

Developing your Community First Plan

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1. Introduction

Community First Panels are required to create a Plan that sets out what you will do to improve your local area. The Community First Panel will then fund projects or activities that compliment the Community First Plan. It is a great opportunity to engage the community in the process, so that everyone can participate in Community First, and will ensure that funding in the last two years of the programme is targeted in areas that the community has identified.

Don't worry we will not be asking you to create a huge document, but rather something appropriate to your ward and your funding allocation.

You should involve as many different local people as possible in developing your Community First Plan to make sure different views from the ward are represented.

This Guidance provides further information on:

- What a Community Plan is
- The scope of the Community Plan and what it should include
- Suggested ways to consult with different groups
- Suggested templates for your Community First Plan

What is a Community Plan?

A Community Plan helps everyone understand a community and what is important to them. Consulting with as many groups as possible in your ward and including their views will make sure that the plan represents different views from your community. It will also determine what is most important for people who live and work in your ward, e.g. – your priorities.

As a “living document” a Community Plan can be updated regularly to make sure it continues to meet the needs of the people it represents. It can also help communities to recognise the assets and resources they already have and can use.

Why do we need a Community Plan?

The Community First Programme gives new funds to areas that need it most. Panels are set up in communities to encourage people to come together to identify what are the main priorities based on needs in their area and to decide where best to spend the funds.

An aim of the Community First programme is not just to provide funding for projects now, but to support communities to plan long-term, and prepare for the future. A Community Plan is a way for panels to:

- Engage with local people and find out their views
- Engage local people in planning for their community

- Develop a bespoke plan that addresses real needs in your area.

Developing a plan is a way for you to tell us and the local community more about your priorities and how you will deliver them over a longer period. Having a plan lets you be clear about how you will address your priorities. The Community Plan can also be a useful document to refer to when you are looking for funding from other agencies and organisations to address your area's priorities.

This guidance document

The following pages will provide a guide as to how you can research the plan, and what it should include.

A number of web links are provided should you wish to read further on different approaches to community consultations and community planning. This guidance is taken from some of these sources and may be familiar to those who have undertaken similar exercises before.

A number of local authorities are already working with communities and doing community led action and/or planning. As a result they may have already done some of these exercises and in your ward and your Community First plan may be able to build on this existing work.

2. Creating a Plan

When is it needed?

Community First Plans should be completed and submitted to CDF **before the end of March 2013**. These plans should also be posted on each panel's website. Every ward has to have a Community First Plan in place in order to receive Neighbourhood Matched Funding in years 3 and 4, so it is important you complete the plan over the coming months.

The completed Plan should be sent to CDF via the on-line system, and can be in any of the following formats; Word, Excel, PowerPoint, pdf. Guidance on how to do this is on Page 16 of this document.

Is a plan already in place?

Before you do any work to create a plan, take a while to see what is already in place in your area. For example:

- Do you already have a Community Plan, or a Neighbourhood Plan, or a Parish Plan?
- What strategic plans does the Local Authority have in place, and do these contain sections relevant to your ward?
- Has a community planning exercise been undertaken as part of New Deal for Communities or another local regeneration initiative?

We are keen to make this process as easy and simple as possible; therefore if your area already has a plan in place, or has recently undertaken consultation exercises to identify priorities, then you can submit this report, or part of it, to us as your Community First Plan.

Who should be involved in the creation of the plan?

The Panel should agree on who will carry out the work of putting the Plan together. Panel Partners can support the process, and can get involved at their discretion. It is advised to share out duties amongst the whole panel to minimise the burden to any one member. Additional support can also be paid for using the costs referred to on page 6.

What will a Community First Plan achieve?

- It will detail its method of involving the community
- It can identify the aspirations of the local community, what sort of place would they like it to be.
- It will identify the needs of the local community

- It will identify the funding priorities for the Community First NMF grant in the area, until March 2015
- It will identify resources available within the community

By exploring the above issues the Panel can match community resources to needs and aspirations, and use the Community First match funding to plug gaps between the needs and the aspirations.

Your local panel website

This site will be useful during the creation of the Community First plan as you can alert residents to any upcoming consultation events or questionnaires, and you can put up draft versions of the plan for comment by the community.

What the plan will look like

CDF does not require you to use a particular template. As mentioned before if a similar exercise is already taking place in your ward then those reports, plans or other documents can be used as a Community First plan.

However example sections for the plan are provided in section 3. Remember the Plan is an opportunity to communicate directly with local residents, it should be written with them in mind, clearly explaining all the steps along the way, and what you are looking to achieve.

Costs

Community First Plans do not need to be long, and should be easy to produce, however we realise that some panels may need some extra support to develop the plan. A part of the year 2 funding allocation may be used to cover costs in developing the plan, however as this money will come directly from the funding allocation we ask you to keep this costs to a minimum, so as much funding as possible can be used to make Neighbourhood Matched Fund grants in your ward.

