# What is Community Engagement?



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**Introduction**

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| A group of community members and a group of professionals standing talking and shaking hands  A woman talking to a man who is listening to her. She is smiling and he has his arms folded and is leaning towards her as if he is interested in what she is saying. | **Community Engagement** is a way to involve people in decisions that affect them.  This includes working together to make decisions about services that affect people’s daily lives. These include services like the ones run by the NHS and the Council.  Community engagement means that organisations like the NHS and the Council speak to and listen to people in communities.  This helps organisations to understand the needs and problems that the community has. It can help communities and organisations work together to help to make the community a better place to live. For example it can mean that the community has better services that meet people’s needs. |
| A map of an area with graphics highlighting some of the different buildings that are important to people like the post office, library, cafe, church and day centre.  In the centre is a picture of a man pointing to himself with the words "My House"  A group of people sitting round a table working together.  They share an ethnic identity | **Community** is a group of people who live in an area or who have something in common.  Services sometimes talk about **geographical communities**, **communities of interest** and **communities of identity**  **A geographical community** is a group of people who live in an area. That could be a town, a village, or a country.  A **community of interest** is a group of people who share hobbies or who do similar things like a fishing group or an online gaming group.  A **community of identity** is a group of people who have things about themselves in common like disability, sex, gender, race, or religion. |
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| A woman filling in a paper form using a pen.  A group of four ethnically-diverse people sitting on chairs around a table.  A man wearing a baseball cap and casually dressed, speaking. There is a blank speech bubble next to his mouth. | Some examples of how community engagement is carried out are:   * Filling in a survey about how you feel about services you use * Working with others to write a response to a consultation * Taking part in a **focus group** where you talk about your experiences using services.   A **focus group** is a small group of people who answer questions and share their feelings and ideas with someone from a service organisation or a researcher.   * Going to a community event and talking about what you think could be done to make your community better |
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## How does community engagement happen?

**Why is community engagement important?**

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| A man holding a sign with a red cross on it next to the same man holding a sign with a green tick on it. This image signifies change for the better. | Community engagement is important because it can lead to people working with organisations to improve services and make their community better for everybody.  The important values are:   * effective – it meets the needs and hopes of the people involved * efficient – it is well organised and planned * fair – it supports people to take part including people who are **socially excluded** |
| A man in a blue jumpsuit sitting huddled up in a chair. He is in a grey room with a closed door and is alone. | **Social exclusion** is when some groups of people find it harder to access services because of things like their age, disability, race or where they live. |
| A group of community members and a group of professionals standing talking and shaking hands | Good community engagement involves:  • making plans, choices and decisions together  •working together to achieve community goals  • people in the community controlling the actions that achieve these goals |

**The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**

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| A group of diversely abled and of diverse ethnicities community members standing in front od a house, a church and a tree. White text on a purple background reads 'community life'. | The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is a law that says people should have more control over what happens in their community and they should be involved in making decisions about their community.  This law says that the people who make decisions should involve people who live in local areas. |
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**The National Standards for Community Engagement**

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| A document with three boxes, the first one checked off with a green tick. | The National Standards for Community Engagement talk about the best ways to help get people involved.  They are an easy guide to make sure everyone can take part in community engagement and get good results. |
|  | [**Click here to open an Easy Read version of the standards.**](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/558172f0e4b077ee5306aa83/t/5911bb52c534a5947d59212f/1494334330292/NSCE%E2%80%93EasyRead%E2%80%93print+version+FINAL+3M.pdf) |