



ENGAGING COMMUNITIES FRAMEWORK

This Framework sets out how we can best engage with our communities, bringing together a resource for engagement. Reasons for developing this include legislation requiring community engagement; corporate ambition to better engage and improve relationships with citizens and communities. Further to this, there is best practice in communicating and engaging communities within our teams and services in the council to share.

The intention of this Framework is to help all council employees and elected members understand the 'why' and 'how' we can best engage with communities. We aim to refresh this Framework annually.

We welcome everyone in the Council who engages with our communities to come along to our Community Engagement Group which meets monthly to link with peers; share information and support better ways of working. (See contacts Section at Appendix One.)

Why develop a Framework? *Consistent Corporate Approach, Best Practice*

Following on from Best Value recommendations and the Council's **Connect for Success** approach, one council one place principle, a need was identified for a corporate approach to community engagement.

This led to producing a Framework to raise awareness and develop a consistent approach across the Council when engaging. There is support and training available for staff to support the delivery of the Framework.

When considering any form of community engagement exercise, it is important to understand why the engagement is needed, and communicate this well, including setting the context of other information sources. Engagement may be one of several sources of information which will inform Council decision making. Others could include data, professional advice, previous consultation, legislation and policy position. Not every council decision will be subject to engagement, and the tools and techniques outlined in this Framework will be used proportionately.

As outlined in this Framework there are different methods of engagement which all have a legitimacy of use. It's important to understand whether we are informing, consulting, involving or co-designing and empowering communities, or a combination of these to help manage expectations and achieve a positive outcome for all involved.



Setting the scene

This Framework highlights key **terminology for engagement**, main **methods** which can be used, and **the tools and best practice** to support effective engagement. It is expected that the use of engagement methods and tools will be proportionate to legislative or other requirements and the time and resources available.

Due to the challenges of geography in Argyll & Bute, current financial pressures faced in local government and resource restraints, this may impact on the ability to carry out certain types of engagement methods, such as face to face. The increasing use of digital engagement methods needs to be balanced with measures to ensure accessibility, provide support and tackle digital exclusion. If you wish to discuss this, please contact a member of the Engagement Group.

There is a helpful '6 Steps to Engagement' included to help you plan, implement and evaluate your approach. As outlined above engagement can be one stage in the decision-making process and it should be made clear at the outset how much scope there is to influence the outcome.

Appendix Two references the key plans and policies that the council works within which relate to community voice and engagement and provides details of national guidance, standards, and legislation, including Equalities and Rights of the Child.

The use of social media to promote awareness and participation in engagement activity can be supported by the Communications Team as part of a communications plan for the engagement.

Why engage? *Community Wellbeing, Better Service Delivery*

Effective engagement can support councils to improve the services they deliver, make effective use of resources, and build more productive and positive relationships with communities. Community engagement also builds and supports community empowerment, and this is important for individual wellbeing and resilient communities. Community engagement has a key role in addressing equality issues and working with vulnerable, excluded, or disadvantaged groups to ensure their voices are heard.

The Council is required to undertake a whole range of engagement actions with a wide variety of stakeholders, from operational matters to statutory processes. This Framework can support activity across this.

Non-statutory

Statutory



This Framework supports officers and elected members to:

- Support statutory and non-statutory consultation processes
- adhere to consistent engagement principles
- have the necessary information and knowledge to undertake engagement effectively and efficiently
- improve the quality of engagement activity
- have a consistent, co-ordinated approach to engagement across the Council and with our Community Planning partners.

Elected Members

Elected members, as community leaders, have a key role in supporting, encouraging, and working alongside local people, community organisations and local interest groups to increase those actively involved in decision-making and the achievement of local outcomes.

Elected members can utilise the Framework as a key reference point and source of information for engagement. This includes the step-by-step process outlined, principles from the National Standards for Community Engagement, and range of other guidance, tools and resources included within the Framework.

Good community engagement can increase participatory democracy which in turn can support the role of elected members as community leaders. The role of elected members in relation to engagement is fully set out in this Improvement Service briefing: [Community Engagement Briefing | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

DEFINITIONS

Definitions around engagement can be confusing as different terminology can be used in different legislative and professional sectors to mean different things. Having a common language to refer to is useful. For the purposes of this Framework, the definitions are:

Community

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 includes the following definition, “A community can be any group of people who feel they have something in common. In many cases, it is that they live in the same area. However, it can also be that they share an interest or characteristic. Communities of interest could include faith groups, ethnic or cultural groups, people affected by a particular illness or disability, sports clubs, conservation groups, clan and heritage associations, etc. They may be very specialised or local, ranging up to national or international groups with thousands of members.”



