

Healthwatch Coventry Good Engagement Principles

September 2022



Importance of engagement with local people

Healthwatch is the champion for local people in health and care. We have a role and track record in hearing people's experiences of health and care services. Through our work, we receive ongoing intelligence about what people think about different engagement work carried out locally.

Healthwatch Coventry believes that:

1. Seeking the involvement of local people and hearing what they have to say should be a positive process for the people involved.
2. Effective engagement benefits local people and NHS/care organisations because resources will be well used and local people will help shape their local services, meaning services are more likely to be effective.
3. The voices of people and communities should be heard more and be influential much earlier in planning cycles and on an ongoing basis to shape services and approaches.

Healthwatch Coventry has the role of asking questions about and working to support engagement activity. So, we will use these principles as a framework for this.

What is 'engagement'?

This term 'engagement' is often used to mean different things. For Healthwatch Coventry 'engagement' is:

1. A two way process where people/patients/service users can have a voice and influence about service or service plans.
2. An activity that is done for clear and describable outcome or purpose.

We are most interested in involvement, co-design and co-production, rather than consultation. Consultation usually happens when the approach or options are nearly final, so the opportunity for influence is less.

We do not call exercises to provide information to local people 'engagement' as this is not a two way process for listening, but a process for informing. Providing balanced and useful information is important, but it can be confused with listening.

Consult, involve, co-produce – the differences

| | CONSULT | INVOLVE | CO-DESIGN/ COPRODUCTION |
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| Goal | <i>A defined formal process to gather views on a specific proposal</i> | To work directly with people to gather their views and ensure they are understood and considered | To partner with people in developing solutions and have direct input into delivery |
| Commitment | <i>To keep people informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on decisions and how they were influenced by people's views</i> | Two way process, to gather people's views, ensure they are included in options/plans and provide feedback on how they have influenced decisions | Equal partnership between healthcare professionals and people, sharing power to plan, design and deliver support together |

Our principles

We have created these eight principles based on feedback from local people collected continually through our work. This enables us to have an understanding of the reasons people have for not getting involved and the frustrations local people express with engagement activities.

The principles below are a simple guide to effective good practice addressing the barriers to effective engagement activity. They are values focused.

We highlight key questions that organisations and systems of whatever size should consider and build into planning and delivery to be effective in engagement.

We spoke to engagement leads from local NHS organisations and the local council as part of this piece of work.

| Area | Focus on |
|----------------------|--|
| 1 Why? | <p>Clearly identify why there is a need to engage with our community</p> <p><i>Sometimes it looks like engagement activity does not have a clear aim, or is seen as an end in itself rather than part of a process or solution.</i></p> <p>Be clear on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the goal for the piece of work, what is the point you want to get to and does this give a real opportunity to listen to local people? • What is it possible for people to influence? If there is no scope for influence that will be a problem |
| 2 Transparent | <p>Be open, honest and transparent about what will happen as a result when engaging with our community</p> <p><i>Thinking this through will help the exercise to be meaningful and effective.</i></p> <p>Be clear on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the limitations and constraints on what people can influence, and what is and isn't within control? • How is the power imbalance between decision-makers and people and the community recognised and addressed, so that people do not feel it is an empty and tokenistic process? • How has the goal been explained to local people in a relevant and meaningful way for them? |
| 3 Partnership | <p>Work with others (within and outside organisations) when involving people and communities to avoid duplicating previous activities and join up where this is best</p> <p><i>People won't keep giving their views and can have longer memories about what they have been asked before than organisations do.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value the time of the people you want to take part and take steps to check whether similar questions have been asked before or if other relevant information has been collected in another way • Check what relevant groups or mechanisms already exist before creating something new • Agree with internal and external colleagues who is best placed to lead this involvement activity so as to avoid duplication and silo working |

