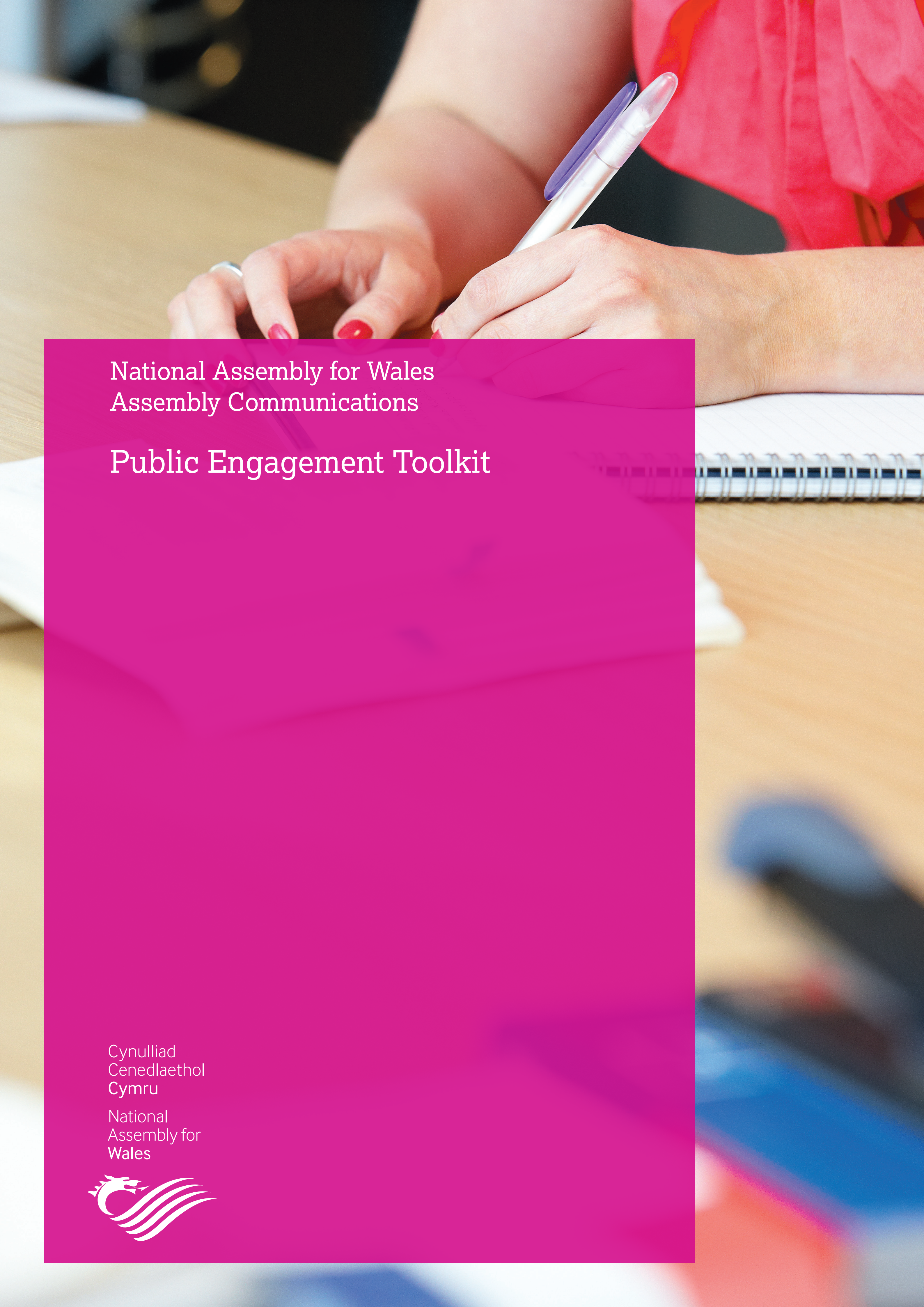


National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Communications

Public Engagement Toolkit

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Communications

Public Engagement Toolkit

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Contents

Public engagement toolkit ... 1
General comments and recommendations ... 3
Paper-based questionnaire ... 4
Online questionnaire ... 6
Web-chat ... 8
External public meeting of a committee ... 10
Focus groups ... 12
Site Visit ... 14
World café ... 16
Reference group ... 18
Video evidence ... 22
Photographic Evidence ... 24
Workshops ... 26
Social media: Twitter ... 28
Social media: Facebook ... 30
Social media: blogs ... 32
Explainer publications ... 34
Newsletters ... 36
Speed-networking Events ... 38
Roundtable Networking Event ... 40

