

Connecting Communities



COMMUNITY
DIALOGUE
MANUAL
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Speed Dialogue



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This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's Community Dialogue Manual Series. The PDF version of this and the other manuals in the series can be downloaded from www.dialoguesociety.org/publications

If you have any comments on this, or any of the other manuals in the series, we would be very glad to have your feedback. Please email your comments to manual@dialoguesociety.org

We would like to showcase the valuable work and effort of groups that use the Community Dialogue Manuals to help inspire other groups to take part also. Please get in touch and let us know how this manual helped you and your group with any photographs and testimonials. Please email these to manual@dialoguesociety.org

If you represent a local stakeholder or public body and are interested in Dialogue Society consultancy please email consultancy@dialoguesociety.org



The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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**DIALOGUE
SOCIETY**

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Speed Dialogue

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Overview

01

Preface

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences. It has done this through a wide range of events including community celebrations, interfaith sharing circles, and open cultural festivals as well as a broad variety of dialogue meetings and seminars.

The manual you hold in your hand is part of a series of ten Community Dialogue Manuals developed by the Dialogue Society to encourage interaction between members of different communities. The primary aim of the series is to help people to bring their communities together through a number of approaches and events that the Dialogue Society has found successful. We have always found that the most successful events have been those with clear objectives and where attention has been paid to detail. Therefore the manuals are full of advice, tips and checklists to help everything go smoothly as you plan, organise and host your own events.

This manual will help you to use a simple but effective activity to bring people together for worthwhile conversations. In speed dialogue, people are allocated a short time to talk one-to-one with a dialogue partner before moving on to have similar short conversations with a series of others. It is, in the experience of the Dialogue Society, an excellent way to help people to overcome barriers of shyness and difference. It could be used in a variety of contexts, either as part of a larger event, or as the central focus of an event.

Please get in touch with us to let us know if and how the manual was helpful, to give any feedback and comments about the manual's content, style and structure and with any other enquiries. Please see inside cover for contact details.

We hope that this manual and perhaps others will be helpful to you, and that you will enjoy bringing people together through the events you hold.

The Dialogue Society

Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to stimulate and motivate individuals and community groups to engage in dialogue while at the same time providing useful ideas through which effective dialogue can take place. It is designed to help you to use the technique of speed dialogue to encourage interaction and friendship within local communities, between people of different cultures and faiths and between different local organisations and stakeholders. Equally, the technique may be helpful in organising discussion of issues of importance to the group in question.

Speed dialogue gives participants a structured way of meeting and having a conversation with more people than they would otherwise engage with. In this kind of dialogue, a participant has a one-to-one conversation of a certain length (3-10 minutes) with a series of other participants. Because conversation partners are allocated in a structured way, a lot of the shyness or awkwardness that people often face when spontaneously starting a conversation is removed. Suggested discussion topics or questions can be used to help get conversations going or to guide discussion of particular issues. As a simple “icebreaker,” a networking technique or a way of structuring discussion of chosen issues, speed dialogue can be a very helpful tool in promoting interaction and communication between people of different cultures, groups and organisations.

In this manual you will find suggestions of how you might like to use speed dialogue, both as part of other events and as the focus of an event. You will also find advice on all the key aspects of organising a speed-dialogue based event, from choosing possible partners to tips to make sure that everything runs smoothly on the day. The “Manual Overview” (page 10) should make it easier to navigate the advice and tips offered in the main body of the manual. The appendices provide sample materials which may be helpful for organising, planning and evaluating your event, as well as giving ideas for speed dialogue conversation pointers.

The PDF version of this and the other Community Dialogue Manuals can be downloaded from www.dialoguesociety.org/publications; you can copy and paste materials from the appendices to adapt for your own use.

This fairly long manual is not intended to be read from cover to cover. This introduction and the overview should give you an idea of the advice and resources included here, so that you can refer to those sections that could be helpful to you when they are relevant.

What is Speed Dialogue?

Speed dialogue is a form of dialogue in which participants engage in a series of short one-to-one conversations with different dialogue partners.

The idea is taken from the practice of “speed dating,” an activity designed to help single people looking for partners to meet a lot of new people in a short period of time.

Voluntary sector organisations and businesses have adapted the speed dating technique to serve different purposes.

Speed dialogue is used:

- as an icebreaker, or
- to facilitate networking among people of different organisations
- to help people from different cultural and religious groups to get to know each other as individuals
- to organise discussion of issues relevant to the group of participants

It works as follows:

- Participants will sit down in pairs
- Each pair of participants will initially talk for a given time (3-10 minutes)
- A facilitator will then ring a bell/blow a whistle, or simply announce that it is time to move on
- Generally, half the group will stay seated in one position, while the other half of the group get up to move and sit with a new person
- There may, for example, be two circles of chairs facing each other; those seated on the outside stay in the same seat throughout, while people in the inside circle move along one space after each time interval

There are some variations, for example:

For certain events, such as ice-breaker events, people may just be asked to find a partner to stand/sit and talk with, moving on to find new partners each time a bell rings/an announcement is made.

People may be left to talk about whatever they wish. However, it is generally helpful to provide some suggestions on a piece of paper to guide the conversation, especially if part of the aim of the session is to talk about a particular subject. Alternatively the facilitator can suggest topics when explaining the activity, or when asking participants to find a new partner.

For ideas on conversation pointers see Appendix 7.

Aims and Objectives of This Manual

1. To encourage and support individuals and groups to engage in dialogue
2. To provide an “ice-breaker,” helping people to overcome shyness, reserve and barriers of difference and get into meaningful conversations
3. To provide a tool for productive networking between different local organisations, encouraging fruitful partnerships
4. To provide a tool to help people to get to know each other
5. To help structure the exchange of ideas within a group in a way that allows each person to express their own thoughts and to hear and discuss a range of other perspectives
6. To provide strategies, tips, advice and know-how for organising successful speed dialogue events
7. To encourage the opening up of different communities to one another
8. To promote friendship, conversation and support within local communities

Who is This Manual For?

- Community groups and charities looking for ways to encourage friendship and discussion within the local community
- Faith groups looking for ways to engage with other faith/community groups
- Organisations working with groups of young people looking for useful icebreakers and ways to promote discussion
- Organisations that routinely organise medium to large scale events and are interested in maximising networking opportunities
- Organisations and groups of any kind looking to bring people together regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, culture, religion etc

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How Speed Dialogue Works:..... 15

Advice on different systems that you can use in organising your speed dialogue events, with layouts and seating plan.

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Advice on building different kinds of intercultural/interfaith/local community events around speed dialogue:

a) Speed Dialogue as an Icebreaker..... 17

Advice on when and how you might like to use this activity.

b) Inter-Organisational Networking Events:..... 18

How to use speed dialogue to effectively bring about new connections and partnerships between local organisations and stakeholders.

c) Intercultural/Interfaith Events:..... 21

How to use speed dialogue to help people of different cultural and religious backgrounds get to know each other.

d) Community Discussion Events:..... 25

How to use speed dialogue to start local dialogues on local issues

Advice for Large Speed Dialogue Events: 25

Extensive practical advice on all aspects of preparing for a large-scale speed dialogue event.

Working in Partnership:..... 25

An explanation of the many benefits of working in partnership and some practical advice on establishing successful partnerships.

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Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue Events

02

Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue

Sample Event Outline for a Speed Dialogue Event with Dinner

Timing

Where a short speed dialogue session is used as an icebreaker, conversations will be short, between 2 and 4 minutes each. 3-5 conversations will probably be sufficient.