- **Up to £2,000** of each panel's Community First allocation can be used to cover the costs incurred in community consultation or participation in the creation of the Community First Plan.
- This can include costs of producing materials (e.g. questionnaires), running community events, facilitation costs, etc.
- We will provide an online form to claim the costs for this. Guidance is on page 14 of this document.
- The grant must be paid into an organisation's bank account not an individual's bank account.
- The grant cannot be paid into any public sector or profit-making organisation bank accounts.
- Only the panel can submit the expense claim, if they wish to claim costs towards the creation of a Plan. On it they will recommend which organisation they wish the payment

should be made to. This can include Panel Partner organisations or other voluntary sector organisations. One claim only will be permitted for each ward.

The CLAIM form will ask the following:-

- Name of ward
- Details of organisation seeking Community First Plan funding
- Amount of funding (up to £2,000) being requested.
- Summary of planned activities
- Breakdown of costs

Supporting evidence of costs or spend will not be required as part of the submission. However CDF reserves the right to request copies or inspect this evidence as part of any future checks, visits or audits.

3. An example of a Community First Plan

Title – Community First Plan for [NAME] ward

Summary

- *You may find it useful to put a map or description of the ward here.*
As an example the link below has an England wide map showing all eligible CF wards.
<http://findyourinitiative.org/>
- *Provide a list of all the activities you did to consult the community to find out what was important to them and what the priorities were e.g. dates of questionnaires, events.*
- *X number of residents responded to the postal questionnaire*
- *X number of residents attended the events to discuss the questionnaire results and agree on priorities.*
- *The [X] panel met on x Dec to sign off the final plan.*

What do our residents want from the area? [examples below]

- *A safe place for their children to play*
- *Healthy residents*
- *A pretty, green environment for all the community to enjoy*
- *Support and training for our young people to help them find employment or start businesses*
- *Road safety measures on x Street.*

What did they think needed to be done to help the local area?

List of items

As a result of these activities the local community has decided upon the following priorities as the focus for Community First:-

List of priorities (suggested between 3-5)

- *Priority 1 and description*
- *Priority 2 and description*
- *Priority 3 and description*
- *Priority 4 and description*
- *Priority 5 and description*

Local Volunteers audit

X number of people offered their support to future Community First projects.

Those volunteers offered the following skills: [examples below]

- *First aid*
- *Baking*
- *Football coaching*
- *Spanish teaching*
- *Sewing*
- *Gardening*
- *Driving*

Panels could display information on groups requiring volunteers on their Community First ward websites.

In-kind resources

The following items have been offered for use for community projects, either free or discounted:-

Examples:-

- *Meeting hall*
- *Grass Field in village for holding events*
- *Marquee (available at discounted rates for community groups)*
- *20 trestle tables (for use at events)*
- *Use of Transit van*
- *School kitchens (for weekend events)*

Panels could display information on groups requiring volunteers on their Community First ward websites.

What Funding is available to community groups in our ward?

List of available grants programmes

What projects are already taking place in our ward?

List of existing projects and contact details.

- **Vox Pops/Surveys**

Panel members or other volunteers can gather views of people in the community by developing a short survey to ask people in the street, or at events taking place in the area.

Examples from other programmes includes using video camera booths, holding teas where the waiters are young people who ask questions and gather people's answers, and using a 'graffitti wall'; at an event where people write up what they would like to see change / what the priorities for their area are etc.

5. What resources might a community already have?

Volunteers

You should work out how many people are willing to give their time to support projects in the local community. People who are willing to support other local community projects, or who have their own projects they want to get off the ground. This has benefits because volunteer hours count towards the match required for Community First grants or it may even provide sufficient support that means a grant is not needed.

Volunteer skills

Possibly more important than simply identifying local volunteers is identifying what skills they have. Reviewing what skills volunteers do and do not have helps the panel and community to work out where they can plug gaps and where other gaps need to be plugged. People may not always realise the skills that they have, which could benefit others. You could use a community event to draw out those skills by putting up a list of skills, and asking people to put their names against those that they possess. Some examples include gardening, baking a cake, driving a van, sewing, changing a fuse, running a stall, using a computer, etc.

In-kind resources

As with the skills listed above, the local community may already possess enough resources through individuals or local groups to get a project off the ground without needing to hire or buy in services or equipment. Again it is important to make best use of whatever is already available. Examples of this may be facilities within the community that can be accessed for free or at a discount, land that could be used for events, equipment that could be used (a PA system, a computer, a lawnmower, a van, even a kitchen or an oven).

Other funds

It may be useful to document all the available funding streams open to the local community, since (as long as it is not local government money) these may be used to match with Community First funding, or may be used instead of Community First funding.

Existing programmes/projects

There may be a number of groups already delivering projects on the ground and identifying what these are doing may help you to identify how you could address your local priorities.