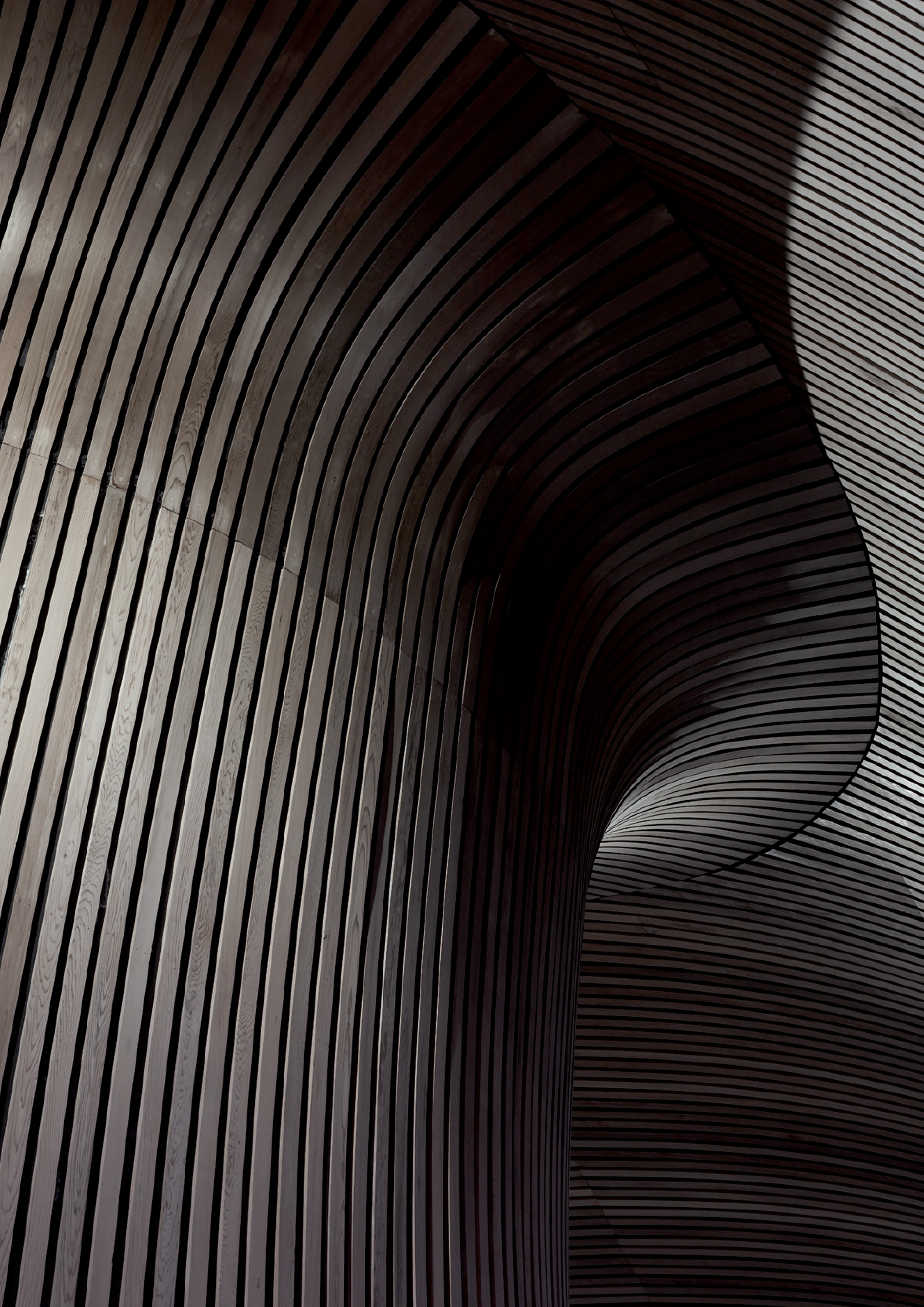
Public engagement toolkit

This document outlines a toolkit of methods that is used by the National Assembly for Wales to enhance links with target audiences and the wider public.

The toolkit has been informed by research into good practice in differing types of communication and engagement from organisations such as the PeopleandParticipation.net, Participation Cymru, The Big Lottery Fund and The Chartered Institute for Public Relations.

This toolkit is used by officials at the National Assembly to guide them when planning activity to promote Assembly business, and Committee inquiries. It outlines methods for promotion, engagement and evidence gathering that can be delivered by the Assembly's Communications team.

At the end of each project, an evaluation will be carried out by officials which is informed by feedback from participants. The evaluation will look to identify strengths and weaknesses with the process and the techniques used. The comments and recommendations made in the evaluation then included within relevant sections of the toolkit to inform future use.