If speed dialogue is the main feature of your event, you can of course afford to make each conversation longer and to have more of them. 5-8 minutes per conversation is sensible: people have time to have an interesting discussion but the time allowed is not so long that people become nervous about whether they will have enough to talk about.

For this kind of event it is worth having 1 – 1.5 hours of speed dialogue, but more than this may be too tiring. If the dialogue itself is more than 1 hour long it is probably worth breaking in the middle for refreshments. You can make the event more substantial by adding various extras, from a buffet meal to musical or theatrical entertainment (see “Extras” section below).

6.00pm	Reception	Give people a chance to have something to drink and mingle casually before you get started. It is nice to accompany this part of the evening with some background music or music from a local group.
6.15pm	Welcome speech by organiser	This should be no longer than 10 minutes
6.25pm	Keynote addresses	Leading stakeholders in the community can be invited to address guests for no longer than 5-7 minutes each. Possible candidates include the local MP, the Mayor or a local Councillor.
6.40pm	Announcer explains speed dialogue: its aims, the materials that people can use, and how it will work.	It is crucial that this is all explained clearly, making people confident of what they are doing and ensuring they are engaged with the process
6.45pm	Speed dialogue session 1	Five 8 minute conversations in the first session
7.25pm	Buffet dinner/refreshments served	If possible accompany with music from a local group. This part will also allow for some 'unstructured' networking and dialogue to take place.

8pm	Speed dialogue session 2	Four 8 minute conversations in the second session
8.35pm	Coffee and desserts; short performance from local drama group	
9.15pm	End	

How Speed Dialogue Works

There are three different systems that you can use in organising your speed dialogue events. Different systems require different layouts or seating plans.

1) Rotation System

- Participants will sit down randomly in pairs
- Each pair of participants will initially talk for a given time (5-10 minutes)
- The facilitator will then ring a bell, blow a whistle or simply announce that it is time to move on
- Generally, half the group will stay seated in one position, while the other half of the group get up to move and sit with the a new person

Seating

- Arrange two circles of chairs facing each other; those seated in the outer circle stay in the same seat throughout, while people seated in the inner circle move along one space after each time interval. You could arrange this sort of seating around a U-shaped table.
- Alternatively, use a number of small, numbered tables with two chairs at each. Those facing one way or closest to a given wall stay in their seats. The others move in between the tables in numerical order; for example, if you started on table 3 you would move to 4 and then to 5 etc.
- Tables could be replaced by other numbered “dialogue stations”- pairs of chairs, parts of tables, sofas or even pairs of beanbags.

To avoid too many conversations between people who already know each other:

- Those who came with friends or colleagues should be in the same group as them (either the “moving around” group or the “staying seated” group - they will then not end up talking to each other).
- Ideally they should also sit as far apart as possible, to avoid someone else having three conversations in a row with people from the same organisation or religious group.

2) Appointments System¹

- Each participant has an appointments form with a list of sessions and spaces to fill in names as shown:

Session Number	Meet with:
1	
2	
3	

- Participants are given up to 10 minutes to make appointments with others (NB they should not put down more than one name for any time slot)
- Participants pair up with their partners for session one
- After the allotted time the facilitator rings a bell/blows a whistle/announces that it is time to move on
- Participants find their partners for session 2 and the process is repeated

Seating

- Provide plenty of seating, if possible with pairs of chairs, so that people can sit down with each other easily even though there are no fixed seating arrangement

3) Simple System

- For certain events people may just be asked to find a partner to stand/sit and talk with, moving on to find new partners each time a bell rings/an announcement is made

Seating

- Provide plenty of seating, if possible with pairs of chairs, so that people can sit down with each other easily even though there are no fixed seating arrangement
- Alternatively, this simple system can also be conducted standing without any pre-organised seating arrangements, allowing people to move around easily

¹ This system is based on “the Clock Game” as used by the Three Faiths Forum: www.threefaithsforum.org.uk

Speed Dialogue Hints and Tips²

- Choose your conversation pointers carefully in accordance with the aim of your event
- Avoid questions which are likely to bring up controversial issues which cannot be adequately discussed in a short time
- When using more complex conversation pointers leave sufficient time so that participants do not feel rushed
- Remind participants that they are speaking as themselves and should not feel that they have to represent a whole culture or religious tradition
- To avoid one conversation partner doing all the talking, facilitators should indicate half-way points in discussion times and remind participants to ensure that each person both speaks and listens

Types of Speed Dialogue Events

a) Speed Dialogue as an Icebreaker

OBJECTIVE: to help people at an event to have meaningful interactions with as many new people as possible

Speed dialogue can be a simple and effective icebreaker during a larger event.

Possible Uses of Icebreaker Speed Dialogue

- At a dinner event, to help people to meet and speak with more of the guests before they sit down
- At a community celebration, to encourage interaction between people who do not already know each other
- At a large community conference or briefing event where stakeholders or partners do not already know each other
- At a youth activity day/interfaith event, to help the young people get to know each other

Format

This kind of speed dialogue can be conveniently arranged using the simple system, as follows:

- The announcer introduces the activity and explains how it will work, perhaps giving a few sample questions to help people start conversations
- Everybody finds a person they do not know to talk to and stands/sits with them

² With thanks to Three Faiths Forum for their input.

- The facilitator rings a bell, blows a whistle or simply announces that it is time to start, and in their pairs people speak for a given time (2-4 minutes)
- The facilitator rings the bell or otherwise signals that it is time to move on, and everybody finds another person they do not know
- The facilitator signals the beginning of the new conversation and the new pairs have a short conversation
- The process is repeated as many times as required within the timeframe allocated for this exercise

Alternatively, if space allows, you could make your speed dialogue more structured with one of the seating arrangements described above under “How Speed Dialogue Works”, page 15.

Resources

- If you have an event booklet for the event (giving the programme, organisers’ contact details and any forthcoming events) include some conversation starters in it. Bring these to the attention of guests when you start the speed dialogue.
- Alternatively the facilitator may simply suggest a few questions or ideas when introducing the activity.
- If you suggest questions or conversation starters keep it fairly light; there will not be time for people to discuss big questions.

Checklist

- You may want to mention the speed dialogue icebreaker in your advertising materials
- Bell/whistle/microphone for the announcer (unless the group is small)
- Prepare introduction, explaining the point of the activity and how it will work
- Suggest questions in introduction and/or in event booklet
- Volunteers to make sure that everyone has a partner at each changeover

b) Inter-Organisational Networking Events

OBJECTIVE: to facilitate effective networking between different community groups, charities, religious organisations and stakeholders encouraging fruitful local partnerships

Speed dialogue is an excellent way of maximising the effectiveness of networking events. It allows people from a range of organisations to hold meaningful conversations with a wider range of potential partners. (On the benefits of partnerships please see

“Working in Partnership” section, page 25 and the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual.)

This kind of networking event could be highly beneficial at any time. However, it may be particularly interesting to arrange such an event in response to a particular local challenge, bringing together people engaged in the local community in a range of capacities to explore partnerships that may help the community to face that challenge. For example, at a time of severe cuts to public services, speed dialogue among people engaged in local public services and civil society may help to minimise the impact of those cuts on the community. Dialogue at such an event may be specifically focused on the way in which cuts may affect the services provided by each organisation, shared goals and interests, and resources, facilities and expertise that could be of service to partners.

Format

The best system to use at this kind of event is the appointments system (see “Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue: How Speed Dialogue Works”, above, page 15). This system gives people the opportunity to find and make appointments with those participants most relevant to their work and goals.

