

# National Standards for Community Engagement

Inbean Nàiseanta airson a bhith  
deasbad le Coimhearsnachdan

নিদিষ্ট সময়ে সামাজিক কাজ করার  
ব্যাপারে কথা দেওয়া ব্যাপারে জাতীয় মান

سروسز میں کمیونٹی کی موثر شمولیت کیلئے قومی معیار

社區協議國家標準

المستويات الوطنية لإشراك الناس

You can ask for this publication in large print, Braille or on audio cassette, and we can also provide translations into other languages.

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Ministerial foreword	2
COSLA foreword	3
About the standards	4
Principles	5
National Standards for Community Engagement	6
Indicators	7
Involvement	8
Support	9
Planning	10
Methods	11
Working together	12
Sharing information	14
Working with others	15
Improvement	16
Feedback	17
Monitoring and evaluation	18
Support materials	19

## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

The Scottish Executive is committed to people in Scotland having a greater say in how local services are planned and delivered. Only by genuinely engaging with local people can we develop services which meet local needs and aspirations. In particular the effective engagement of local people is critical to the regeneration of our most disadvantaged communities by local partnerships. It is only by listening to the experiences and ideas of the people who live in these communities that we can find solutions which will make a lasting difference.

These National Standards for Community Engagement will help to develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services.

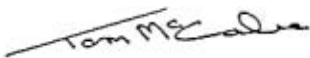
The standards are measurable performance statements which can be used by everyone involved in community engagement to improve the quality and process of the engagement. They set out key principles, behaviours and practical measures that underpin effective engagement. They will be of real benefit to community planning partnerships in involving communities to achieve real and sustained results.

We all need to listen to communities and involve them in making a positive contribution to what really matters. These National Standards for Community Engagement are a good practice tool which will help to provide a framework to help people influence the planning and delivery of services in their local areas.

We are committed to real and genuine engagement and commend these standards to you.



Malcolm Chisholm  
Minister for Communities



Tom McCabe  
Minister for Finance and Public Services Reform

## COSLA FOREWORD

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) welcomes the National Standards for Community Engagement and the work of the Scottish Community Development Centre, Communities Scotland, and our members and partners who have been actively involved in the pilots. Local government has supported this project since its inception and has found the process useful in developing and refining this approach. We believe the standards should be implemented by all parts of the public sector where they are seeking to engage communities. We see the standards as a fundamental part of community planning and a means of bringing in the voice of those engaged in the most disadvantaged communities.

The principles underpinning the standards help create a common set of ground rules that should be applied to 'both sides' of the engagement process. Honouring the standards should help build on the respect that already exists between community organisations and their local councils. Additionally, the principles and framework of the standards will form an important component in the way local participation of community organisations is developed more generally in the governance of Scotland.

COSLA commends the standards to its members and as more councils and partners start to implement them, we hope to see their widespread use in all parts of the public sector.



Councillor Corrie McChord  
Spokesperson on modern governance, COSLA

## ABOUT THE STANDARDS

The National Standards for Community Engagement have been developed with the involvement of over 500 people from communities and agencies throughout Scotland. They are a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results.

The standards can be used in both formal and informal community engagement. During the development of the standards for more formal settings such as community planning partnerships, community engagement was defined as:

*Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences*

These formal arrangements for community engagement are very important, however, it should be noted that the standards are also applicable to less formal ways of engaging people and can be used to enable large numbers to participate.

In testing the standards a number of useful learning points were identified. These included:

- seeking agreement to use the standards from all those involved in the process;
- nominating a key person to lead on the use of the standards; and
- prioritising the standards to reflect the purpose of the engagement and experience of community partners and agencies.

More details of the learning points and other guidance can be found in the users' guide which accompanies the standards. Details can be found at the back of this publication.

## PRINCIPLES

The standards are based on following principles:

- Fairness, equality and inclusion must underpin all aspects of community engagement, and should be reflected in both community engagement policies and the way that everyone involved participates.
- Community engagement should have clear and agreed purposes, and methods that achieve these purposes.
- Improving the quality of community engagement requires commitment to learning from experience.
- Skill must be exercised in order to build communities, to ensure practise of equalities principles, to share ownership of the agenda, and to enable all viewpoints to be reflected.
- As all parties to community engagement possess knowledge based on study, experience, observation and reflection, effective engagement processes will share and use that knowledge.
- All participants should be given the opportunity to build on their knowledge and skills.
- Accurate, timely information is crucial for effective engagement.

In summary, these principles highlight the importance of equality and recognising the diversity of people and communities; a clear sense of purpose; effective methods for achieving change; building on the skills and knowledge of all those involved; commitment to learning for continuous improvement.