General comments and recommendations

This page lists a number of recurring comments and recommendations which have been raised at evaluation sessions. They are not specifically related to one type of engagement activity, but are principles to consider at the beginning of the process;

- Planning at an early stage is important to ensure that expectations are met
- Audiences and the preferred approach should be agreed promptly to ensure as much time as possible to contact individuals and groups and take part in sessions
- Taking advantage of pre-existing activity arranged by stakeholders or individual groups is generally more successful, because they have closer links to the target audience, and their events/meetings are generally fairly well attended, as they have a ready-made audience. It also means that costs such as venue hire are significantly less
- Discussing consultation approaches with representative bodies, and/or a sample of the target audience before finalising plans is essential. They should be used as sounding board to test questions, suitability of engagement methods, and raise awareness of potential issues that could be encountered, and how to mitigate them
- The type of engagement method should be chosen based on resource availability and how accessible it is for the target audience to participate
- The Committee may not always have to act as one and can act flexibly, with individual members representing the Committee at different event locations for example (possibly in their regions/constituency) during the consultation period
- People involved in consultation activity should be asked if they are happy for their details to be used in press releases, blogs etc., and made aware of documentation that gets published
- It is essential to get feedback from participants to ensure that engagement activities are improved in terms of planning and delivery
- We will want to speak to many groups on a variety of different occasions and about different issues, therefore managing that long-term relationship is important
- Consideration must be given to how we feedback to participants, explaining how what they said impacted on proceedings and what final decisions were made

Paper-based questionnaire

Description and purpose

Questionnaires are research tools that gather responses to specific questions. Typically, questionnaires will gather specific data that will provide statistics, but may also be used to gather comments.

Questionnaires are used to give a large number of people, the opportunity to comment on specific issues.

The balance of open ended and closed questions needs to be considered. Asking a large amount of open ended questions will have a big effect on the amount of data that will need to be analysed and therefore make it a more time consuming process. Limiting characters on open ended questions could be considered in future to encourage more concise answers.

Audience

Anyone can respond as long as they have access to the questionnaire. This type of consultation should be run alongside other methods, such as an online questionnaire.

Questionnaires should be designed with an audience in mind. Where appropriate, a suite of questionnaires could be provided for various audiences, for example, easy read, young people's versions etc.

Cost

Relatively low. Distribution channels are important and should be considered before deciding to use this as a consultation method.

Time requirements

Time should be allowed to:

– agree draft content, design and print the questionnaire (one week);

– design separate questionnaires for different audiences if appropriate

– pilot the questionnaires (three days);

– advertise the consultation;

– allow the public to respond; and,

– analyse the comments (three – four days).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows a large number of people to contribute	Illegible handwriting
Can reach people who are unlikely to respond to traditional engagement methods	Excludes people who cannot access the questionnaire/provide written responses
Anonymity	Can require a workshop to ensure participants understand what is required
Gives all participants an equal voice	Without effective distribution channels the number of responses is likely to be low
Uses specific questions therefore the results are easier to analyse and responses are more focused	If questions are not carefully prepared, surveys can generate an unmanageable amount of material and data to analyse

Online questionnaire

Description and purpose

Online questionnaires are promoted online to gather responses to specific questions and are used to give a large number of people the opportunity to comment on specific issues. The purpose is to gather information, usually statistical, from respondents.

The balance of open ended and closed questions needs to be considered. Asking a large amount of open ended questions will have a big effect on the amount of data that will need to be analysed and therefore make it a more time consuming process. Limiting characters on open ended questions could be considered in future to encourage more concise answers.

Audience

Online questionnaires are targeted at an online audience and therefore this method should be used in conjunction with other methods, such as, paper-based questionnaires to avoid digital exclusion.

Sourcing and contacting specialist online communities may generate more responses, which can be done by liaising with relevant groups and organisations that have close links to the audiences you want to hear from. Promoting an online questionnaire should be done offline as well as online, by contacting relevant groups and organisations on the phone and by e-mail, so that survey links can be circulated further. Twitter and Facebook are good ways of sourcing such online groups and specialist online forums.

Cost

Minimal or free.

Time requirements

Time should be allowed to:

– agree draft content, design and print the questionnaire (one week);

– design separate questionnaires for different audiences if appropriate

– pilot the questionnaires (three days);

– advertise the consultation, and identify online communities;

– allow the public to respond; and,

– analyse the comments (three days).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows a large number of people to contribute	Excludes people who do not have internet access
Can reach people who are unlikely to respond to traditional engagement methods	If the questions are not carefully planned, online consultations can generate unmanageable amounts of material
Anonymity	Any perceived complexity, such as registration, can be a barrier to participation
Gives all participants an equal voice	
Uses specific questions therefore the results are easier to analyse and responses are more focused	
No printing costs	
No distribution costs	

Web-chat

Description and purpose

Web-chats are discussions held online with a small group of pre-selected participants who are given a distinct login and password. Web-chats normally run for an hour and are held at a pre-determined time. There is normally a moderator who will check questions and comments before allowing them to be posted, and a facilitator.

People can join a discussion as long as they have internet access and a computer/mobile device.

They are often used to encourage discussion and debate between a group of stakeholders and a member(s) of the committee and/or officials. They tend to be used as a less formal means of consultation. It is done in 'real time' which allows participants to have more personal contact with the member or the official. A transcript of the discussion can be obtained at the end of the discussion for reference.

