

Good Engagement Charter

A toolkit to support implementation of the Charter



About the Good Engagement Charter

Healthwatch Warwickshire and Healthwatch Coventry are independent organisations whose role is to act as a consumer champion for health and social care services in each area. Healthwatch gathers and represents the views of the public to make sure that the voices of people who use services and their carers are taken into account by both service providers and those who manage or commission services in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Healthwatch Coventry and Healthwatch Warwickshire worked together and agreed that meaningful community engagement is crucial to ensure that people's voices are heard and can influence the improvement of health and social care services. They commissioned research to investigate what local people expect from consultation and engagement activities and what would encourage them to get involved. Their aim was to set standards for good engagement that health and social care providers can use to support their own consultation activities. The research culminated in the development and launch of the [Good Engagement Charter](#)¹ in September 2013. The Charter sets out nine standards which when adopted support organisations to engage in meaningful engagement and consultation activities with local people.

About the Charter toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to enable your organisation to adopt the Good Engagement Charter and use the Charter standards to get full value from listening and responding to patients, service users, carers, potential service users, community groups, communities and the wider public about what matters to them. Using the Charter standards to plan and deliver engagement and consultation activity can help your organisation to gather good quality, robust intelligence from the people who experience your services and develop opportunities for ongoing meaningful communication bringing the voices of users and potential users right to the decision making table. When done well, engagement and consultation activity raises the profile and status of an organisation, increasing satisfaction levels and informing continuous improvement. It can help your organisation to discover what is working well and highlight dissatisfaction and other problems, as well as providing intelligence about what is most important to people.

Using this toolkit

The toolkit has been created to enable your organisation to work towards adopting the Charter into your working practice for community engagement. It will help you to review your existing engagement practice, recognising where good community engagement standards are in place and it will help you identify where practice could be developed to achieve excellence across all the Charter standards. The toolkit will enable your organisation to evidence its good engagement practice and achieve success when able to demonstrate it is fully compliant with the Charter Standards.

Neither the Good Engagement Charter nor this toolkit are intended to be prescriptive, nor are they intended to replace formal staff training on engagement practice within your organisation, however it would be useful to include them in training when working towards adopting the Charter standards.

¹ Healthwatch Coventry Charter

<http://www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/files/Good%20Engagement%20Charter%20%28Cov%29%20%20final%20Aug2013.pdf>

Glossary of terms

Planning:

The preparation to be done before any engagement activity takes place. It includes planning for pre-engagement work as well as the engagement activities themselves.

Engagement:

The activities through which people are involved in having a say on health and social care services. These can include existing and potential service users, carers and family members, staff members and volunteers, health and social care interest groups, the general public and other interested parties.

Evaluation and Feedback:

Evaluation takes place after engagement activity so that organisations can reflect on how the outcomes of the activity to support internal learning and development. Feedback is the process through which people who have taken part in engagement activities find out what has happened as a result.

Levels of engagement

There are different levels at which people can choose to have a say on health and social care services and it is important to provide a range of ways for people to engage to meet their preferences. People can move across and between these levels of engagement at different times depending on their personal interest and their circumstances. Each level of engagement has equal weight and value when matched to the engagement goals and used appropriately.

INCREASING LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	WORK TOGETHER	EMPOWER
Engagement goal	To provide people with balanced and objective information	To obtain feedback from people on ideas, options or decisions	To work directly people to gather their views and ensure they are understood and considered	To partner with people in developing ideas, options and preferred solutions	To devolve decision-making and funds to people
Commitment	To keep people informed of changes or progress	To keep people informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on decisions and how they were influenced by people's views	To gather people's views, ensure they are included in options and provide feedback on how they have influenced decisions	To work together on service development and re-design, develop solutions and have direct input into commissioning	We (or you) will implement what you decide
Ways to engage	Website Newsletters Reports Presentations	Public meetings Focus groups Surveys	Pre-consultation work Workshops Action research	Working groups Participatory decision-making Experience-led commissioning Co-design Co-production	Delegated decision making Personal budgets User-led commissioning

Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation spectrum, see <http://www.iap2.org>

Commitment to good engagement checklist

With these foundations in place your organisation will be ready to commit to good engagement.