*"Standards for community engagement will help provide guidance to public bodies about how to ensure real engagement with realistic timescales."*

Fariha Thomas, Amina – Muslim Women's Resource Centre

## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. **INVOLVEMENT:** we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement
2. **SUPPORT:** we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
3. **PLANNING:** we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
4. **METHODS:** we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose
5. **WORKING TOGETHER:** We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently
6. **SHARING INFORMATION:** we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants
7. **WORKING WITH OTHERS:** we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement
8. **IMPROVEMENT:** we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants
9. **FEEDBACK:** we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected
10. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION:** we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement



## INDICATORS

An indicator is a characteristic about which evidence can be collected in order to assess performance.

The indicators for the standards on the following pages set out characteristics that will demonstrate high quality community engagement.

They can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate community engagement as a whole or particular stages and aspects of it.

The indicators are for all participants to use to ensure best practice and hold one another to account.

Evidence relating to the indicators can be collected in straightforward ways.

Regular assessment of performance against the indicators enables all participants to be involved in achieving continuous improvement.

*"The standards for community engagement will be a useful framework for increasing participation in the planning, delivery and the regulation of services by people who use care services and their carers."*

David Wiseman, Care Commission

## THE INVOLVEMENT STANDARD

We will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement

### INDICATORS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT STANDARD

1. All groups of people whose interests are affected by the issues that the engagement will address are represented
2. Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people who experience barriers to participation
3. Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people from groups that are affected but not yet organised to participate
4. The people who are involved, whether from agencies or community groups:
  - want to be involved
  - have knowledge of the issues
  - have skills, or a commitment to developing skills, to play their role
  - show commitment to taking part in discussions, decisions and actions
  - attend consistently
  - have the authority of those they represent to take decisions and actions
  - have legitimacy in the eyes of those they represent
  - maintain a continuing dialogue with those that they represent

*"The establishment of national standards for community engagement creates a common starting point for us all. The standards provide a framework which will ensure the engagement is meaningful and effective."*

Barbara Philiben, North Lanarkshire Council

## THE SUPPORT STANDARD

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

### INDICATORS OF THE SUPPORT STANDARD

1. The participants identify what support each representative needs in order to participate
2. There are no practical barriers to participants in community engagement. Where needed, they have:
  - suitable transport
  - care of dependants
  - general assistance
  - personal assistants
  - access to premises
  - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocacy)
  - meetings organised at appropriate times
  - co-operation of employers
3. There are no financial barriers to participants in community engagement including:
  - out of pocket expenses
  - loss of earnings
  - suitable transport
  - care of dependents
  - personal assistants
  - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocates)
  - timing of meetings
4. Community and agency representatives have access to the equipment they need (for example computers, a telephone, photocopying)
5. Impartial professional community development support is available for groups involved in community engagement
6. Specialist professional advice is available to groups involved in community engagement

## THE PLANNING STANDARD

We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken

### INDICATORS OF THE PLANNING STANDARD

1. All participants are involved from the start in:
  - a) identifying and defining the issues that the engagement should address, and the options for how to tackle them
  - b) choosing the methods of engagement that will be used (see Methods standard)
2. Participants express views openly and honestly
3. Participants agree on the amount of time to be allocated to the process of agreeing the purpose(s) of the engagement
4. The purpose of the engagement is identified and stated, there is evidence that it is needed, and the purpose is agreed by all participants and communicated to the wider community and agencies that may be affected
5. Public policies that affect the engagement are explained to the satisfaction of participants and the wider community
6. Participants identify existing and potential resources which are available to the engagement process and which may help achieve its purpose(s) (for example, money, people, equipment)
7. Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are agreed and recorded
8. The participants assess the constraints, challenges and opportunities that will be involved in implementing the plan
9. The participants agree the timescales for the achievement of the purpose(s)
10. The participants agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the purpose(s)
11. Plans are reviewed and adjusted in the light of evaluation of performance (see Monitoring and evaluation standard)

## THE METHODS STANDARD

We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

### INDICATORS FOR THE METHODS STANDARD

1. The range of methods used is:
  - acceptable to the participants
  - suitable for all their needs and their circumstances
  - appropriate for the purposes of the engagement
2. Methods used identify, involve and support excluded groups
3. Methods are chosen to enable diverse views to be expressed, and to help resolve any conflicts of interest
4. Methods are fully explained and applied with the understanding and agreement of all participants
5. Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback

*“The standards for community engagement represent a mechanism which can provide an enhanced understanding of partnership work, where all groups are enabled and empowered to have a voice equally.”*

Tanveer Parneez, BEMIS

## THE WORKING TOGETHER STANDARD

We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

### INDICATORS FOR THE WORKING TOGETHER STANDARD

The participants:

1. Behave openly and honestly – there are no hidden agendas, but participants also respect confidentiality
2. Behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory manner
3. Recognise participants' time is valuable and that they may have other commitments
4. Recognise existing agency and community obligations, including statutory requirements
5. Encourage openness and the ability for everyone to take part by:
  - communicating with one another using plain language
  - ensuring that all participants are given equal opportunity to engage and have their knowledge and views taken into account when taking decisions
  - seeking, listening to and reflecting on the views of different individuals and organisations, taking account of minority views
  - removing barriers to participation
6. Take decisions on the basis of agreed procedures and shared knowledge
7. Identify and discuss opportunities and strategies for achieving change, ensuring that:
  - key points are summarised, agreed and progressed
  - conflicts are recognised and addressed
8. Manage change effectively by:
  - focusing on agreed purpose
  - clarifying roles and who is responsible for agreed actions
  - delegating actions to those best equipped to carry them out
  - ensuring participants are clear about the decisions that need to be made
  - ensuring that, where necessary, all parties have time to consult with those they represent