Audience

Participants can be sourced through representative organisations and by inviting people to take part through social media.

A guide number of 6-8 participants should be considered as the appropriate number. Anyone can take part in a web-chat ranging from stakeholders, representative bodies to members of the public.

Cost

Minimal, or free.

Time requirements

– A web-chat would normally be scheduled for around an hour.

– Time would be required to set up the web-chat including preparation of materials (such as topics for discussion), IT support and inviting participants.

– Staffing resource would be required at the web-chat to support the member or the official, moderate the comments and to record and analyse the comments.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Can reach people who are unlikely to respond to traditional engagement methods	Excludes people who cannot access the internet
Anonymity. People may feel more at ease in discussing sensitive subjects	Have to rely on the technology working properly
Can speak to individuals from a range of different places at once	Security settings will not allow a lot of people to take part from their work computers
Uses specific questions therefore the results are easier to analyse, and responses are more focused	
Very low resource requirement	
No cost	
People can participate from anywhere as long as they have internet access, and a computer/mobile device or tablet	

External public meeting of a committee

Description and purpose

An external public meeting can be a formal or informal meeting of a committee which takes place in a public place other than the organisation's estate.

External public meetings allow attendees to see the organisation, through the committee, at work in their area. It allows them to hear the evidence given on a topic that may be of particular interest to local people.

Audience

External public meetings will usually be attended by individuals or representatives of organisations that are interested in the subject matter. The local community, schools and local groups should also be made aware of external public committee meeting. Where possible the external meeting should discuss issues of particular importance to groups and individuals from the area.

Cost

Costs are fairly high, and may include: staff time and travel, venue hire, catering, recording equipment and supporting arrangements.

Time requirements

– An external public meeting is usually conducted over a period of two to three hours.

– Time would be required to arrange the meeting, including, venue hire/catering and publicity.

– Staffing resource may be required at the meeting to provide a reception service. Alternatively these meetings can take place at locations and times which is arranged by the target audience for purposes other than the committee's consultation. If this is the case time is needed to work with networks, representative organisations and individual groups to establish times and location of these pre-existing meetings.

– Time is also needed to produce promotional materials for partner organisations and networks to distribute to their members/audiences.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Public can view committee proceedings live, without having to travel to Cardiff	Limitations in terms of when these events can happen due to tight schedules and commitments
Attracting an audience is much easier when external public meetings are held at a location and time that the target audience meets regularly	Attracting an audience can be time consuming
The Committee can visit an area that has relevance to the meeting subject	

Focus groups

Description and purpose

Focus groups are guided discussions of a small group of people.

They are normally one-off sessions although several may be run simultaneously in different locations.

Focus groups allow for an in-depth discussion on a specific topic allowing greater understanding of respondent's attitudes, feelings and benefits within a group context.

Audience

Members of a focus group are usually selected in order to try and ensure a balance of representation. They can be selected to be representative of the general demography of the area/subject, as representatives of specific groups, or individuals with an interest in a specific subject matter.

Holding focus groups with pre-existing groups is a relatively easy way of accessing relevant, specific interest groups with a readymade audience.

Focus groups usually have around six to twelve participants in order for them to feel comfortable in voicing their views, and to give everyone the ability to contribute.

Cost

Costs may include:

- Staff time and travel.
- Venue hire.
- Catering and.
- Travel/subsistence arrangements for participants.

Time requirements

A focus group can last between 45 minutes and two hours.

- Time would be required to set up the focus group, including sourcing and securing participants.
- Venue hire/catering and preparation of resources.
- Staffing resource would be required at the focus groups to facilitate and to record the comments and analyse them. It is possible that the participants may need to be prepared in advance.
- Time is needed to work with networks and representative bodies to access relevant groups, and identify pre-arranged events and meetings across the country.
- Both time and cost considerations are greatly reduced when holding focus groups at pre-arranged meetings

Strengths	Weaknesses
Encourages contribution from service users and those who do not engage through traditional methods	Needs preparation time and staff resource. Ideally one to facilitate and another to take notes.
Can lead to greater understanding of the issue	The group can be dominated by stronger participants who can imbalance the discussion.
Encourages an in-depth discussion	Participants may feel nervous to express opinion in a group of peers
Uses specific questions therefore the results are easier to analyse	
An environment which encourages discussion and debate leads to people expanding on points raised rather than giving one word answers.	
Accessing audiences is easier when attending events or meetings that are pre-arranged. This is cost effective as well.	

Site Visit

Description and purpose

Members of the committee undertake a series of visits to groups/organisations/locations relevant to the consultation.

The purpose of the visits would be to meet with people affected by key issues. A note of the main issues raised at these visits could be taken and included in the evidence.

Audience

The audience can be targeted depending on the subject of the consultation.

