

Summary of National Standards for Community Engagement



Introduction
Cllr Anne McGovern,
Chair of Fife
Partnership

“I am delighted that Fife Partnership has adopted the National Standards for Community Engagement. Community Engagement is at the heart of community planning and we have a commitment to make sure that people and communities are in regular dialogue with all partners.

The Standards are based on common sense, normal courtesy and good practice. They provide us with a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants to achieve the highest quality of process and results.”

Fife Partnership

This partnership has lead responsibility for community planning in Fife and is committed to implementing the National Standards for Community Engagement throughout Fife. The partner agencies are:

Fife Council

Fife Constabulary

NHS Fife

Scottish Enterprise Fife

CVS Fife

Communities Scotland

Fife’s Further & Higher

Education Sector

What are the Standards for Community Engagement?

These are 10 statements of commitment that can be used to develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services. They are underpinned by principles of good practice that have been highlighted by community and agency representatives across Scotland to promote equality and fairness.

Each standard has a series of indicators that can be collected in order to assess performance. The standards can be used to ensure good practice and hold communities and partners to account.

The goal is community engagement that is:

- o effective in achievement of the shared purposes of the participants
- o efficient by being well-informed, rational, considered and focused on purpose
- o equitable by giving a fair voice to all communities and tackling any barriers that may exclude them

Are the Standards for you?

The standards are for practical use by anyone who is committed to improving community engagement. Based on the experience of agencies and communities across Scotland, the standards describe what is involved in achieving good practice.

So, if you are involved in community engagement that is committed to improving local services and building stronger communities, the standards are for you and your community and agency partners.

Communities Scotland’s definition of community engagement:

“Community engagement is the process of involving communities in the development and management of services such as health, education and housing. It may also involve other issues which concern us all, or it may be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children. Community engagement

takes many shapes and forms. It can involve simple exercises in consultation through to the formation of multi-agency partnerships with community representation at the centre. Underlying effective community engagement is the commitment of service providers and planners to listen to those for whom services are being planned.”

10 National Standards for Community

The Involvement Standard

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

- o All groups of people whose interests are affected by the issues that the engagement will address are represented
- o Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people who experience barriers to participation

The Support Standard

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

- o The participants identify what support each representative needs in order to participate
- o Community and agency representatives have access to the equipment they need (for example computers, telephone, photocopying)

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 actions to be taken

- o Participants express views openly and honestly
- o Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are agreed and recorded
- o The participants agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the purposes

The Methods Standard

We will agree and use methods that meet the purpose of the engagement

- o Methods used identify and include all relevant and excluded groups
- o Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback

The Working Together Standard

We will agree and use clear protocols to enable participants to work with one another

- o Behave towards one another respectfully and neutrally
- o Take decisions on agreed protocols, procedures and processes
- o Use resources effectively

The Sharing Information Standard

We will ensure that necessary information is shared between the participants

- o Information relevant to the engagement is shared between participants
- o Information is made available in accessible formats for participants

The Working with Others Standard

We will work effectively with other organisations and individuals in the engagement

- o Identify other stakeholders and their interests and activities that are relevant to the engagement
- o Learn from other organisations and individuals in practice

Engagement



Standard

Standards of engagement that are fit for purpose

Identify, involve and support participants

Standards are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback

Together Standard

Procedures that enable the community to work together effectively and efficiently

Participants support one another in a positive, non-discriminatory manner

Decisions are made on the basis of agreed shared knowledge

Resources are used efficiently, effectively and fairly

Information Standard

Information is communicated

Information relevant to the engagement is shared with all participants

Information is made available in appropriate formats to all participants

With Others Standard

Participants work with others with an interest in the same issues

Participants identify structures, organisations and resources relevant to their work

Participants share resources and seek improvement in their work

The Improvement Standard

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

- o Each party identifies its own learning and development needs and together the participants regularly review their capacity to play their roles
- o Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose

The Feedback Standard

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

- o Explanations about why decisions and actions have been taken are shared along with details of any future activity
- o Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes

The Monitoring & Evaluation Standard

We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the National Standards for Community Engagement

- o Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants
- o The participants agree on the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results and the changes that occurred



top tips for getting started

Communities Scotland

The National Standards for Community Engagement pack was produced by Communities Scotland. A user's 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:

- o case studies from the pilot projects
- o a toolkit to help you get started with using the standards
- o 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:

www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

or by contacting:

Community Engagement Team
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HE
Tel: 0131 313 0044

- 1** Keep it as simple as possible
- 2** Nominate someone to lead on the use of the standards who
 - o knows what they are
 - o can see how the standards apply to what is being developed
 - o will introduce other participants to the standards
- 3** Seek agreement to use the standards from all those that will be involved in the engagement
- 4** Build use of the standards into the process of the engagement
- 5** Make the use of the standards a shared activity between the participants so that they can all see how using them is in their interests
- 6** Don't worry if you can't implement all 10 standards at once.
- 7** Select the standards you will start with by identifying those that the participants see as the most important for the type of engagement they are involved in
- 8** When introducing the standards to a process that is already underway
 - o introduce the standards at a point when participants are focusing on assessing or reviewing performance and progress
 - o introduce the standards as a new phase of activity needs to be planned
- 9** Always focus on those parts of the standards that are seen by the participants as most relevant to the stage of development of the engagement
- 10** When introducing the standards explain that they are a product of the work of community and agency representatives like themselves who have set out to create a tool to improve the quality of community engagement

Where can you get further help?

To support the implementation of the National Standards, a network of engagement champions has been set up across the Fife Partnership agencies. Champions will provide information and assistance to encourage good practice on engagement.

Contact details of all the engagement champions are on FISH and Fife Direct.

Regular case studies and good practice examples will be available on FISH and Fife Direct. If you would like to contribute an example of good practice, please contact:

Susan Muir, Fife Council, Town House, Kirkcaldy, KY1 1XW
Tel: 01592 417851
e-mail: susan.muir@fife.gov.uk

Copies of the National Standards for Community Engagement are available from Susan Muir.