

The term 'Community Engagement' is often used to describe activities that look to involve community members in decision-making, and the design and sometimes the delivery of services and facilities.

Aberdeenshire Council, in partnership with the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership, would like to find out how they can involve you in decisions and services.

We are asking for your help to shape the way we work together to create a vision for the future which continues to strengthen your involvement in local decisions-making.

At the moment we are looking for information you feel should be included in a new strategy which will focus on how we work together. Views are being sought from community groups, third sector organisations, and employees from across Aberdeenshire.

Information you share with us will help us prepare a draft version of the strategy which will be shared with you later in the year. We will then hold further talks with groups/organisations about the feedback received before going through the council's formal approval process.

There are National Standards for Community Engagement which are good-practice principles designed to support and inform community engagement taking place, and improve what happens as a result. These standards have been recently updated and it is proposed to include the standards in the revised Community Engagement Strategy

1. Which town in Aberdeenshire do you live nearest too?

2. Have you heard of the [National Standards from Community Engagement](#)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Are you aware of Aberdeenshire Council's existing [Community Engagement Strategy](#)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Can you give us an example of a time you have engaged with the council or community health services or the Community Planning Partnership (more information about members of the partnership is available [here](#)) to inform decision making and the experience was positive? (this could include budget engagement or engagement about local sports and leisure provision for example)

5. Why did you feel this worked well?

6. What difference did this make to you?

7. Can you give us an example of a time you have engaged with the council or community health services or Community Planning Partnership (more information about partnership organisations is available [here](#)) to inform decision making and the experience was less positive?

8. Why do you feel this way?

9. What could have been done to make it a better experience for you?

10. The following are suggested areas for the contents of the revised engagement strategy.

Introduction and vision (Information about the organisations creating the strategy, why we have this strategy and what we are trying to achieve)

The term 'Community Engagement' (What do we mean? How can we do it?)

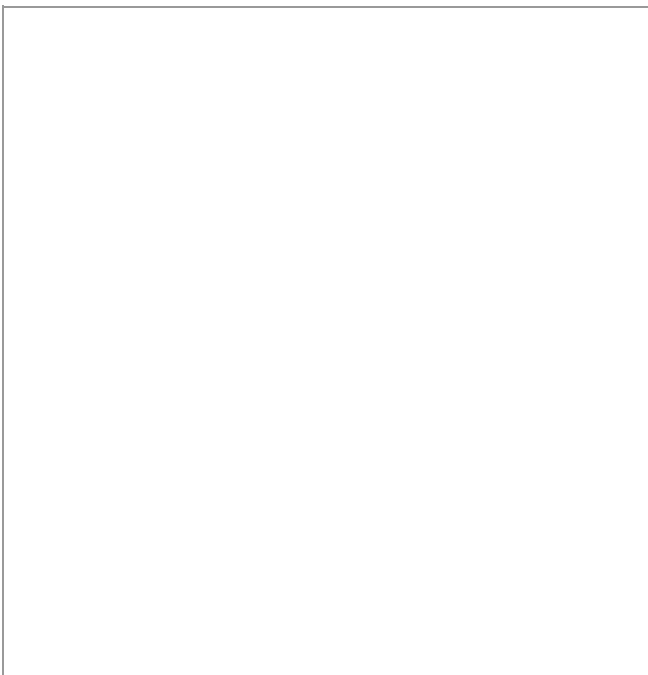
National Standards for Community Engagement (Agreed standards that all our engagement activity should adhere to and can be measured against)

Equalities (Ensuring everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard)

The Community Empowerment Scotland Act (Further information available [here](#))

Information covering how both group representation (such as community councils) and individuals can take part in engagement.

Is there anything else you feel should be included? Please provide further information below?

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11. The Community Empowerment Scotland Act 2015 came into effect last year. Are you aware of the scope of the Community Empowerment Act and how it can be used by communities/what the implications are for communities?

12. Over the past two years the council has piloted a number of Participatory Budgeting exercises – If you have been involved how do you feel this approach has worked?

13. There are lots of different 'levels' of Community Engagement and Participation, which can be set out in the Participation Chain below. The Chain represents a spectrum of activities, as opposed to a hierarchy and services should consider what type of activity is most appropriate to achieve their objectives.

Keeping Informed: Keeping informed means sharing information with communities to help the public understand the issues. This could be done through brochures, newsletters and letters.

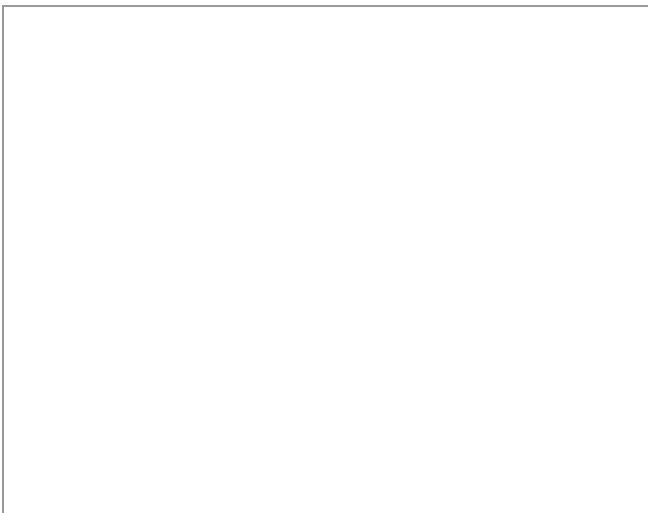
Asking for Views (Consultation): Obtaining public feedback to inform decision making, for example through Open Days, Focus Groups or Surveys. Services listen to the concerns of communities and provide feedback on how their input influence decision making.

Deciding Together (Involving): Services work directly with the public, to ensure the public's concerns and issues are addressed. This means involving service users in service design and delivery, for example through User Panels.

Acting Together (Collaborating): This is where communities and services work in partnership to make decisions. The public provide advice and innovation and this is incorporated into service design and delivery to the fullest extent. E.g. through Community Needs Analysis.

Enabling independent community initiatives: This is the highest level of community participation and engagement, which is known as 'Community Empowerment'. The final decision making power is placed in the hands of communities.

Are there any other descriptions you would like to be considered and why?

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14. We realise at times engagement is not co-ordinated across Aberdeenshire. We are considering developing an open access (to partners and public) searchable database where people can access information about engagement activity taking place where they live. Would you want to access information on activity that has taken place, are taking place and/or about to take place?

15. What are the top three things we can do to improve our working relationship with local communities that will allow us to work together through engagement activity and consider how services are delivered in the future?

16. Any other comments?

