

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

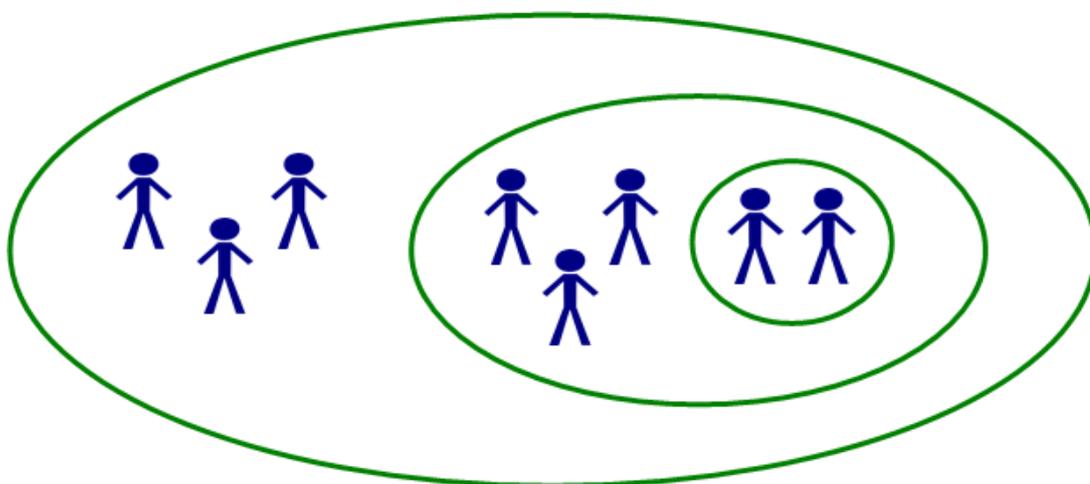
Before starting out on a consultation or engagement exercise, it is really important to understand your community and to be clear about who you want to consult or engage. Communities can be difficult to define but you can gain a better understanding by looking at their characteristics and how communities function.

Communities of place

Most of us will be familiar with communities of place. Depending on the level at which you are working, a community of place may be viewed at different scales – a street, hamlet, village, parish or even a community area

During the process of a consultation or engagement exercise, you might find yourself working with a number of distinct geographical communities – with different characteristics and different needs and aspirations. These may be easy to identify within a larger settlement such as a town or city, but even small rural communities tend to have their own sub-communities.

In those rural parishes which sit alongside growing towns, new developments may have extended out of the town into that rural parish. Do these people even know that they are part of your parish? Do they identify themselves as belonging to your community? You may need to come up with different strategies for communication, consultation and engagement if you are going to succeed in engaging with each of those sub communities.



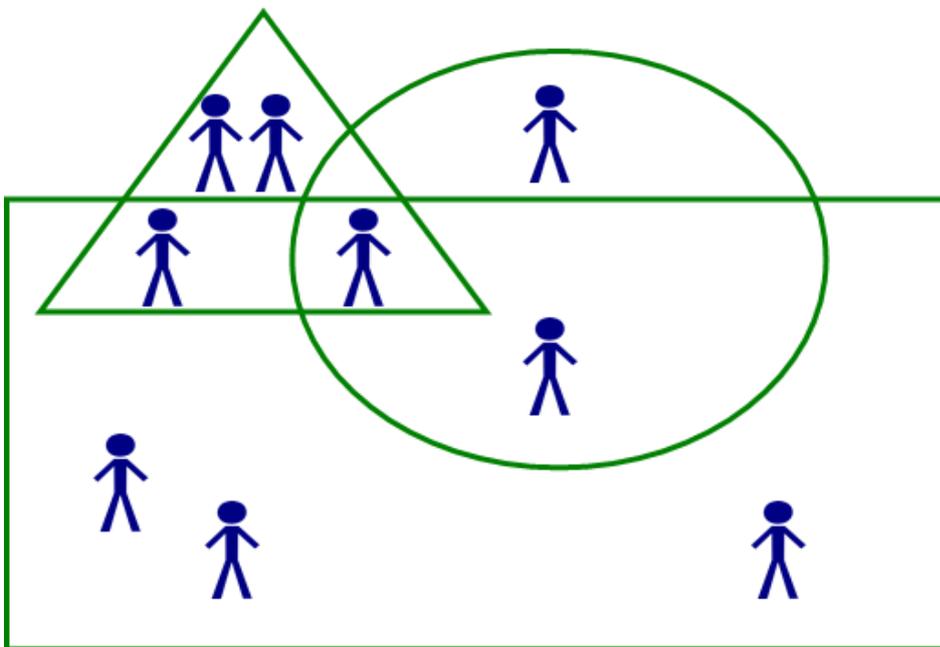
Communities of place

Communities of interest

As well as communities of place, you will also have communities of interest. These can be formal groups or networks such as members of a church, a local club or an organisation.

Most places will also have informal communities of interest. These might include dog walkers, mums with young children, people who drink at the local pub or meet at the bus stop or outside the school gate. These informal networks can also be really useful ways of channelling and gathering information if the right methods are used.

In smaller places, your communities of interest may well extend beyond your area of immediate interest. This can present both opportunities and challenges if you want to consult with these networks.



Communities of interest

Further information

For further information, contact us at:

01380 732826 or 732801
enact@communityfirst.org.uk

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