Community organisations should be able to demonstrate that they are representative of their communities. This should be balanced with equality considerations – see Equalities Section in Appendix 2.

Community Engagement

“Community engagement is a purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations, and public and private bodies to help them identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding between them and taking joint action to achieve positive change.”

(Scottish Community Development Centre – SCDC)

Engagement

Engagement can be seen in the context of The Ladder of Participation which includes: Informing; Consulting; Involving; Collaborating and Self-determination. As represented in the diagram below, and in more detailed information following this, which includes examples, tools and case studies.



(Aberdeen CPP Engagement Participation & Empowerment Strategy)

Further information on ladder of engagement which has been adapted to be specific to local authorities can be found here: [The ladder of citizen participation and community engagement \(citizenlab.co\)](http://www.citizenlab.co.uk/the-ladder-of-citizen-participation-and-community-engagement)



Engagement covers a broad range of activities for the council. The method of engagement will vary depending on purpose. One engagement exercise may involve 2 or 3 different methods, e.g.:

- To consult and inform of planned changes to services or new strategies / policies and seek feedback - **Consultation**
- To inform the development of design and delivery of services, including a service design approach - **Informing, Collaboration**
- To identify needs and key issues affecting local citizens and communities - **Collaboration**
- To test or pilot new services or approaches to service delivery - **Involvement**
- To assess the impact of changes in resources or new policies or services - **Collaboration, Involvement**
- To plan for the delivery of services in the future – **Collaboration**

The Scottish Government has started using the term 'Participation' rather than engagement. It has produced a Participation Handbook, which you can find linked in Appendix Two.

Empowerment

Empowerment recognises the independent role which communities can play, and what they can be supported to achieve, using assets and resources for the purpose of improvement and transformation.



The ladder of participation and the engagement tools to choose the methods appropriate to your project aim.

Rung on ladder	Type of activity	Tools & techniques/ resources	Case studies and tools
<p>Self-determination People implement what they decide</p>	<p>Minimal input from public sector/ provide support when requested</p> <p>Community capacity building</p> <p>Active Community Groups and Organisations</p>	<p>Online support and resources for self-service</p> <p>The Councils Community Development Team can visit and support communities should they require assistance.</p>	<p>An online toolkit for community led action planning https://www.communitytoolkit.net/</p> <p>Support available from the Community Development team Community Development Argyll and Bute Council</p> <p>Grants and funding information and tools https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-community/grants-and-funding/grantnet</p> <p>Examples of projects funded Funding to support Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p>
<p>Empowerment Organisations implement what people decide</p>	<p>Direct decision-making as a sole result of community consultation and involvement</p>	<p>Consul Democracy online citizen participation tool https://consuldemocracy.org/ Participedia.net</p>	<p>Active Asset Transfer Requests Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Internal & External examples of PB https://pbscotland.scot/resource-hub</p>



	Voting Participatory budgeting	PB resources and tools https://pbscotland.scot/	ABOIP consultation where results of engagement were directly implemented by CPP as 3 priority outcomes ABOIP 2023-4 summary
Collaboration (co-production) Organisations seek people's involvement in identifying issues, outlining options and making decisions	Participatory decision-making Citizen advisory panels Open space events Service planning Art of Hosting	The Council's Service Design approach Service Design – My Council Works Consul Democracy https://consuldemocracy.org/	Asset Transfer Request for Calgary Bay Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk) Action planning to deliver ABOIP – see case studies at Appendix 4. HSCP examples of collaboration? SCDC Engagement Examples Community engagement examples SCDC - We believe communities matter Examples of co-production https://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/examples Community-led Action Planning Argyll & Bute
Involvement People's concerns inform organisations' proposed decisions	Ongoing process of engagement – workshops, deliberative polling, citizen juries, deliberative workshop.	https://involve.org.uk/ Rights under Community Empowerment Scotland Act 2015: Council pages	Feedback forms after events to help shape future Area wide example using the Place Standard Tool How good is your place? (argyll-bute.gov.uk) Youth engagement event Young Islanders at Big Ideas 2024! - yin.scot



	<p>Focus groups to gather views to inform shaping service decisions.</p> <p>Involving people in the decision on the final design of a project/ building/ park etc. by presenting options to choose from.</p> <p>Feedback forms. Charrettes and other examples of participants shaping the outcomes of engagement.</p> <p>Community needs assessments.</p>	<p>Participation Requests Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Active Asset Transfer Requests Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Further support available for asset transfer process DTAS Community Ownership Support Service </p>	<p>An innovative approach to engagement conversions Community Assets for Living Well Art of Hosting Workshop - Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface</p>
<p>Consultation People's views are listened to in respect of organisations' proposed decisions</p>	<p>One off engagement opportunities – focus groups, surveys, public meetings, networks and forums</p> <p>Gathering views through annual surveys on</p>	<p>Council resources on engagement:</p> <p>Consultation Toolkit Consultation toolkit (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Consultation App Community Engagement – My Council</p>	<p>How good is your place? (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Community Food Growing Strategy (arcgis.com)</p>