To help them to do this it is helpful to prepare a participants’ booklet with photos and bios of all participants. This booklet can be distributed before the event (by email) and will help participants to more easily identify those people they would like to meet with. See “Resources” subsection below.

The simple system will also work for this kind of event. Participants find themselves a new partner at each signal and will be able to find some of the people they are keen to meet. But the appointments system gives them more time to do this and makes the dialogue more relaxed as the process of finding partners has been completed in advance.

Programme

- This kind of event could be held by a charity or community group during the working day or in the early evening, with a simple programme of speed dialogue and perhaps some refreshments. Even without extras (see “Extras” section below, page 33) it would be a very worthwhile event for many charities, community groups, stakeholders and religious organisations.
- Alternatively dinner and entertainment could be provided, making the event an enjoyable social occasion as well as an interesting and important networking session.

Resources

- Appointments form (see “Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue,” above, page 14).

- A participants' booklet to distribute prior to the event. For each participant this should give name, job title, organisation description, brief biography, photo and preferred contact email address. You will need to request these in your invitations and inform invitees that they will be distributed among other participants (see Appendix 4).
- For a straightforward, focused networking event you do not necessarily need to provide conversation pointers. People will be occupied explaining their work, exchanging details and beginning to explore potential for collaboration. But if your event is focused on a particular local challenge or project you may want to give pointers (see Appendix 7).
- Conversation pointers can be included in an event booklet giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events

Checklist for a Simple Networking Event

(For further advice and a checklist for a larger evening event with dinner, please see "Advice for Large Speed Dialogue Events" section, below, page 25)

- Decide on your objective, target audience, venue, date and time
- Identify the format and components of your programme
- Advertise widely among community groups, charities, stakeholders etc (for ideas see "Event Publicity" section of "Advice for Large Speed Dialogue Events" below, page 28)
- Send invitation emails
- In invitations request organisation summaries, biographies and photos and explain that these will be distributed to other participants along with email addresses in a participants' booklet; you may want to give participants the option of withholding their email addresses from the participants' booklet
- Invite a VIP to give a short opening/welcome speech
- Prepare introduction, explaining the point of the activity and how it will work
- Bell/whistle/microphone for the facilitator (unless the group is small)
- Prepare and send out participants' booklets
- Prepare conversation pointers and either add to event booklets or print separately
- Prepare event booklets
- Prepare feedback forms
- Provide refreshments: at least tea, coffee and biscuits
- Volunteers to assist participants to find their next partner at each changeover
- Thank you emails after the event (Appendix 6)

c) Intercultural/Interfaith Events

OBJECTIVE: to help people from different cultural and religious groups to get to know each other as individuals, compare experiences and think through challenges

Speed dialogue can be a helpful way of facilitating meaningful one-to-one conversations between different people. Why not use it at a dialogue event bringing together people of different cultural groups or religious congregations?

Working on a small scale, you could simply arrange a speed dialogue session between two different faith communities. Or you could be ambitious and invite groups from a range of different religious/cultural organisations.

Give people helpful pointers for interesting conversation, and allow at least 5 minutes per conversation.

There are a range of possible approaches you could use (see Appendix 7):

- Focus on faith, providing suggestions of questions that will channel curiosity and encourage a positive exchange of experiences and reflections.
- Focus on local challenges, encouraging reflection on a social issue such as social cohesion or education.
- Ask people to share stories; give a suggestion or suggestions for a theme and make each conversation long enough to accommodate brief telling of a story. In order for people to exchange stories you will probably need to allow 8-10 minutes per conversation and give a signal when half the time has passed so that the second person may tell their story.³

Format

The rotation system should work well for this kind of event (see “Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue: How Speed Dialogue Works”, above, page 15).

Allow 4+ minutes per conversation, and 8-10 minutes if you are using stories.

Programme

- This kind of event could be held on a small scale by two religious congregations meeting for dialogue after a service. For instance, a group from a mosque could visit a church after a Sunday morning service to have a cup of coffee and engage in speed dialogue. The event need not last longer than one hour.
- For a larger event dinner and entertainment could be incorporated, making it an enjoyable social occasion for people of a range of faiths or cultures.

³ For advice and resources on personal storytelling visit <http://stethelburgas.org/themes/power-of-stories>

Resources

- To avoid difficulties in getting started or repetitive conversations, provide some interesting pointers on a “Conversation Starter” sheet or in the event booklet, which will also contain the programme, organisers’ contact details and any forthcoming events.
- Alternatively the facilitator can suggest topics when explaining the activity, or when asking participants to find a new partner.

Checklist for a Small Scale Event

(For further advice and a checklist for a larger evening event with dinner, please see “Advice for large speed dialogue events” section below, page 25)

- Contact the leader(s) of the religious/cultural organisation(s) you would like to invite to the dialogue. Explain the idea and propose a meeting or phone conversation to discuss in more detail.
- Fix your objective, venue, date and time.
- Identify the format and components of your programme. Visit the congregations/groups to invite your guests in person and give out fliers with details.
- Prepare introduction, explaining the point of the activity and how it will work.
- Bell/whistle/microphone for the announcer (unless the group is small).
- Invite leader(s) of the other group(s) to say a few words also.
- Arrange seating (see “How Speed Dialogue Works: Rotation System” under “Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue” above, page 15).
- Prepare conversation pointers and either add to event booklets, or print separately.
- Prepare event booklets.
- Prepare feedback forms.
- Provide refreshments: at least tea, coffee and biscuits.
- Put out a contact list for future events.
- Send thank you emails after the event.

d) Community Discussion Events

OBJECTIVE: to allow discussion of important local issues within a group of people in a way that allows each person to express their own thoughts and to hear and discuss a range of other perspectives

Speed dialogue is one way of stimulating discussion of local challenges among local people. Provide conversation pointers on local challenges. During each conversation, people should have the time to introduce themselves and exchange a few thoughts on the topic, guided by the questions.

Organising a speed dialogue session which includes stakeholders, voluntary sector workers and members of the public can be informative and thought-provoking for all and may lead to fruitful local partnerships, ongoing discussions and action on local challenges.

You may want to allocate some time for a short Q&A session with a selection of stakeholders (a councillor, a local MP, a police commander and perhaps one or two religious leaders). This adds value to the event by bringing diverse participants into contact with stakeholders and giving them a chance to put questions to them whether or not they are able to talk with them during the speed dialogue. It encourages engagement with local society and democracy and allows stakeholders to take on board some of the key issues arising from the evening's conversations.

According to levels of interest, your event may lead to further, more focused events. Put out contact lists for further discussion of particular issues. One volunteer should take charge of each, contacting those interested to organise another, more focused speed dialogue or a straightforward discussion. If such groups do form, contact relevant local councillors to invite them to attend, or report to them on the content of discussions.

You might also want to suggest to stakeholders that they hold surgeries on issues that the discussion has shown to be particularly interesting to participants. You will be able to forward the email addresses of participants to the stakeholders (with the participants' permission) so that the stakeholders can keep in touch about these surgeries.

Format

The rotation system should work well for this kind of event (see "Planning and Managing Speed Dialogue: How Speed Dialogue Works", above, page 15).

Allow 4-8 minutes per conversation.

Programme

- You may want to organise a large-scale community speed dialogue, with, as far as possible, all sectors of the local community represented. The dialogue could be followed by dinner and form a kind of Community Engagement Dinner. Please see the *Community Engagement Dinners* Community

Dialogue Manual for other ways of arranging dinners which bring the local community together to socialise and engage in constructive discussion.

