



Knowing your Community

Many people will consider that they know all about the area that they live in and the people who live there. However, we often only know about the social circles we are involved in and think we know about issues based on what we believe without actual evidence. Many organisations gather, publish and use information and statistics on communities which may be a good starting point to examine what your community is like.

There are a number of websites where you can access data including the census information which give you some information on the type of community you live in and the issues it faces. Census information gives you a good indication as to the population, ages and employment status of the people in the area and health information can also be accessed such as hospital admissions and those with a disability. Stirling Council provides Community Council statistics for all Community Council areas based on the national census.

If you are looking for something specific, it may be harder to find and you might need to be more creative in where you look. Think about who would be interested in the type of data you want; which organisations are related to the topic you want to cover; and ask others. Trying to find out how many people cycle to work may mean contacting the local council, cycling clubs, health professionals or the census. Increases in bike sales in your area might be a better indicator of who cycles than how many people are in local clubs.

However interpreting information and understanding what it really tells you can be complicated. It is important to question any data such as who collected the data; their reason for collecting it; how they collected it and what the data really means. Much of what is gathered will depend on the questions people are asked and the

Gathering community information yourself

You can also collect statistics yourself in a number of ways including creating a community questionnaire for people to complete online or in person, interviewing people or having a focus group. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages in using it so you need to look at the best for what you are trying to achieve. However, knowing your community is not all about statistics, getting opinions and views is often the most important area for Community Councils to engage in.

Views, Opinions and consultations

Since one of the basic roles of the Community Council is to represent their community, they can only really claim to do this if they continuously engage with their community to find out what they need, their views on issues and their hopes for the future.

So engaging with your community is a continuous process, keeping them informed about issues so they can make informed choices, consulting them on options and getting their opinions on what should happen. At times this might involve small engagement sessions and at others it might mean the full community needs to be involved.

Reasons why people might want to take part

- They want to make a difference to their community or individual lives
- A sense of duty as a citizen
- To influence the decision about something that directly affects them or their family
- To raise a point that no one may make
- Unhappiness with the current situation and wanting to change things
- They like being involved in anything going on
- They want to complain

Whatever the reasons why people will be involved, engagement is also about making the engagement relevant to people and worthwhile. If people understand the issues, feel their views will make a difference, and trust that changes for the better will come out of the process, they will be more likely to see it in a positive way and take part.

Developing positive, continuous engagement will develop a Community Council's relationship with its community, and build the understanding and trust needed to successfully represent the community.

Knowing Your Community Checklist

Engaging and Discovering Community Views	
Gather basic statistics on your community.	
Consider creating a community profile looking at all aspects of who makes up your community and any information from statistics which are significantly different than the national average.	
Consider the context of all statistics gathered.	

Sources of Data

Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics - Gives data on geographical areas

<http://www.sns.gov.uk/default.aspx>

National Census – data taken from the national census every ten years. Covers a variety of data on people and areas

<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

Scottish Household Survey

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

Average house price

<http://www.ourproperty.co.uk/>

Deprivation

<http://www.sns.gov.uk/Simd/Simd.aspx>

Scottish Assessors Association

Provides Central Scotland Valuation Rolls & Council Tax Lists on-line - for individual or small groups of properties. 40-50K Stirling electors on edited electoral register - names & addresses (cost depends on how many names and addresses)

<http://www.saa.gov.uk/central/>

National Records of Scotland

(population estimates and projections, migration, electoral stats, vital events)

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/index.html>

For more information on Sourcing data or finding out about your Community, contact the Community Council Enquiry Officer on 01786 233948 blys@stirling.gov.uk