Cost

Staffing time and travel expenses.

Time requirements

– Time would be required to arrange the visit including, securing participants.

– Staffing resource would be required at the visit to note any comments and analyse them.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Members can see and experience in person the effect of an issue	Limitations in terms of when these events can happen due to tight schedules
Members can speak directly to experts on a particular subject	
Participants get to talk with members in an environment that they are comfortable in	

World café

Description and purpose

A World Café is a discussion in an informal setting such as a café where participants share experiences and explore issues in small groups. Participants discuss the issue at hand around their table and at regular intervals they move to a new table to discuss a different topic. The table host remains throughout the discussions and summarises the previous conversation to the newly arrived participants. By moving participants around the room the conversations at each table are cross-fertilised with ideas from other tables. At the end of the process the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session of the group.

World Cafés are effective for generating ideas, sharing knowledge, stimulating innovative thinking, and exploring action in real life situations.

Audience

A World Café can be attended by a wide range of participants, from officials to service users and members of the public.

Cost

The cost of a World Cafe event varies widely. Costs may include:

– Staff time and travel.

– Venue hire.

– Refreshments.

– Supporting arrangements and facilitation.

Time requirements

A World Café can last between one and four hours. Time would be required to set up the World Café, including:

– Sourcing and securing a venue.

– Catering.

– And inviting participants.

Staffing resource would be required at the World Café to support the officials, record the comments and then analyse the comments.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Provide an opportunity to hear a variety of views/ ideas in a short time	Due to the short time period of discussions they can lack depth
Encourages contribution from service users and those who do not engage through traditional methods	Comments may be difficult to analyse
Specific questions can be used making discussions more focused	Needs preparation time and staff resource
Can lead to a greater understanding of the issue	Can be repetitive for table host who has to discuss same issues throughout the event

Reference group

Description and purpose

Reference groups traditionally involve members of the public who sit as a committee to inform and advise decision making. The group needs to have access to relevant information and may meet regularly over a longer period of time. These can be run as one reference group, or more run simultaneously across the country.

Reference groups can be facilitated by external organisations, which should be considered on a case by case basis (a very sensitive subject matter may necessitate the involvement of external facilitators). External facilitators, and/or representative bodies can be used to source participants.

This method is appropriate for longer projects.

Traditionally they are used to seek direction from citizens over a specific issue or set of issues.

– It is important that the remit and scope of a reference group is established early on, possibly through setting terms of reference to do so.

– It is also very important that participants have a sound understanding of what influence their involvement could have in order to manage expectations, and to develop a common understanding of the key issues. This can be done by effective wording in the terms of reference and presentations/discussions at the beginning of the process

Audience

Representative samples of the target audience, local population, representatives of particular groups (for example older people) or specific individuals, such as community leaders.

– Reference groups are suitable for people with time at their disposal. Due to the large time commitment, such groups will inevitably exclude a large amount of people from being able to take part

– 10 participants should be viewed as the ideal number of participants for such a group. Many more will make it difficult for everyone to have their voices heard, many less may result in less experience and expertise

– Audiences may come from far and wide, so early discussions should be held to establish the preferred locations for meetings. Video conferencing can also be added, though it is recommended that participants be physically present for the first few meetings to build rapport with fellow participants.

– Depending on the nature and background of the participants, materials produced may need to be made in a simpler format. For example numbering bullet points, and naming organisations and group throughout the briefing rather than just at the beginning to make it easier to keep track

Cost

Costs may include:

– Staff time and travel.

– Venue hire.

– Catering.

– And travel/subsistence arrangements for participants.

There is a large cost associated with using an external organisation to facilitate.

Time Requirements

Ideally a minimum of three months is needed to set up a reference group, including securing participants, deciding on terms of reference etc. Ideally eight weeks' notice is needed for any meetings or events that the reference group may undertake in order to arrange venue hire/catering and preparation of resources. Staffing resource would be required at the meetings to facilitate and to note the comments and analyse them. It is possible that the participants may also need to be prepared in advance.

– The number of meetings may vary, but five meetings is seen as a good guide to give participants enough opportunities to contribute, and not making it too much of a time commitment. Early meetings should be fairly close together whilst the group is getting familiar with one and other

– Meetings should last around three hours to give participants enough of a chance to discuss issues in depth, but no longer than three hours as participants may start to lose concentration and focus – splitting the group in two, looking at different issues may be a way of maximising the effectiveness of the groups time

– There is a substantial impact on staff time. Arranging travel, note taking, producing briefings and notes and so forth may require an additional staff member for the project

– The individual(s) taking notes at meetings should be the individual(s) that ultimately draft the final report to ensure continuity and accuracy