- On a smaller scale, you could organise shorter sessions at a local community centre or place of worship, perhaps providing coffee and biscuits before the dialogue.

Resources

- Printed list of conversation pointers on local issues and challenges (see Appendix 7). If convenient, conversation pointers may be included in an event booklet also giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events.
- Alternatively the facilitator can suggest topics when explaining the activity, or when asking participants to find a new partner.
- An attendees' contact list to circulate to all participants after the event. This will enable people to follow up on new connections and continue discussions. Mention in your invitation that you will be circulating a list of names, organisations and email addresses and give people the chance to opt out of this list when they RSVP. Circulate the list with your thank you email after the event.
- Mailing lists on particular local issues.

Checklist for a Small Scale Event

(For further advice and a checklist for a larger evening event with dinner, please see "Advice for Large Speed Dialogue Events" section, below, page 25):

- Decide on your objective, target audience, venue, date and time.
- Identify the format and components of your programme.
- Publicise the event. Invite community groups, charities, stakeholders etc (for ideas see "Event publicity" section of "Advice for large speed dialogue events" below) and place posters and fliers in post offices, newsagents, community centres, supermarkets, libraries etc.
- Prepare introduction, explaining the point of the activity and how it will work.
- Bell/whistle/microphone for the announcer (unless the group is small).
- Arrange seating (see "Arranging seating" under "Planning and managing speed dialogue" above, page 14).
- Prepare conversation pointers and either add to event booklets or print separately.
- Prepare event booklets.
- Prepare feedback forms.
- Provide refreshments: at least tea, coffee and biscuits.
- Circulate list of participants' contact details when you write to thank your guests.

Advice for Large Speed Dialogue Events

As noted in the sections above, any of the kinds of speed dialogue events just described (inter-organisation networking events, interfaith/intercultural events and community discussion events) could be organised on a small scale, or made into larger evening events comprising the speed dialogue itself, dinner and perhaps entertainment.

Such events, of course, require a lot more organisation than the smaller versions of these events. For this reason, additional advice on organising these larger events is given here in the following sections:

- Working in Partnership
- Planning Your Event
- Event Publicity
- Preparing for the Event
- Extras
- Event Essentials
- Checklist

Working in Partnership

NB. For extensive advice on finding local partners and working in partnership please refer to the Building Partnerships Community Dialogue Manual.

Consider inviting another community group, charity or religious congregation to work with you on the planning and organisation of the project. The benefits go far beyond just the sharing of the workload:

- It unites your ends and your means; your goal of promoting interaction and friendship between different groups is served even at the planning stages of your event as your group and another work together on the project and get to know each other.
- It expands your range of expertise by bringing in the skills of members of another group.
- It expands your range of guests, as you can invite all your partners' contacts to your event(s).
- It can bring you new insight into the perspectives and concerns of a different cultural, social or religious group.
- It increases the credibility of your dialogue work by showing that even as you plan your events you are practising what you preach and engaging with other groups.
- It can increase trust and interest in your organisation; some sectors of the community who are unfamiliar with your work may already know and trust your partner organisation, and be more inclined to get involved with your projects because of the connection.

- It helps keep your work genuinely rooted in dialogue. Even as you work on your project you are engaging in a form of dialogue, and probably growing in appreciation and understanding of a different group.
- It can establish a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship where each partner can sometimes benefit from the support, expertise, contacts and facilities of the other.

Tips for Working in Partnership

- Attending events run by other organisations with objectives linked to your own will give opportunities to meet possible partners.
- It is a good idea to invite prospective partners to an informal, social meeting, perhaps over lunch or tea. If they are interested in what you do and in working with you on the project you propose, you can then arrange another meeting.
- Choose your prospective partners carefully. The most successful partnerships are those that serve the objectives of both/all partner organisations. You need partners who share your enthusiasm for bringing the community together through this event.
- When contacting an organisation to propose a meeting or collaboration on a particular project, emphasise the objectives that you share and show how collaboration makes sense for you both.
- Make sure that your partners have the opportunity to be involved at every level. If possible, try to get them involved in planning from the early stages, so that they are really part of the team.
- Make sure that your partners feel valued and recognised; be sure to include their names and details on any materials for a jointly organised event, and ensure that they are visible and acknowledged on the day.

Appendix 1 gives a sample letter for contacting a prospective partner.

Planning Your Event

Form a Planning Committee

Gather a planning committee from among your congregation/organisation/group.

Consider Partnership

Decide whether you want to work in partnership with one or more organisations and contact them so that they join in the planning process as soon as possible.

Decide on Your Aims

Clarify what your aims are and put them in order of importance.

Set Date, Time, Duration and Venue

- Decide on a target audience
- Find and book a venue, such as a town hall or large community centre
- Set date, time and duration with your target audience in mind
- People have more time at weekends, but avoid a day when there is another significant local event such as a football match
- Bear in mind that many Jews would be unavailable on Friday and Saturday evenings due to the Sabbath (Shabbat)

Identify Key Speakers or VIP Guests

- The attendance of an important local stakeholder can raise the profile of your event, attract more guests and bring your community into contact with an influential local figure. You could consider inviting your local MP, the Mayor and other councillors, and asking one or more to make a speech. It may be worth contacting possible VIP guests right at the start of the planning process, and choosing a date that works for them. (See Appendix 3 for a sample invitation.)
- See also “Event Publicity”, below, page 28.

Draft Content for Promotional Literature

- You will need to design/prepare posters, an event booklet for people to refer to on the day and letters/emails of invitation for all your potential guests
- See “Event publicity”, below, page 28

Plan Food

Decide how you will provide the food for the evening. Volunteers? Caterers?

Plan Extras

Think about ‘extras’ that can be included in your event. Possibilities which may enhance the interest and enjoyment of the event include:

- Displays – posters, artwork, notices, children’s work
- Information on organisations represented
- Speeches
- Music/Poetry
- Drama

For further details see “Extras” section below, page 33.

Plan Finances

- Work out what the event is likely to cost altogether and plan how you will meet the cost of the event.

- If you don't have a budget for this kind of event you could ask for donations from religious/community groups involved with the project. Volunteers may be willing to provide food without charging for ingredients.
- You may need to charge a small price for the food, although you should try to avoid asking guests for too much or you will put off those with less disposable income.
- You could ask a local business to be a sponsor for the event (be sure to acknowledge them in your publicity materials).
- Or contact your local council or local support and development organisation for advice on any funding opportunities.⁴

Check Licensing

Find out if you need any licences for the event and arrange to obtain them (see “Extras” section, below, page 33).

Plan Human Resources

- Assign volunteers responsibility for different areas: food, venue, design, invitations etc
- It may be helpful to produce a human resource plan for the day (see below, page 30)

Event Publicity

Designing and Preparing Invitations

- You will need to design posters and invitations (and event booklets for people to refer to on the day). You will also need to prepare letters/emails of invitation.
- Identifying Who to Invite and Sending Invitations
- Please see the *Building Partnerships* Community Dialogue Manual for advice on finding and contacting a range of community groups, religious groups, businesses and stakeholders whom you could invite.
- Groups/individuals you may like to approach include:

⁴ Find your local organisation through <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/ http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html (Scotland)/ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

Local support and development organisations are organisations that provide support to voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city. They provide a range of valuable resources, from free or affordable training to networking and funding opportunities.

