



Mapping Community Needs

What is ...Mapping Community Needs

Mapping community needs involves building relationships, knowledge and familiarity with the community in order to identify who needs what, where and when they need it.

You want to be responsive to the community so it is important to have evidence of their needs so that you can direct services effectively and so that people understand why you are following a particular course of action.

Why use this technique?

It is a process of getting to know the community and becoming informed about community needs. This means that priorities can be agreed with the community and services can be more closely targeted and directed.

When should you use it?

This should be used when...

- Looking to involve a particular community or group
- Seeking to break down barriers
- Trying to make services more user-focused
- Working with new or emerging communities
- Looking to respond to community needs
- As one of the tools in community development work

What type of information does it produce?

You can employ a number of qualitative and quantitative techniques to map the community's needs. You can also make use of primary and secondary data.



What are the advantages?

- A comprehensive picture of community needs
- It enables you to break down the community into manageable groups
- It gives you a clear idea of what can be done and what is not possible
- You can put policy decisions in context
- It brings policy-makers and community closer together

What are the disadvantages?

- You may not recognise new emerging communities
- It can be time-consuming if community is to be truly involved
- Results may be unpredictable
- Officers may have preconceived ideas about a community's needs
- Officers may feel they have vested interests to protect

What are the costs?

- It can be highly resource intensive
- It is likely to involve the adoption and use of a range of other consultative techniques such as questionnaires, focus groups etc.

What are the practicalities?

- Clearly define the “community” you are consulting
 - Be clear about what you hope to achieve from the exercise
 - Ensure staff are clear about their roles
 - Allow enough time to make the contacts
 - Try to involve the community in the planning and delivery
 - Give thought to the collection of feedback and how it will be fed back
 - Ensure that the needs are fed back to the community are ones that they recognise
 - Provide training for staff where appropriate
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