Strengths	Weaknesses
Encourages contribution from service users and those who do not engage through traditional methods	Needs substantial preparation time and staff resource
Provides qualitative, people focused perspective, adding legitimacy to a project/inquiry	The group can be dominated by stronger participants who can imbalance the discussion.
External facilitators add objectivity and independence to the group, as well as subject knowledge	Participants may feel nervous to express opinion in a group of peers
External facilitators may be useful when discussing a very sensitive issue, as they are more likely to be well versed in dealing with issues and circumstances of that nature than Assembly officials may be, and can help get the best out of participants	Sourcing participants, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences is extremely important to the overall success of the group
	Large time commitment means that a large proportion of people will not be able to commit to take part in such groups
	Too many people on the reference group could hinder proceedings

Video evidence

Description and purpose

Video evidence is a creative process which allows participants to explore a specific issue and to tell their story/give evidence. Interviewees can be filmed using professional filming equipment; however, this can also be done using smart phones and tablet devices.

To gather thoughts and opinions from individuals or very small groups of people. It's important to consider the environment in which you are filming so that there are no issues with sound and lighting, which can ruin the quality of the video.

Audience

Video evidence is a method that allows anyone to respond. The audience would normally be the general public and/or service users i.e. those without a policy background. Arranging to speak with people and arranging dates and times before hand is much more effective than turning up at a location trying to speak with members of the public.

This method works very well with groups who do not have time to attend events/focus groups, such as small businesses.

Cost

– If required filming equipment already exists.

– Staff time and travel.

Free:

– Groups can also be asked to submit videos using their own equipment.

Time Requirements

– Enough time should be given to advertise the consultation and allow the public to respond, if they are submitting their own videos.

– Staffing resource and preparation time is required.

– Time would be required to analyse and edit the videos (roughly around 20 minutes editing per interview and a day to edit all content into a video package).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Can reach people who are unlikely to respond to traditional engagement methods	Editing videos is time consuming
Can provide the committee with real, visual and anecdotal evidence of the issue	Lots of associated costs if you do not already have the equipment
It is a very convenient method for people to take part in. Interviewees cab take part in a place and at a time of the participant's choosing	Some people may not be comfortable in speaking on a video. Recording audio clips only is not an effective alternative to those who do not wish to appear on camera as it is less impactful. Offering an email address so as to submit written evidence to may be a viable option in this instance.
Impactful way of getting people's views across	Consider copyright of music when asking people to submit videos themselves. Some groups may be using music that they do not have the copyright for sharing on-line, therefore we would have to show the video without
Uses specific questions therefore the results are easier to analyse	Unable to film in any environment due to sound and lighting issues

Photographic Evidence

Description and purpose

Photographic evidence allows participants to explore a specific issue and to tell their story or give their evidence through photographs. Photographs can be used to highlight specific issues within communities.

Audience

Photographic evidence is a method that allows anyone to respond.

Cost

Low:

– If required equipment already exists.

Free:

– Groups can be asked to submit photographs using their own equipment.

Time Requirements

– Enough time should be given to advertise the consultation and allow the public to respond.

– Staffing resource and preparation time would be required.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows a larger number of people to contribute	May be difficult to analyse
Can reach people who are unlikely to respond to traditional engagement methods	Method lends itself to very specific visual topics
Can provide the committee with real, visual evidence of the issue	

Workshops

Description and purpose

Workshops can take many forms including facilitated discussions designed to encourage greater understanding of a topic and/or raise awareness of an organisation and its activities.

They are used to gather opinions from specific interest groups who may not necessarily provide written evidence. Workshops will normally involve services users which can give an additional dimension to certain inquiries. Specific workshop activities can be designed to get participants to explore discussion topics and build consensus.

Audience

The workshops would be targeted at groups with a specific interest in the topic under consideration. Members of a workshop are usually selected in order to try and ensure a balance of representation. They can be selected to be representative of the general demography of the area/subject, as representatives of specific groups, or individuals with an interest in a specific subject matter.

Holding a workshop with pre-existing groups is a relatively easy way of accessing relevant, specific interest groups with a readymade audience.

Workshops usually have around six to twelve participants in order for them to feel comfortable in voicing their views, and to give everyone the ability to contribute.

Cost

Costs would include: staff time and travel, venue hire, refreshments.

Time requirements

Workshops can last between 45 minutes to two hours. Time would be required to set up the workshop, including:

– Securing participants.

– Venue hire/catering.

– Preparation of resources.

Staffing resource would be required at the workshop to record the comments and analyse them.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows groups and organisations to learn about the process before taking part	In comparison to a focus group, it can take longer to discuss a variety of topics
Ensures focused responses	Time to plan resources and activities
Workshop activities can be entertaining for participants	
Allows an in-depth, open discussion on a topic, and the ability to drill down and build consensus	

Social media: Twitter

Description and purpose

Twitter is a microblogging platform that is used to post links to information, images and links to other places such as the organisation's main website, blog, Facebook, or Flickr account etc.