See also the list of possible sources of funding at <http://thebigsociety.co.uk/what-is-big-society/faq/>

Local stakeholders

- MPs
- MEPs
- London Assembly Members
- Mayor
- Councillors
- The Council
- NHS health professionals
- School teachers and support staff
- University lecturers and academics
- Police and police community support officers

Local community groups

- Faith groups and religious leaders
- Local support and development organisations⁵
- Supplementary schools
- “Friends of” groups
- Tenants and residents organisations
- Older people’s groups
- Women’s groups
- Cultural community groups
- Local charities and voluntary organisations
- Local campaign/issue-focused groups
- Sports groups
- Local artists/music groups/art groups

Local businesses

- Local business and shop owners

When inviting a community group/religious group consider attending a service/meeting and inviting your guests in person, leaving printed invitations for reference. (On visiting places of worship please see the *Celebrating Festivals* Community Dialogue Manual.)

Preparing a Press Release, and Contacting the Media

Invite members of the press to attend and to cover the event in their publications. Contact as many local media outlets as possible two weeks in advance. Avoid sending

⁵ See footnote 4, above, page 28

emails with attachments. In your initial email give a brief, clear explanation of what is happening. The journalist will contact you if he/she is interested and you can then send a press release (see Appendix 2). Follow up with a call a week before the event.

Preparing for the Event

Human Resource Plan

Early in the planning process, make particular people responsible for different areas of work:

- General coordination (finalising programme, chairing meetings and overseeing project in general)
- Speed dialogue planning
- Non-designed materials (speed dialogue conversation pointers, contact lists, feedback forms)
- Venue organisation
- Food and drink
- Publicity coordination
- Design
- VIP guests
- Media
- Technical management
- Records of the event: filming, photography, interviews etc
- Performers
- HR planning for the day
- Health and safety/first aid
- Venue preparation and decoration

It may be helpful to have a *Human Resource plan* to identify roles and responsibilities on the day and the number of volunteers needed. The table below is a guideline to assist in identifying such roles. The need for some roles will be determined by the size and type of event that you hope to organise. Bear in mind that one person may be able to take on a number of areas of responsibility during the event.

Sample Human Resource Plan

Role	Responsibility Description	Numbers
WELCOMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greet guests entering and direct to registration table(s) ▪ Watch out for any security issues and act on them 	1-2

REGISTRATION TABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greet and register guests Direct to drinks area/seating 	2-4
INTRODUCTORY SPEAKER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome people and introduce the event, including practical information such as fire procedures Introduce any other speaker(s) including VIPs Thank guests and organisers at the end, mentioning feedback forms, contact lists etc 	1
FACILITATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain exactly how the speed dialogue is going to work and introduce conversation pointers Answer any questions Time the dialogue and signal changeover times 	1
TECHNICAL SUPPORT PERSON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and check all technical equipment, turn music on and off etc 	1-2
FOOD MANAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct food distribution and volunteers 	1
FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare food ready to be served - ensure hot food is properly heated, serving area is tidy etc Serve food Make sure the food stand is clean at all times Dispose of accumulating rubbish regularly 	2-5
AMENITIES INSPECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check toilets for cleanliness & hygiene Ensure rubbish is cleared away 	1-2
PHOTOGRAPHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take photos of the crowd, people eating and talking etc 	1-2
VIDEO CAMERAMAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tape scenes from the evening Interview people about their experience of the evening 	1
MEDIA LIAISON OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look after media representatives and meet their needs 	1
VIP LIAISON OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greet VIP's and show them to their places Look after them and meet their needs 	1-4
EVENT COORDINATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate volunteers Ensure smooth running of events Liaise with Food Manager, Facilitator, speakers and VIP Liaison Officers to ensure that the event runs to schedule 	1
FIRST AIDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be on site at all times to respond to accidents and medical problems and contact relevant support (See footnote 8, below, page 35) 	1

Food

- An open buffet meal allows people to mingle freely, encouraging informal networking even during the meal. It is also less work for the organisers than a sit-down meal served at tables.
- Make sure that you have signs to indicate vegetarian/vegan food, and food containing ingredients to which guests may be allergic, such as nuts.
- Bear in mind the dietary requirements of the followers of certain religions. There is often considerable variation in the practice of different groups/individuals belonging to a religion. If you are inviting a religious congregation it is probably worth asking a contact for guidance on the dietary needs of their group.
- If you are inviting Buddhist or Hindu guests remember that many of the followers of both religions are vegetarian. Note that Hindu vegetarians generally do not eat eggs, though they do consume milk and dairy products.
- Note that while Sikh principles do not require adherents to be vegetarian, some Sikhs adhere to the principle of refraining from any meat that has been ritually slaughtered: they do not eat halal or kosher meat.
- If you are inviting Jewish guests remember that many only eat certified kosher meat. Other Jewish food laws are explained in the *Fast Breaking Dinners* and *Community Engagement Dinners* Community Dialogue Manuals.
- If you are inviting Jains remember that they are strict vegetarians because of their careful adherence to the principle of non-violence. They do not eat eggs and some do not consume milk or milk products. In addition, honey is forbidden because of the violence done to bees in its collection and root vegetables are not eaten because harvesting them destroys the whole plant.
- Non-Muslims inviting Muslims should remember that they do not eat pork products and that meat must be halal.
- A vegetarian option (especially if it excludes eggs) will ensure that there is an acceptable meal for most guests (although if you know that vegans and/or Jains will be attending remember that they have stricter dietary restrictions).
- Make sure that you brief volunteers to maintain high standards of hygiene and safety throughout. Volunteers working with food must make sure they wash their hands regularly and where possible serve food with gloves; any food being cooked or reheated must be piping hot all the way through; cold cooked food should be kept chilled.

Materials

Aside from publicity materials and designed materials, think about and prepare the following:

- Conversation pointers for the speed dialogue itself. A range of examples are given in Appendix 7. Volunteers who prepare these should ask for feedback from the rest of the group before finalising them. They may be sent to the design team and incorporated into the event booklet, or prepared and printed separately.
- Design and print a little event booklet to hand out at the event, giving the programme, organisers' contact details and any forthcoming events, and perhaps including the discussion topics.
- For a networking event: a booklet of participants to distribute prior to the event. For each participant this should give name, job title, brief biography, organisation description, photo and preferred contact email address. You will need to request information and photos in your invitations and inform invitees that these materials and their email addresses will be distributed among other confirmed participants.
- For a community discussion event: a participants' contact list for distribution after the event. This will enable people to follow up on new connections and continue discussions. It will also enable participants to initiate contact with those whom they did not have the opportunity to meet in the course of the event. Mention in your invitation that you will be circulating a list of names, organisations and email addresses and give people the chance to opt out (see Appendix 4). Circulate the list with your thank you email after the event.
- Feedback forms so that you can learn from people's experience of your event (see Appendix 5 for sample form).

Extras

You could add interest to your event by organising some additional features to compliment the event. Possible ideas that can be incorporated into your evening are given below:

Displays – Posters, Artwork, Notices, Children's Work, Photos

Provide displays to give people something extra to look at. At an interfaith event, for example, you may like to make a colourful display giving information on religions represented at the event, asking for contributions from the religious groups attending. Children may like to contribute pictures or posters, and photos from other community events are always interesting.

Invite any partner groups to contribute displays/photos.

Information on Organisations Represented

When inviting local organisations to your event, or when they reply, invite them to provide leaflets and posters to be displayed at the event.

Speeches

If you have VIPs coming, you may want to invite them to make a speech. Guests should be asked to keep speeches succinct. Include them in your printed programme.

Music/Poetry⁶

A performance from a local choir or instrumental group provides an enjoyable extra element to the evening. Alternatively, you could ask local school children to read some poetry.