| | |
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| <p>4 Inclusive</p> | <p>Use different ways for people to be involved and make sure methods are accessible and inclusive to the lives and needs of the people</p> <p><i>There is no one way to reach people and all methods have strengths and weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the involvement activity be accessible, inclusive and tailored to the people that should take part, (not just those people who regularly respond)? • What creative methods will maximise people's opportunities to be involved? To access broad and diverse opinions a range of very different ways of enabling people to be involved will be needed. • Work to understand who is not taking part, why this is, and what would enable them to be involved? |
| <p>5 Timely</p> | <p>Make sure there is enough time to hear from and involve people – don't do rushed engagement activity</p> <p><i>One of the key issues with engagement activity is that it often has short timescales that do not enable local people or Healthwatch to be properly involved</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the timeframe realistic - can you reach your target groups in this period? • How have we discussed and agreed those timeframes with the people or community members you are working with? • Plan involvement activities early in any service review process, and not near the end. • How has ongoing involvement been designed into services? |
| <p>6 Resourced</p> | <p>Allow resource and skills for involvement with target communities</p> <p><i>Engagement activity requires time and skills to carry out the work needed. Spending time on an activity which does not achieve the aim is not a good use of resources</i></p> <p>Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resource is there for the engagement activity and is this realistic? • Identify any additional skills or connections needed to include specific communities, and how we can work with partners to gain those skills and connections? • Consider that others working in the community may not have the time and resources to help or be involved |

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| <p>7 Outcome</p> | <p>Close the feedback loop with people</p> <p><i>People really don't like giving their input and then not hearing anything more. People would rather have explanations about why actions weren't taken than hearing nothing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear with people from the start about how and when they can expect to have feedback on what the involvement activity has identified and what will then happen with this information • Explain how decisions have been influenced by their involvement (e.g. "you said, we did" so that people can see a difference and feel motivated to take part in future • Explain the reasons why some decisions have not reflected views expressed within the involvement activity, including explaining why some decisions or factors are beyond control |
| <p>8 Learning</p> | <p>Recognise best practice and evaluate what was done to inform future engagement work</p> <p><i>Create continuous learning and an open culture that allows conversations about what is learnt and can be improved about engagement as well as recognising what is good. This will benefit engagement practice.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in reflection on the activity to see what worked well, what could have been better and what could be done differently • How have the people been involved in this review? • How have ICS partners been informed of findings and outcomes and learning so we can agree "what good looks like" and avoid community fatigue with very similar and uncoordinated involvement activities? |

How we will use these principles

We would like to see these principles become the norm in the culture locally around working with people and communities, with appropriate ownership and accountability around them.

As part of our annual reporting cycle we will publish information about how local engagement practice meets our principles and we will encourage examples of good practice to be shared with us.

Healthwatch Coventry will use these principles:

1. To work with other organisations to support better engagement activity and when looking at how engagement activity has been done locally in our role in the accountability of the ICS.
2. To ask questions about engagement activity and processes at all levels of the health and care delivery and system
3. In our decision making about what we do, for example:
 - To help us to decide what activity we get involved in
 - For conversations about time frames for pieces of work
 - In decision making about agenda items at our meetings
4. In relation to our own work and practices.

Our call to action

Making sure good engagement happens at system, place, in localities and in organisations

We want questions about the quality and effectiveness of engagement activity to be built into decision making and delivery throughout the ICS. Everyone should ask and answer questions as engagement activity is planned, carried out and reviewed. This will lead to a continual cycle of improvement.

Key things for organisations, partnership of organisations, care collaboratives and the Integrated Care Board to consider in decision making are:

1. How have we reflected the value of good involvement of patients, carers and communities in our strategic plans and ensured our involvement activities are aligned?
2. How have we ensured that clear internal reporting routes have been established to ensure our involvement activity informs our decision-making?
3. How have we planned for and resourced engagement activity?
4. How have we held ourselves and each other accountable by evidencing in any piece of involvement activity how good practice, review and sharing have been applied?

Acknowledgements

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Version control

This document replaces that 2013 Good Engagement Charter which we have now withdrawn.

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We want these principles to be widely shared and used. However please contact us before reproducing externally published documents so we are aware.



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