(continued on next page)

## THE WORKING TOGETHER STANDARD

We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

(continued)

- co-ordinating skills
  - enhancing skills where necessary
  - agreeing schedules
  - assessing risks
  - addressing conflicts
  - monitoring and evaluating progress
  - learning from one another
  - seeking continuous improvement in how things are done
9. Use resources efficiently, effectively and fairly
  10. Support the process with administrative arrangements that enable it to work

*"The standards encapsulate what common sense, normal courtesy and good practice dictate in our conduct of our business with communities. They provide a sound basis for getting the best from our engagement with the people of the Highlands and Islands."*

Sandy Cummings, Highlands & Islands Enterprise

## THE SHARING INFORMATION STANDARD

We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

### INDICATORS FOR THE SHARING INFORMATION STANDARD

1. Information relevant to the engagement is shared between all participants
2. Information is accessible, clear, understandable and relevant, with key points summarised
3. Information is made available in appropriate formats for participants
4. Information is made available in time to enable people to fully take part and consult others
5. All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted
6. Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to all information that is relevant to the engagement

## THE WORKING WITH OTHERS STANDARD

We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement

### INDICATORS FOR THE WORKING WITH OTHERS STANDARD

The participants in the engagement:

1. Identify other structures, organisations and activities that are relevant to their work
2. Establish and maintain effective links with such other structures, activities and organisations
3. Learn about these structures, activities and organisations, to avoid duplication of their work and complement it wherever possible
4. Learn from others and seek improvement in practice
5. Encourage effective community engagement as normal practice

*“Given the voluntary sector’s role in enabling the most excluded and hardest to reach communities to influence the planning and delivery of services, the standards offer a welcome framework and guidance to further clarify and promote this role.”*

Calum Guthrie, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

## THE IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants

### INDICATORS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

1. All those involved in the engagement process are committed to making the most of the understanding and competence of both community and agency participants
2. All participants have access to support and to opportunities for training or reflection on their experiences, to enable them and others to take part in an effective, fair and inclusive way
3. Each party identifies its own learning and development needs and together the participants regularly review their capacity to play their roles
4. Where needs are identified, the potential of participants is developed and promoted
5. The competence and understanding of the engagement system as a whole is regularly evaluated by the participants as it develops
6. Resources, including independent professional support, are available to make the most of the competence and understanding of individual participants and the engagement system as a whole
7. There is adequate time for competence and understanding to be developed
8. Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose
9. Participants share their skills, experience and knowledge with community and agency colleagues

*“The standards will make it easier for me as a community representative as they legitimise my place at the table.”*

Dawn Galashan, Great Northern Partnership

## THE FEEDBACK STANDARD

We will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

### INDICATORS FOR THE FEEDBACK STANDARD

1. Organisers of community engagement regularly feed back, to all those affected, the options that have been considered and the decisions and actions that have been agreed. This is done within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source
2. Feedback on the outcomes and impact of these decisions and actions is provided regularly to communities and organisations within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source
3. Explanations about why decisions and actions have been taken are shared along with details of any future activity
4. The characteristics of the audience are identified to ensure that:
  - relevant information is provided in understandable languages
  - relevant information is provided in appropriate languages
  - a suitable range of media and communication channels is used constructively
5. Information includes details about opportunities for involvement in community engagement and encourages positive contributions from groups and individuals in the community
6. Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes

## THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARD

We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

### INDICATORS FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARD

1. The engagement process and its effects are continually evaluated to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices
2. Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants (see Planning standard indicator 7)
3. The participants agree what information needs to be collected, how, when and by whom, to understand the situation both at the start of the engagement and as it progresses
4. Appropriate participants collect and record this information
5. The information is presented accurately and in a way that is easy to use
6. The participants agree on the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results and the changes that occurred
7. The participants act on the lessons learned
8. Progress is celebrated
9. The results of the evaluation are fed back to the participants and the wider community
10. Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other agencies and communities

*"Although these guidelines have been prepared with the wider community in mind, the business community is an important element of the community planning process and much of the guidance in this document will apply equally well to engagement with businesses."*

Jack Perry, Scottish Enterprise

## SUPPORT MATERIALS

A users' guide and illustrations of how each of the standards can be applied are included in the standards pack. These are also available on the Communities Scotland website.

In addition the website contains:

- Case studies from the pilot projects
- A toolkit to help you get started with using the standards
- A detailed reference manual that reviews the principles on which the standards are based and explores each standard and its associated indicators.

Details of the support materials can be found at:

[http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs\\_006607.hcsp](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_006607.hcsp)

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