Instrumental background music while people are arriving, mingling or eating is also a pleasant addition.

Rotating Quotes on a Screen

A PowerPoint display of inspiring quotes projected onto a screen or wall while people are arriving and mingling provides extra interest. Including quotes from diverse sources will add to an atmosphere of sharing and mutual respect. For an interfaith/intercultural event you could use quotes from religious texts and from inspirational figures such as Rumi, Gandhi and Mother Theresa. For an inter-organisational networking event consider preparing a set of rotating quotes concerned with dialogue and partnership. Please refer to the Celebrating Festivals Community Dialogue Manual for possible quotes.

Drama ⁷

Add extra entertainment to your event by arranging a performance from a local amateur dramatics society or school/college/university drama club. You could even invite a local comedian. If you do this make sure you are familiar with his/her work and feel confident that it won't cause any real offence to anyone.

⁶NB if your event will include the performance of a play, an exhibition of a film, the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music and your venue does not have a premises licence, you will need a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). Incidental (background) music is an exception and does not require a licence.

You will need to fill in a Temporary Event Notice form and send it to the Council's Licensing section, and to the local police, a minimum of ten working days before the event. The Licensing section will be able to give you the appropriate form and advise you on whom you should send the police copy to. An individual can apply for up to five TENs in a year, and a single premises can be used up to twelve times. Currently an application costs £21.

If you are going to play recorded music you will need a licence from the Performing Rights Society. The PRS for Music website (<http://prsformusic.com>) has a "Charity and community" section (<http://prsformusic.com/users/businessesandliveevents/musicforbusinesses/charityandcommunity/Pages/default.aspx#10>). You can call them on 08453093090 or can request a callback via the website.

⁷See footnote 6, above.

Event Essentials

Attention to detail can determine the success of your speed dialogue evening. Below are some essential details worthy of your attention.

The Venue

Make sure the venue is very clean and aired. If possible, bring in some flowers or plants.

Health and Safety

Appoint a health and safety coordinator to talk through health and safety with the volunteers and make sure that they know what to do in an emergency.

Appoint a fire warden. Check that your fire alarm is working and that fire exits are fully accessible and clearly signposted.

Make sure that you have a well-equipped first aid kit and that your volunteers know where it is.

Make sure you have a qualified First Aider on site in the event of an emergency.⁸

When introducing the event remember to include safety information, including the location of fire exits.

Guests

Make sure there are some volunteers whose responsibilities include simply taking time to chat to visitors. They may have another minor role too, but their main role should be to socialise with the guests.

Make sure that there are people at the door to welcome people in and to thank them for coming as they leave. Don't let people just drift out without feeling that their attendance has been appreciated.

Leave out a visitors' book/contact list and invite guests to add their details to it. You may wish to include a column that they can tick if they wish to help at future events.

Feedback Forms

Remember to prepare and print these in advance and to make sure that guests fill them out shortly before the end of the evening.

⁸ St John's Ambulance (<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses.aspx>) and the British Red Cross (<http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/>) provide a range of first aid courses. Local branches can also offer first aid cover for events at competitive rates.

Alternatively, if you know a doctor or nurse personally you could ask him/her to be present at the event and provide First Aid cover.

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Accidents-and-first-aid/Pages/Introduction.aspx> for a First Aid guide.

Filming and Photography

Try to take plenty of photographs on the day so that you can use them for future articles, newsletters, website etc. If possible, investing in a professional photographer can be worthwhile if you are likely to use the photos for future publications, brochures etc.

If you have or can hire a video camera, filming from the event can be a valuable resource to use later. Record interviews from participants offering reflections at the end of the event.

At the beginning of the event, inform guests that there will be some photography and filming during the evening and explain the purpose of this.

To Remember on the Day

Smile! There is no substitute. It will make people feel welcome.

Talk to your guests. Be friendly; approach people.

Make sure everyone knows exactly what their job is and is confident doing it.

Checklist

Planning: Why, What, How, When, Where

(At least 1-2 months in advance)

- Identify your objective(s). All elements of the event should tie into the main objective(s).
- Tell your organisation/group about the idea and see who is interested in helping to plan the event. Form a planning group to take responsibility for organising the event, but remember to keep the wider group updated regularly on how you're doing. Your planning group will need to meet regularly, perhaps once a fortnight with further discussion as necessary between meetings. You will need to discuss and clarify your objective with the planning group so that everyone has the same goal in mind.
- One of the first things that you should do in your planning group is to decide whether to invite another group(s) to work in partnership with you. Make contact with them as quickly as possible so that representatives of their group have the option of joining the planning group early on and being fully involved in the process. (Appendix 1 gives a sample letter to a prospective partner.)
- Decide on a target audience.
- Decide on the format of the speed dialogue, its objective(s) and its theme(s).
- Decide on what else you want to include in the event (food, drinks, extras-music, displays etc).
- Prepare a provisional programme for the whole event.

- Set a date with your target audience in mind. Make sure that no other significant local events fall on the same day.

Practical Priorities

(At least 1-2 months in advance)

- Find and book a venue. When doing so, make sure that the venue has all the tables and chairs you will need, or that you will be allowed to bring in additional furniture if necessary.
- Find out if your venue has a premises licence; if it does not, consider whether you need to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (see “Extras” above, page 33 and footnote 5).
- Work out what the event is likely to cost altogether.
- Plan how you are going to meet the costs.

Design

- Design posters.
- Design event booklets (for a larger event).
- Design fliers.

Marketing and Invitations

(Begin 1-2 months in advance)

- Discuss and decide on a strategy for inviting guests and make a time plan.
- Send letters to the Mayor, councillors, MPs and other important people in your community inviting them to the event (see Appendix 3 for a sample invitation). Give as much notice as possible.
- Issue invitations to other local stakeholders (the local police force, teachers, academics and health professionals), community groups and religious groups.
- Give plenty of invitations to the priest of your local church and/or the rabbi of your local synagogue and ask him/her to announce the event after a service. Even better, go along and invite the congregation yourself.

(4-5 weeks in advance)

- If you have a mailing list you can do a mailshot to attract a larger and more diverse audience.
- You can also consider putting up posters if your speed dialogue event is focused on a particular neighbourhood or local area.
- Depending on the response to your advertising so far, post invitations to local residents, particularly in neighbourhoods from which there has been little response so far.

- Announce details of the event to your religious congregation (e.g. after Friday prayers/a service) or to your community group and give out invitations.
- Prepare a press release.

(In the last month)

- Contact as many media outlets as possible two weeks in advance.
- Send reminders to registered guests.
- Call media outlets to follow up one week before the event.

Preparing for the Speed Dialogue Event

- As soon as you can, make a list in your planning group of all the jobs that need to be done and delegate responsibility for different areas of work: dialogue materials, design, cooking, cleaning and decoration, any entertainment etc.
- Prepare an HR plan for the event and assign jobs to volunteers.
- Find your volunteers and assign them to the various roles. (Make sure you have a balance of male and female volunteers.)
- If you wish to use a professional photographer or cameraman to capture your events, make sure you book them in advance. Otherwise, find experienced volunteers for photography and filming.
- Prepare conversation pointers (Appendix 7). The volunteer(s) responsible for this should ask for feedback from the planning group before finalising these. They should be printed, or sent to the design team to add to the event booklet.
- For a networking event: assemble and distribute participants' booklet with names, job titles, biographies, organisation descriptions, photos and contact emails. (See "Resources" subsection of "Inter-Organisational Networking Events" section, above, page 19.)
- Prepare and print feedback forms. Appendix 5 gives a sample form.
- Prepare an introduction to the event, and an explanation of how the speed dialogue will work.
- Decide on the type and quantity of food. The initial response generated by the promotion material will give you some indication of attendance levels so that you can start planning.
- Decide to buy or make the food. Consider cost effectiveness as well as effect on the overall quality of the event. If you are buying food from elsewhere check well in advance (at least one month) that your chosen supplier can provide it.
- Take allergies into account; for example, be careful to provide information on whether food may contain nuts.
- Cater for vegetarians.
- Buy/borrow plates, bowls, glasses, cutlery and serviettes as required.