Twitter can also be used to repost information that other sources have posted (known as retweets), or to gather a quick spread of information (like a straw poll of followers).

Twitter can be used for a number of purposes such as to inform the public about the organisation's work; to raise awareness of particular issues; to answer quick queries from followers; to ask for information; as well as.

– Search relevant hash tags to source event participants

– Source event participants by posting questions or statements relating to the subject matter of the event. Those who re-tweet or reply can then be contacted directly

– Encourage people to complete surveys

– Ask people to submit questions for debates

Audience

The Assembly has a very specific audience following it on Twitter. By working with partner organisations and using their networks, we can share messages, materials and promote surveys with a specific audience that wouldn't normally engage with the Assembly. By partnering with websites and brands that specifically engage with minorities or hard-to-reach audiences, we can ensure that our message reaches its intended target.

Cost

– Use of social media is free (or very low on-going costs)

– Successful use of social media requires forward planning and advance notice of required resource to ensure conversations are managed successfully.

Time requirements

– When working with partner organisations on social media, they will often need a couple of weeks' warning to integrate any agreed activity into their communication plans. This time would also be used to draft content.

– Twitter updates can be scheduled in advance, which allows more efficient planning.

– It is not possible to moderate things that other people post on Twitter, as they are posted on their own personal accounts.

– When asking for questions to a particular meeting/event eight-four weeks is needed to give people enough time to submit questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
Useful for sharing information quickly	'Disposable' medium; Tweets are limited in length and cannot be used to elicit complicated or lengthy responses
Useful for gathering information quickly (straw-poll type responses)	Limited space for posting information
Useful for searching public opinion on current events (through search of key terms and hash tags); can be used to find individuals who are key influencers in a certain topics to engage in consultations or inquiries	Tweets can never be 'deleted' in the true sense
Can be used to find relevant groups and organisations to work with	

Social media: Facebook

Description and purpose

Facebook is a social networking site where individuals can connect with friends, organisations and brands. Facebook is used to post links to Assembly information on other platforms, such as the Assembly's website, committee pages, the Assembly blog, Flickr account, or Senedd TV. Facebook is also sometimes used to post useful information such as recess dates, or photographs from Assembly events (such as committee report launches, PO events, or our presence at the summer shows).

Facebook is used to inform members of the public about inquiries or consultations that are currently open, posting links to existing material on other platforms (Assembly website, blog, Senedd TV). Facebook can also been used for asking questions and gathering information as informal evidence for inquiries or consultations.

Depending on the kind of inquiry that was to be run, a Facebook group could be set up to encourage comments or discussion about a topic.

Audience

The Assembly has a very specific audience following it on Facebook. By working with partner organisations and using their networks, we can share messages, materials and promote surveys with a specific audience that wouldn't normally engage with the Assembly. By partnering with websites and brands that specifically engage with minorities or hard-to-reach audiences, we can ensure that our message reaches its intended target.

Cost

Use of Facebook is free, but successful use of social media requires forward planning and advance notice of required resource to ensure conversations are managed successfully.

Time requirements

– When working with partner organisations on social media, they will often need a couple of weeks' warning to integrate any agreed activity into their communication plans. This time would also be used to draft content.

– Facebook updates can be scheduled in advance, which allows more efficient planning.

– It is not possible to moderate things that other people post on Facebook as they are posted on their own personal accounts.

– When asking for questions to a particular meeting/event 8-4 weeks is needed to give people enough time to submit questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
More flexible in terms of posting information	We have a limited reach in terms of audience (they tend to be already-engaged with the Assembly or politically active)
Useful for sharing information quickly	Does not allow people without internet access to engage

Social media: blogs

Description and purpose

Blogs are online repositories of information (in full – 'web –logs') that are used to communicate information and also to seek feedback through comments from readers.

Blogs are a less formal tool that can be used by organisations to share information about their work with the public, using more friendly language and photographs and videos to tell stories that might not be appropriate on an 'official'-type website.

Blogs can be used to inform members of the public about inquiries or consultations that are currently open, or to be used as informal evidence-gathering locations. Blogs can also be used to post positive evaluation of work that has been carried out (case studies, 'good news' stories focusing on people who have had positive outcomes through their engagement with Assembly business). This can include inviting a participant to write a blog as a "guest editor".

Audience

Content on our blog is linked to Facebook and Twitter, and we can also ask partner organisations to post links to our blog and direct their networks to it.

Blogs can also be circulated and or distributed among partner organisations and networks in order to broaden readership and reach.

Cost

Resources are required to ensure conversations are managed successfully.

