

Section Three - Using Existing Information

3.1 - Desk Research

Before you launch into a full scale consultation exercise, you must check on the information that is already available. Asking for unnecessary information is wasteful of time and resources and can be annoying for those who are being consulted.

Useful information can be from a variety of sources -

- National studies of a similar nature to that which you are consulting on.
- National data which can provide contextual information for your own study
- Local studies carried out on similar issues

The main sources of this material are likely to be

- Your own department
- Other departments in the authority
- Other local authorities
- Central government
- National governmental organisations such as IDeA, Local Government Association, Regional Agencies etc.
- Academic studies and reports.
- Trade journals and publications associated with the subject area in question.
- Local newspapers
- Consultation Database

Not all potential sources can be listed here, but as many sources as possible should be considered. The Web generally is also a useful potential source of such information.

The results should be used throughout any report in order to provide weight and qualification to the work being undertaken.

Doing so, will ensure that the full range of opinions and conclusions on the topic area are brought into the discussion, and this will ensure a better understanding of the topic area.

Key Points

- Ensure that all secondary data is accurate and reliable
- Reference all sources of literature used
- Ensure direct quotes are written in quotation marks and referenced
- Never use secondary information alone to form conclusions, but use it to form a background for further consultation work.
- Ensure that any secondary information used is relatively up to date

Corporate Research and Consultation Team

The Corporate Research and Consultation Team (CRCT) has several sources of potential secondary information. They hold the details of national censuses containing details about the population of Bury and more local areas. They also hold the results from other national studies such as the General Household Survey, which can give a broad picture of national and regional social characteristics.

The CRCT also maintain and update the Consultation Database, a useful source of information about past & present consultation exercises within Bury.

Visit the Research and Consultation Website for further information and useful links to other potential sources of secondary information.

Resources required

- Time. Researching published material either printed or on the internet will take a considerable amount of time to ensure that all possible sources are covered.
- Staff available to carry out the work
- Skills, to draw together data and conclusions from a wide range of published material and other work.

The Consultation Database will tell you if other similar studies have been carried out within the authority.

Contacts

The Bury MBC Website @ www.bury.gov.uk contains some useful links to potential sources of information. The section on Consultation in particular will help you to search for exercises similar to your own both within the authority and in other organisations.