

Talk for Scotland toolkit: Public engagement activities

Inclusive participation

The aim of the toolkit is to help remove barriers to active citizenship for people with communication support needs.

To remove barriers **all** public engagement activities should be communication accessible.

We have developed 6 Communication Support Principles to help service providers do this.

Good practice in public engagement

These Communication Support Principles should work alongside recognised good practice in community engagement.

- **involve people from the start of the process**

This encourages working in partnership. It means that participants will not feel the decision has already been made without their involvement.

- **work at a pace that suits both you and your participants**

You should allow enough time for participants to consider issues properly.

- **provide information that is clear, timely and accessible**

If you don't allow people enough time to take in the information, you are effectively excluding them from the participation process.

- **provide a range of ways to take part**

Not everyone can or wants to get involved at the same level or in the same way. Provide a range of participation methods. By doing this, you will increase the opportunities for people to get involved in a way that suits them.

- **provide support to increase the opportunity of involvement**

As well as communication support needs, participants may require, for example, childcare or help with transport.

- **always provide participants with feedback and outcomes**

It is very important that participants get clear feedback. There is nothing worse than giving up your time, then not hearing what has happened. If people get feedback they will be more motivated to get involved next time.

- **regularly review what works and what does not work about your participation methods**

The National Standards for Community Engagement were published in 2005. Details are available from Scottish Community Development Centre (www.scdc.org.uk/national-standards-community-engagement).

Types of engagement

The 6 Communication Support Principles relate to all public engagement activities.

One-to-one engagement whether face to face, by telephone, letter, email or other electronic means.

For example:

- lobbying an MP
- getting information at a Citizens Advice Bureau
- making a complaint to the Council
- applying to be a volunteer.

Engagement with a group or whole population.

For example:

- NHS Public Patient Forums
- Scottish Youth Parliament
- voting
- consultation around service or policy development.

In Scotland, there is a commitment to developing ways to include a wide range of interests in decision-making, including:

- people with a physical disability
- young people
- women
- lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
- black and minority ethnic groups
- people in more remote rural areas.

People with communication support needs are included in **all** these groups. They may face therefore multiple barriers to participation.

Adopt the 6 Communication Support Principles in public engagement activities whoever your target audience. This will make your public engagement more inclusive.



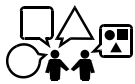
Principle 1: Recognise that every community or group may include people with communication support needs



Principle 2: Find out what support is required



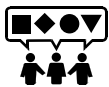
Principle 3: Match the way you communicate to the ways people understand



Principle 4: Respond sensitively to all the ways an individual uses to express themselves



Principle 5: Give people the opportunity to communicate to the best of their abilities



Principle 6: Keep trying

Detailed practical advice linked to each Communication Support Principle is available in Talk for Scotland toolkit.

Benefits of inclusion to service providers

The Disability Equality Duty provides the legal framework for public engagement. This gives disabled people a **right** to equal access to information and services.

But there are other clear benefits for service providers and service users if decision-making and consultation is more accessible to a wider audience:

- it targets resources more effectively
- it ensures a customer focused service
- it leads to increased customer satisfaction.

Putting Communication Support Principles into practice

Take two steps to put communication support into practice in any public engagement activity.

Step 1:

Every time you plan a public involvement activity, think of each 'communication act' involved in the process.

A 'communication act' is any exchange:

- between you and another person
- going one or two ways
- by any communication method e.g. face to face, writing, phone, electronic means.

Step 2:

Adapt your communication using the 6 Communication Support Principles. This will make sure every 'communication act' in the whole process works for people with communication support needs.

Public engagement activities

To help you in your planning we have illustrated this two step approach with some key activities:

- information campaign
- consultation surveys (telephone/face to face/postal and online)
- regular special interest group meeting
- focus group
- conference.

These are just examples. The same two steps are relevant in any public involvement activity you might run.

Detailed information for each activity is available from the Talk for Scotland toolkit, Public engagement activities section – Practical examples.

Each example shows:

- ✓ the series of actions you will take in running one of these activities
- ✓ the Communication Support Principle you should use for each action
- ✓ key advice and examples of good practice materials.