- Ensure that all volunteers working with food are briefed on maintaining high standards of hygiene, washing hands regularly, covering any cuts etc.

Extras

- Contact groups who may be able to perform music or drama at least six weeks in advance of the event. Arrange when they will perform, for how long and whether/how much you will need to pay them.
- Prepare displays, or make sure that volunteers are doing so (children's posters, photo displays etc).
- Gather and display information on organisations represented at the event.
- Fix length and topic of speeches with any VIPs invited to speak.
- Prepare PowerPoint display of quotes.
- Find any recorded music you want to play during the event.
- Obtain any necessary licences, including a licence from the Performing Rights Society if you are playing copyrighted recorded music (see "Extras" above, page 33: footnote 5).
- Make sure you have the necessary equipment for playing music and/or for a PowerPoint display (laptop and projector) or show (microphone(s)), as well as any microphones needed for speakers. Test all the equipment in the relevant area.

General Practical Preparations

(In the month before the event)

- Buy plenty of pens for feedback forms, contact list etc.
- Make sure that there are enough black bags for the rubbish.
- Check health and safety considerations: fire alarm; accessible, clearly signposted fire exits; first aid kit; fully informed volunteers.
- Buy a visitors' book and/or a clipboard for your contact list.

(In the final few days)

- Check that you have sufficient volunteers for each of the jobs on the HR plan and that they understand their role. Have a meeting the day before the event.
- Buy/pick up/prepare the food.
- Make sure the venue is thoroughly cleaned and decorated the night before or the morning of the event.
- Air the venue out on the day.
- Put out a visitors' book/contact list and pens for people to leave contact details and brief comments (including a column that they can tick if they wish to help at future events).

During the Event

- Volunteers should arrive at least an hour in advance for a briefing and final check.
- Remember to include safety information in the introduction to the event and to notify guests that photography and filming will be taking place.
- Volunteers should stick to the job assigned to them to make sure that everything is done properly.
- Volunteers should engage with the visitors and NOT just talk among themselves.
- People should refrain from speaking any languages other than English as a courtesy to all guests.
- Keep things clean and tidy, paying particular attention to the area where food is served.
- Before visitors leave someone should ensure that they have signed the visitors' book/contact lists and have filled in their feedback forms and handed them in.
- After the event the volunteers will need to stay to clean the venue and dispose of any rubbish left behind.

Follow-up

- Write thank you letters/emails to anyone who helped.
- Within a week, get in touch with all who came on the day and thank them for attending. (For a community discussion event include a contact list: see "Resources" sub-section of "Community Discussion Event" section, above, page 24.)
- Put all the photographs from the day on the website, if you have one. Include the link in any follow up emails. Or include them in emails as attachments.
- Also include any memorable comments.
- Hold a post-event debriefing meeting with the planning group and volunteers. Evaluate the event and discuss improvements for next time. Make a note of these. Ensure that everybody's efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.
- And then, keep in touch with your guests and get to know them better. Suggest that they attend/help with other events.
- For a community discussion event: arrange follow-up discussion groups (see "Community Discussion Event" section above).
- For a community discussion event: arrange topical stakeholder surgeries (see "Community Discussion Event" section above).



COMMUNITY
DIALOGUE
MANUAL
S E R I E S

Appendices

You can copy materials from appendices via:

www.dialoguesociety.org/publications

03

Sample Email for Contacting a Local Faith/Community Group Proposing Working in Partnership

Dear [Title Surname],

My name is [Name Surname] and I am writing to you on behalf of [Name of Organisation] to ask whether you or any of your contacts at [Name of Their Organisation] would be interested in working with us on a special networking event with diverse voluntary organisations and stakeholders in [Location].

The aim of the event is to promote connections and partnerships among voluntary organisations, public sector agencies and private sector organisations in the area for the benefit of the whole community. We plan to use speed dialogue to maximise effective and meaningful conversations between participants. We would like the event to be a sociable occasion and propose combining networking with dinner and entertainment provided by local music groups.

We hope to hold the event [on/in] [give possible dates or suggested month/week]. We hope to host around [Rough Estimate of Numbers] guests.

We would be delighted to have the input of any interested members of your [team/group/congregation]. We feel that working in partnership is the best way of organising community events; as well as broadening the range of experience and abilities contributing to the project, it would give our group and yours a chance to get to know one another. We are particularly interested in working in partnership with [Name of Their Organisation] because we feel that there is a lot of common ground between your aims and objectives and ours. [Give a brief explanation of this. For example: We at the Dialogue Society are committed to promoting proactive citizenship; along with community cohesion and intercultural dialogue, it is one of our key goals. Your schools programme promoting understanding of democracy and politics among young people clearly contributes significantly to the same goal. We feel that there may be scope for various kinds of collaboration.]

If any of your [team/members] would like to join the planning group for the networking event they would be most welcome, and the help of volunteers at any stage of the process would be greatly appreciated.

Would you and others from [Name of Organisation] be interested in coming to meet our planning group to discuss any possibilities? If you are free at [Suggested Times] on [Suggested Dates], please let me know and come for a discussion and a cup of tea with us at [Location].

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Speed Dialogue to get Islington Talking

Muslim-led charity and local church team up to arrange community discussion and dinner (Islington, [Date, Year]) The Dialogue Society and All Saints Church, Islington will be hosting a community speed dialogue event on [Date] at [Location]. The event, based on a succession of short one-to-one conversations on the model of speed-dating, will also include dinner and entertainment from local performers. The stated aims of the event are to increase community spirit and to encourage a fruitful exchange of ideas on local responses to local issues.

The organisers are expecting a good turnout, with guests from a range of community groups, local charities and religious congregations, as well as local residents responding to general event publicity. The Mayor of Islington, Cllr [Name Surname] will be giving a key note speech and there will be a Q&A session with councillors, Islington Borough Commander [Name Surname] and local religious leaders.

Ozcan Keles, Executive Director of the Dialogue Society said: "We at the Dialogue Society, along with our good friends at All Saints, look forward to this event, which we hope will promote community cohesion and proactive citizenship in the local area. We hope that the event will lead to some ongoing community discussions, in issue-focused community groups and perhaps also in follow-up meetings with stakeholders. It should be an enjoyable evening for all."

Cllr [Name Surname] of Islington Borough Council said: "I am delighted that the Dialogue Society and All Saints' Church are taking this initiative to facilitate inclusive community discussion about some of the challenges currently faced by our community. In these difficult economic times it is particularly important both to maintain community spirit and to put our heads together to find ways to support the most vulnerable and tackle social problems."

#Ends#

Notes to editors

1. For further information contact Ilknur Kahraman, Co-Director of the Dialogue Society at ikahraman@dialoguesociety.org or on +44(0)20 7619 0361.
2. Founded in 1999 as a registered charity, the Dialogue Society aims to advance social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It was founded by second generation British Muslims of Turkish background. See www.dialoguesociety.org
3. All Saints' Anglican Church, Islington, is a diverse community of Christians with a strong history of commitment to social justice and intercultural relations. It has been collaborating with the Dialogue Society since 2007. Contact the vicar, [Name Surname] on [Email Address].