6. Other useful resources

You may be interested to read further on different approaches to community involvement and planning. Some weblinks and examples are listed below:-

Community Led Planning

Community Led Planning (CLP) is a step-by-step process that enables every citizen to participate in, and contribute to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their local area. One of the defining characteristics of all Community Led Plans is they are initiated and led by local volunteers who steer their community through a step-by-step process, rather than by someone from outside the community.

More information can be found here. ACRE provide guidance on community led planning:-

<http://www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning>

Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development is not simply identifying what is missing in a community and what it needs, but also seeing what a community has to offer and what its strengths are. Community action can then start from these positives and build on them to address the needs.

Guidance on this particular approach is available here:-

<http://cdfpreview.web.coop/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ABCD-Guidance.pdf>

Useful Links

- ACRE Guidance on How to produce a Community Led Plan: [Community Led Planning Guidance](#)
- ACRE Checklist for producing a Community Led Plan: [Checklist for producing a Community Led Plan](#)
- People and Participation, includes a list of descriptions of different types of participation methods:
<http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Browse+Methods>
- Work by Involve in the field of community participation, their publications include practical steps to make community participation more interesting:
<http://www.involve.org.uk/category/publications/practical-guidance/>
- The Department for Communities and Local Government link providing information about the Community Rights and Neighbourhood Planning:
<http://communityrights.communities.gov.uk>

- The Local Government Association website includes an article on community participation, with a list of approaches:
http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/localism-act/-/journal_content/56/10171/3510950/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE#contents-4

More information about your community

Below is a selection of links that will enable you to find out more about your local ward.

- Statistical data for your ward you can be found at:
<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>
- Some examples of local plans can be found at the following links, note these plans are more detailed than is required for your Community First Plan:
<http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/index.php/community-development/community-first-parish-plan-help>
http://www.comfirst.org.uk/community_planning

Map of local area

Find a map of your Community first ward via the following website:

<http://findyourinitiative.org/>

7. Useful contacts for Community First Plans

The following groups may be useful to help put together your plan:-

Local Council

The local council may have useful information to assist the creation of a plan:-

- Data from their own research or questionnaires.
- Existing neighbourhood or parish plans.
- Useful contacts, such as with the local police or health trusts.
- Information on other programmes in the area.
- Knowledge of resources available in the local area.

Community Organisers

Community Organisers work in local areas enabling people to take action on their own behalf and have the power and confidence to tackle the issues which are important to them

Find out more about them here:-

<http://www.cocollaborative.org.uk/content/programme>

Locate your nearest Organiser:-

http://www.cocollaborative.org.uk/members-organisers?distance%5Bpostal_code%5D=se26+6ar&distance%5Bsearch_distance%5D=20&distance%5Bsearch_units%5D=mile&keys=

Business Connectors

Business Connectors work with local people and organisations to ensure expertise and resources from local businesses can be maximised by the communities they serve.

Find out more about them:

http://www.bitc.org.uk/business_connectors/aim_of_the_programme.html

Locate your nearest Connector:-

http://www.bitc.org.uk/business_connectors/find_your_local.html

8. How to claim for Community First Plan costs

Use this link to access your online account, [Community First Plan costs claim form](#).

1. Once signed in, click on the box marked 'Requirements'.
2. Click on the linked marked 'CF Plan expenses claim'.
3. The CLAIM form will ask the following:-
 - Name of ward
 - Details of organisation seeking CF Plan funding
 - Amount of funding (up to £2,000) being requested.
 - Summary of planned activities
 - Breakdown of costs
4. Once you have completed the form press 'SUBMIT' to send it to CDF. You will be sent a confirmation email confirming that it has been sent successfully
5. Supporting evidence of costs or spend will not be required as part of the submission. However CDF reserves the right to request copies or inspect this evidence as part of any future checks, visits or audits.

9. How to submit your Community First Plan

The Plan should be submitted via the online system.

Before starting the process please save your Community First Plan document as follows, [Name of ward] [Local Authority] CF Plan. You can save it as Word, Excel, PowerPoint or PDF.

1. Use this link to access your online account, [Online account main page](#).
2. Sign in with your email and password
3. You should now be on the 'Applications' page
4. Click on the linked marked 'Community First Plan'
5. This will take you to a form. There are only two pages to complete.
6. Page 1 asks you whether the Community First Plan is a new creation, or was put together as part of a previous piece of work. You are asked to explain what that piece of work was. Page 2 is for you to attach the Community First Plan.
7. Do this by clicking on the 'Browse' button and locating and clicking on your CF Plan file. Once you have selected the correct file you then press the 'Upload' button to upload your plan.
8. If your Plan forms part of an existing, larger piece of work, then you may wish to attach a separate 'Priorities' document (If you are using an existing plan, please identify your priorities from this plan in a separate document to send us too). To attach a supplementary file, go to 'Title' and using the dropdown change the title to 'CF Plan additional'. Then follow the instructions in Point 8 (browse and then upload).
9. You should now see the file name(s) displayed. The form is now complete.
10. Once you have completed the form press 'SUBMIT' to send it to CDF. You will be sent a confirmation email confirming that it has been sent successfully.