	(✓)
Good engagement is part of your strategic plan	
Engagement activities relate directly to strategic objectives	
Strategic leads are accountable for good engagement and prepared to provide a 'public face' if necessary	
Sufficient resources are allocated within budgets to deliver good engagement	
Engagement staff have the capacity and skills to deliver good engagement	
Where appropriate, staff from other teams are released to support engagement activity	
Clear internal reporting routes are established in advance to ensure engagement activity informs decision-making and this can be evidenced	

PLANNING

Charter Standard	Points to consider	Hints & Resources
<p>We will be clear about why there is a need to engage with our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your engagement goal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing information e.g. changes to opening times ○ Seeking views about proposed changes to services ○ Service re-design • Engagement materials should clearly state the reasons people are asked to be involved - clarity of purpose will help decide what approaches to use • ‘High profile’ engagement activities e.g. ones that may invoke a judicial review such as closing or reducing services require particular clarity of communication • A strong narrative can tell people about proposed changes and the underlying rationale for the changes in a way they can more easily understand 	<p>Use the ‘Levels of engagement’ chart to identify where the planned activity sits. This will help decide your approach.</p> <p>Information should be presented in a range of formats</p> <p>High profile consultations can be taxing for staff involved, make sure you have good support systems in place.</p> <p>An engagement and communication plan is a useful tool to identify target groups, personnel, tasks and methods with consideration to Equalities Impact. Here is one idea for the layout of such a plan. Document 1</p>
<p>We will make sure that we work with partners when engaging our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your strategic objectives fit with those of partner organisations / other departments? Is shared engagement activity feasible? • Does your local authority publish a calendar of its public consultation activity? Is it possible to align engagement activity timetables? • Which partner agencies e.g. voluntary and community organisations might help to extend the reach of your engagement activity to identified groups such as people with disabilities, young parents etc? • How can you find out if previous engagement work within your own organisation, or by other organisations, has covered the same ground and what people said before? 	<p>Think about how to avoid engagement fatigue or overload</p> <p>How can you integrate your planned activity into work already being undertaken</p> <p>How you are planning to reach your target audience(s) should be included in your consultation and communication plan</p> <p>Draw on good practice and learn from others, the information and expertise held in other organisations can help your organisation benefit from how others have tackled similar challenges</p>

ENGAGEMENT

Charter Standard	Points to consider	Hints & Resources
<p>We will make sure there is plenty of time for engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The engagement process should be planned with enough time allowed for all stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-consultation work ○ Preparation and printing of consultation materials ○ Organisation of events/invitations/publicity ○ Informal consultation ○ Formal consultation period ○ Analysis of the information gathered ○ Internal and external reporting ○ Feedback to people who participated • Are your engagement events scheduled in order to offer people choices around times and locations? • Build in time at engagement events to allow for questions and comments 	<p>The timetable should be part of the engagement and communication plan.</p> <p>Some groups/communities require significant investment of time to achieve meaningful engagement eg those with protected characteristics</p> <p>Events/focus groups/public meetings etc should be offered at different times - including evenings and weekends - to ensure wide engagement.</p> <p>Design activities to encourage discussion and generate a wide range of views Making Consultation Real has a useful section on consultation methods from page 11 as does The Participation Tool kit</p>
<p>We will use a range of different ways for people to have their say</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about groups and tools should start when you are designing the engagement process and be included in your engagement and communication plan • Do you know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is directly or indirectly affected by any changes or planned developments? This can include patients, people who use the service, carers, the general public, staff and statutory sector partners Who is likely to be disproportionately affected by any changes or developments? What (or whose) help is needed to make the decision work? This could include organisations in the voluntary or private sectors Who else has an interest in the subject? • How can you ensure your engagement activity is inclusive and tailored to the people you are hoping will take part? 	<p>Undertake a stakeholder analysis.</p> <p>Undertaking an Impact Assessment will help to identify any groups or communities likely to be disproportionately affected by the proposed changes</p> <p>If you need to reach several communities of interest, or involve people in very different situations, it is better to use a number of different tools tailored to each group</p> <p>For more information about how to decide which engagement activity to use - to matching tools and approaches to situations, plus how to prepare read the</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you make sure that groups of people who may be disproportionately affected by any changes are well represented in the engagement activity? • Can you go to where people are rather than expecting them to come to you or to attend a specific engagement event? • How will capture the information that will be generated through engagement activity? For example, will you record focus groups and then write them up for analysis, or will someone come with you and make contemporaneous notes? 	<p>Before you Start section of the Participation Tool Kit. Not sure which tools would work best for you? See "Consultation in Practice" section in this Welsh Government guide</p> <p>Don't forget to think about how you will engage with staff affected by proposed changes, this NHS England Smart Guide has some useful ideas</p>
Charter Standard	Points to consider	Hints & Resources
<p>We will be open, honest and transparent when engaging with our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your consultation documents clear about what is being proposed, the expected benefits of any changes and how people can engage? • What are the 'givens' in the proposals being consulted on and what is it possible for people to influence? • If there are constraints on what people can influence, be honest about limitations, issues or problems up front • How has pre-engagement work influenced the content of proposals and the design and approach to engagement? • Tell people how you will store and hold any information and how you are going to collate and analyse the intelligence and information generated • How will you provide evidence of neutrality in gathering /analysing data to ensure transparency in the event that the process comes under scrutiny? • Be open about where any personal disclosures may have statutory implications e.g. safeguarding or criminal activity • Participation in engagement activity should be voluntary - people should be assured that participation will not affect current or future access to services by the patient, carer, family member or any other 	<p>An open and transparent process stands up to scrutiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be clear about intentions • be honest about issues and constraints • be open about the decision making processes <p>Avoid preconceptions about the outcomes of the engagement activity and be open to the evidence and data that will be generated</p> <p>Don't make assumptions across a whole client group based on a few people's opinions. It is not possible to say 'all older people think this' or 'all younger people feel that'. You know what the people you engaged with told you, it is not necessarily reflective of all views</p> <p>Remember that staff and volunteers are important stakeholders, it is important that they fully understand the process too</p>