Sample Letter of Invitation to a Local VIP

[Your Name]
 [Position and Organisation]
 [Address], [Postcode]
 [Telephone]
 [Email]
 [Date]

[Title Name Surname]
 [Position and Organisation]
 [Address], [Post Code]

Dear [Title Surname],

RE: Invitation to Community Speed Dialogue Dinner, [Date]

On behalf of [Your Organisation] and [Partner Organisation], I would like to warmly invite you to speak at a Community Speed Dialogue Dinner to be held from [Time] on [Date] at [Venue].

The idea of the event is to bring people from all sectors of the local community together for a friendly meal and for discussion of issues of local importance. Speed dialogue, which has the same format as speed dating, gives participants the chance to have a set of short conversations with other diverse participants, in this case on topics of local importance. We feel that both the friendly social interaction promoted by a big community dinner and the opportunity for everyone to exchange ideas and enter into a constructive dialogue can really help to build a strong, active and cohesive local community. We anticipate a good turnout and look forward to welcoming local people from all walks of life. I attach a provisional programme for the event.

If you would be prepared to say a few words at the beginning of the evening we would greatly appreciate it. In addition we are asking a selection of local stakeholders to contribute to a brief Stakeholders' Q&A session on some of the key issues discussed during the evening; we would like to invite you to contribute to this also.

We hope that the event will lead to some ongoing community discussions, in issue-focused community groups and perhaps also in follow-up meetings with stakeholders such as yourself. If you would potentially be willing to be involved in this process I would be delighted to discuss this further in person at your convenience, or by email.

We would be honoured to have your presence for the evening, and would like to extend the invitation to your partner. Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information.

Yours sincerely,
 [Name Surname]
 [Position]
 [Organisation]

Sample Email of Invitation to a Local Stakeholder

Dear [Title Surname],

On behalf of [Your Organisation] and [Partner Organisation], I would like to invite you to a Speed Dialogue Networking Event to be held from [Time] to [Time] on [Date] at [Venue].

The aim of the event is to promote connections and partnerships among local voluntary organisations, public sector agencies and private sector organisations in the area for the benefit of the whole community. We are using speed dialogue to maximise effective and meaningful conversations between participants.

Light refreshments will be provided. Please see confirmed guest list attached.

I do hope that it will be possible for [Their Organisation] to have a presence at the event. If you are unable to attend yourself please feel free to pass the invitation on to a colleague.

Please contact me by telephone or email to confirm your attendance, or for further information.

If you are able to attend, please provide me with the following information:

- Name and job title
- Short description of organisation (<150 words)
- Short biography (<150 words)
- Preferred contact email address
- Photo

The above will be circulated among participants in a handbook via email. If you do not want your email address to be included in the handbook please state this clearly in your reply.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

Sample Event Feedback Form

Community Speed Dialogue Evening Feedback

For each question please tick the box closest to what you feel.

Were you made to feel welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> No
Were the aims of the event clear?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you feel that it achieved those aims?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Largely <input type="checkbox"/> To some extent <input type="checkbox"/> No
How closely did the event follow the advertised programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
How did you find the speed dialogue worked?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very well <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well <input type="checkbox"/> Not very well <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
How interesting did you find the speed dialogue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting <input type="checkbox"/> Not that interesting <input type="checkbox"/> Not interesting at all
How was the entertainment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Ok <input type="checkbox"/> Not so good
How was the food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Ok <input type="checkbox"/> Not so good
Would you want to come to another community event like this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Definately <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> Probably not
Where do you expect to see the people you met today again?	<input type="checkbox"/> We have arranged to meet <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting a religious service <input type="checkbox"/> At another event like this <input type="checkbox"/> Nowhere
Are you happy for your contact details to be included in a list to help participants keep in touch?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but email only <input type="checkbox"/> No
Any further suggestions or comments:	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
Thank you!	

Sample Thank You Email for Attendees

Dear [Title Surname/First Name (depending on whether you spoke on first name terms at the event)],

I am emailing on behalf of [Name of Organisation(s)] to thank you for attending our Speed Dialogue Networking Event on [Day]. It was a pleasure to meet you and we appreciate your support for the event. We felt that it was a very fruitful session and that a range of potentially exciting partnerships may grow out of the conversations.

Photos taken of the event can be found on our website via the following link [Include link].

I would very much like to hear about any developing partnerships which grow out of the first event; it would really help us to gauge the usefulness of this kind of event. We are thinking of repeating the event annually [or state frequency]. I will be in touch again when we are planning next year's event.

May I also draw your attention to a forthcoming community event which we will be holding on [Date]. [Give brief details of the event.] If you would like to help in any way with this event, provisionally planned for [Date], I would love to hear from you. We will be having our next planning meeting on [Date]. I will send details nearer the time and hope to see you there.

Once again, many thanks for your support.

With best wishes,

[Name Surname]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

Sample Conversation Pointers

This appendix gives just a few sample questions or discussion points for each event type/theme. They are intended as a starting point for you to add to or replace.

In case people forget to cover the basics, include the following in any set of conversation pointers:

- Introduce yourself, giving at least your name, organisation and position

And to encourage continuing relationships you could also include the following:

- Would you and your members like to visit my organisation and in return is it possible to arrange a visit to your organisation for me and my members?

1. Challenge-focused networking: community cohesion example

- What are the signs of a cohesive community?
- What do you think is the biggest threat to community cohesion in your area?

2. Focus on faith

- What are the challenges of being a Christian/Muslim/Jew/Baha'i/Buddhist/Hindu... where you live?
- What are the best things about being a Christian/Muslim/Jew/Baha'i/Buddhist/Hindu
- What, if anything, do you think people of different faiths should do together?

3. Sharing stories

- Tell your partner about an inspirational friendship (How did you meet the person? How did you become friends? What experiences have you shared? What makes him/her an inspiration to you?)
- Tell your partner about an encounter with someone that really surprised you.

4. Local issues community discussion

a. Volunteering

- How much do volunteers contribute to your local area?
- Do potential volunteers know about the volunteering opportunities⁹ available? Do people know about the local support and development organisation, which can help people find volunteering opportunities?

b. Coping with cuts

- How will public service cuts in the local area affect you, your family and your community?
- How are you/people you know responding to the cuts or to difficulties caused by them?
- Can voluntary organisations and volunteers help? If so, how? In what areas?

c. Education

- Could there be more collaboration between schools and community groups, religious communities, stakeholders, businesses etc? What, specifically, could be done?
- Does school life seem to be laying the foundations of a cohesive community in the next generation, with good relationships between people of different cultures and faiths? If not, what do you think might be done to change this?

⁹ Find your local organisation through <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/ http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html (Scotland)/ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

Local support and development organisations are organisations that provide support to voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city. They provide a range of valuable resources, from free or affordable training to networking and funding opportunities.



COMMUNITY
DIALOGUE
MANUAL
S E R I E S

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's
Community Dialogue Manual Series:

1. Building Partnerships
2. Noah's Pudding
3. Celebrating Festivals
4. Community Fairs
5. Community Engagement Dinners
6. Community Centres Branching Out
7. Speed Dialogue
8. Open Mosque Day
9. Fasting Breaking Dinners
10. Media Engagement

The PDF version of this and the other
manuals in the series can be downloaded
from the Publications page of our website at
www.dialoguesociety.org/publications





COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL S E R I E S

Connecting Communities