Time requirements

– Time to agree draft content and to identify partner organisations where relevant

– Blogs can be scheduled in advance, which allows more efficient planning

– Time must also be allowed for translation (or checking if written in both languages)

Strengths	Weaknesses
Less intimidating platform for sharing content	Blogs needs to be properly tagged to be searchable (by search engines and within our own site)
We can encourage comments and engage in discussion with readers through the comments function	Blogs need to be updated often to keep the public interested in and aware of our work
We can post diverse content; written word, photographs, videos	Without resources to push and promote, likelihood for comment in most cases is low
Promotes upcoming, existing, and/or past work with a variety of audiences when promoted effectively	

Explainer publications

Description and purpose

Explainer publications include invites, posters, flyers and leaflets to explain the nature and terms of reference of a committee inquiry or consultation.

These can act as supporting materials or introductions to other evidence-gathering activity such as focus groups, public meetings and questionnaires. In most cases they are used to put information about consultations in places of public interest such as libraries to encourage participation in writing, with an accompanying e-mail address, telephone number and addresses.

Audience

These materials can be tailored for specific audiences, both in terms of the language used and the look and feel of the publications.

These publications can be placed in public places where you expect the target audience to visit such as libraries, GP surgeries etc.

Cost

These include: design and printing costs; and costs associated with distribution.

Time requirements

– Time to agree draft content for these materials and design and print them.

– Time to distribute and allow people to respond.

–

Strengths	Weaknesses
Some people like to take information away, and digest it in their own time	Distribution channels would need to be established, to increase exposure
Beneficial for those who don't have internet access	
Increases number of people who are aware of consultation and therefore increases likelihood of them contributing	
Increases exposure of the organisation's work with people in places of common interest	

Newsletters

Description and purpose

A newsletter is a regularly distributed publication generally about one main topic that is of interest to its subscribers. In the majority of cases this would mean sending content to relevant organisations who distribute newsletters to their members.

Newsletters can be used to raise awareness of upcoming, current or completed consultations in order to encourage responses.

Audience

Subscribers will usually have a very specific interest in a subject matter. Audiences will vary greatly depending on the newsletter itself, and which organisation is producing it.

Cost

Some newsletters charge for material. The majority of organisations would not charge to put content in their newsletters.

Time requirements

- Time to agree draft content for these newsletters
- Time to identify relevant organisations for the specific projects
- Time must also be allowed for translation (or checking if written in both languages)

Strengths	Weaknesses
A good way of promoting information to niche audiences Increases potential number of people who are made aware of a consultation It can be targeted Goes beyond those who follow the organisation, to those who have an interest in the subject matter	May be difficult to identify tangible results

Speed-networking Events

Description and purpose

Relevant stakeholder organisations, user groups, or individuals can be invited to speak directly with members and/or officials. Tables will be arranged around the room in a circular format, where the member or the individual will move around and visit each table one-by-one following a discussion which would be given an allotted time. This gives both parties an opportunity to discuss the issues that are most important to them.

This type of event gives participants a platform to meet with relevant stakeholders, to learn more about the field and who the key stakeholders are. These events can also be used to inform a committee's scoping work.

Audience

Stakeholders with an interest in/experience of the topic.

Cost

If held in an external venue, costs could include venue hire, refreshments, travel etc.

Time requirements

Time is required to:

– Hire a venue

– Arrange catering and invitations

– Secure participants

–

Strengths	Weaknesses
The open format allows for more individual interaction between stakeholders and committee members/officials	Appropriate event space can be difficult to procure
Organisations are able to prepare in advance, which adds value to the discussions.	Talking continuously for over an hour can be difficult for the participants.

Roundtable Networking Event

Description and Purpose

Relevant stakeholder organisations, user groups, or individuals can be invited to speak directly with members and/or officials. Tables will be arranged around the room in a circular format. Committee members would then visit each table one by one for an allotted time. Each table will be made up of representatives from different organisations of a similar type. This is different to speed networking events as there will be a number of stakeholders representing different bodies on each table, and the group have a longer period of time for discussions. This method also means you can have more stakeholders participating than you could with a speed networking event.

This type of event gives participants a platform to meet with relevant stakeholders or service users, to learn more about the subject matter.

Audience

Stakeholders with an interest in/experience of the topic. It may be appropriate to split participants into relevant groups where possible so that common issues are being raised on the same table.

Cost

If held in an external venue, costs could include venue hire, refreshments, travel etc.

Time requirements

Time is required to:

– Hire a venue

– Arrange catering and invitations

– Secure participants

Strengths	Weaknesses
The open format allows direct interaction between stakeholders and participants.	Appropriate event space can be difficult to procure
Organisations are able to prepare in advance, which adds value to the discussions.	Some people or organisations may feel they are not getting the same level of direct interaction as they would through a traditional speed networking event
This type of networking event is tailored towards getting more in-depth discussion and consideration of subjects, including those of others on the table, not just those of the individual, as is the case with speed networking events	Effective facilitation is needed to ensure everyone around the table gets a chance to contribute
More stakeholders can attend this type of networking event than a traditional speed networking event	Grouping different organisations to specific tables could be problematic
	Getting service users to attend may depend on the ability of representative bodies to attract an audience