	<p>participant or stakeholder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, participants should receive reimbursement for any expenses incurred, including any carer or associated costs 	
Charter Standard	Points to consider	Hints & Resources
<p>We will make sure that information is accessible by all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you make sure you are using plain, non-technical and jargon-free language in all your engagement materials and activities? • Who can offer support to help you provide information in a range of formats such as different languages, Braille or easy read formats with clear illustrations? e.g. voluntary organisations or user groups • Do the staff running the engagement activity have the skills, knowledge and experience to explain to people what they are being engaged about, to elicit their views and encourage their ideas and opinions? • For engagement activity at the level of ‘Involve’ or above, informed consent should be gained from people who will participate in a more detailed engagement process such as co-production. An information sheet in accessible formats should set out factors relevant to the interests of participants (e.g. time commitment, contacts, availability of expenses) and be made available to all participants prior to obtaining their consent • How will people know you are carrying out engagement activity? 	<p>Engagement, consultation and information documents should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A welcome or forward • The story so far/where we are now • Why does something need to change and what this will mean • The proposals/models/including any preferred options and the rationale behind them • What happens next • FAQ • How can people make their views known • Survey or feedback form <p>Adopt Plain English principles and include a glossary of unavoidable medical or professional terms</p> <p>Your engagement and communication plan should include how you will promote the engagement activities in order to encourage a wide response and stimulate discussion</p> <p>For helpful information on talking with specific groups of people the following may be helpful People with learning difficulties Link to document 6 on red text and Children and Young People</p>

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Charter Standard	Points to consider	Hints & Resources
<p>We will provide people with regular feedback when engaging with them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What systems do you have in place to capture and analyse feedback? Consider when planning engagement activity that it may generate a lot of different kinds of responses, quantitative and qualitative data - do you have the capacity and skills to analyse this effectively? • What resources, including staffing, do you need to analyse the responses? • How do you ensure consistency and accuracy in data capture? • How will you feedback to groups and individuals? • Be clear with people from the start when they can expect to have feedback e.g. does your engagement activity report have to go to managers or through internal/external committee processes before the information can be shared? • How will you record contact details of people who ask for feedback e.g. copies of reports, presentations or to hear the headline results of the decision-making process? • How do you keep records of all your engagement activity? • All data should be held in line with your organisational policies and Data Protection regulations 	<p>Engagement activity will generate both positive and negative responses so feedback needs to be balanced and proportionally reflective of what people said</p> <p>When feeding back to participants think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a statistical picture of who took part • The responses to the process - what was learnt, what people said • What will change/what happened as a result of the engagement • Any new information such as dates of the next stages or the final decisions <p>All information should be anonymised and appropriately stored</p>
<p>We will recognise best practice and make sure that it is used to inform future engagement with our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on all engagement activity to see what worked well, what could have been better and what you would do differently next time • It is important to recognise and build upon successful engagement activities by maintaining contact with people who participate through feedback (see above) and offering them opportunities to engage again in future • Think about how you can share what you have learnt about engagement with partner agencies to build up a shared knowledge of what works • Build reflection on previous learning points into your planning process 	<p>Adopt the Good Engagement Charter and work towards full compliance</p> <p>Use the Design Check List again here</p>

	for future engagement activities	
<p>Measuring success</p> <p>We will evaluate the engagement process and make sure that any lessons learnt are used to make engagement better in the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you considered using simple evaluation tools for each engagement activity you undertake? • Measuring success is more than providing people with feedback on their engagement. It is about reflecting on the engagement activity and asking the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Were the engagement goals understood by all stakeholders? ○ Were the activities pitched at the right levels of engagement? ○ Did the methods used match the objectives? ○ Could you say that a representative set of views were obtained? ○ Was the engagement process accessible (different engagement tools used, documents in plain English and in easy to read formats, were 'hard to reach' groups engaged?) ○ Was the timescale clearly set out and kept to? ○ How much did it cost - factoring in internal costs, and external costs - did this represent value for money? ○ What influence did local people's views have on the decisions made? 	<p>Simple evaluation tools can be found in the Participation Tool (NHS Scotland)</p>