	<p>existing service provision</p> <p>Asking for comments on draft documents, plans, strategies</p> <p>Seeking views to inform the development of council strategies usually sits between consultation and collaboration.</p>	<p>Works Consul https://consuldemocracy.org/Place Standard tool Our Place</p>	
<p>Informing Organisations keep people informed of proposed decisions</p>	<p>Providing the information people need to form and give views – newsletters, websites, exhibitions, leaflets, posters, social media, news releases.</p> <p>Ongoing information provision throughout a project – emails, leaflets, face to face engagement, council</p>	<p>Newsletter Websites Corporate communication channels</p>	<p>CD Newsletter Community Development Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>CPP Newsletter Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Bulletin Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Cascade (staff newsletter)</p> <p>Funding Alert Monthly funding alert Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Alert service on key council services Keep in the loop Argyll and Bute Council (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p>



	<p>meetings, members seminars</p> <p>Picture / drawings</p> <p>Videos to inform</p>		<p>School websites/ newsletters</p> <p>Full Partnership graphic.pdf from CCP Management Session September 2024</p>
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Support Available for Engagement

There are a range of supports available both internal and nationally.

The Council has developed a **Consultation Toolkit**, and a consultation app [Community Engagement – My Council Works](#). The app lists consultations which have been carried out and those which are planned and allows for better planning of consultation activity and sharing information from findings.

Further details of timescales for **planning engagement** can be found in the [Consultation toolkit \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#).

Advice and support are available from the **Community Development Team** (communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk) and there are online resources and training at: [Community Development | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

- A community development approach brings skills in facilitation for meetings and discussions, reaching out to non-digital residents and lesser heard voices. Also enhancing communication between communities or community organisations and council services, senior council officers, elected members and partners who can work together. This can be invaluable in ensuring a wide reaching and inclusive engagement process.
- It also includes developing networks, contacts and relationship building, developing rapport and facilitating further opportunities to engage, if required. Additionally, the Community Development Team can support community groups with governance, training, accessing funding and developing plans, such as community led action plans and locality place plans. A community led action planning toolkit has been developed [Community-led Action Planning Argyll & Bute \(communitytoolkit.net\)](#)

The Community Engagement Strategy Group brings together officers across the Council who are involved in consultation and engagement and sharing information and examples of practice. (contact Suzanne.Mason@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Training for staff in community engagement is available to increase awareness and skills across council services. (Add links to training when available).

The [VOiCE](#) (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) tool is an innovative IT based tool which provides support to community engagement activity, with

- Planning community engagement and service user participation
- Monitoring and recording the process
- Evaluating the process against the National Standards for Community Engagement (Scotland) and principles for good quality engagement (elsewhere).

VOiCE is published by the Scottish Government as part of its support for implementation of the National Standards for Community Engagement.



Also, there is the Scottish Approach to Service Design, further information can be found here [The Scottish Approach to Service Design \(SAAtSD\)](#). The vision for this is that the people of Scotland are supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of their public services (from policy making to service improvement).

- The approach is a way of exploring the problem space openly, collaboratively and with users, before a solution or service is decided.
- Inspired by the Scottish Approach to Service Design, the council has adopted a Service Design-led approach to improvement activities, further information on the Council's approach can be found here: <https://mycouncilworks.co.uk/service-design/>

There are links and parallels between approaches to engagement adopted by partners, such as [Argyll and Bute HSCP Engagement Framework \(scot.nhs.uk\)](#)



STEPS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Step 1: Define the purpose and identify project team

Why are you engaging and what method fits your purpose best? Define the purpose - refer to ladder above for guidance and examples of methods of engagement,

For consultation exercises, please also refer to the Council's Consultation toolkit [here](#), which provides some more detailed guidance to supplement what is included in this Framework. The Toolkit includes detailed advice on planning consultations, and on designing surveys tailored to different audiences, timeframes and process for planning and analysis for consultation. This overall Framework covers all engagement activity from informing to self-determination, including consultation – refer to ladder of participation, examples included and case studies at Appendix 4.

Consider what the aims are and how much influence the engagement will have on the decisions made. Be clear on this and set it out in all communication to the people you are engaging with. Identify who will be the key members of your project team based on the skills you need to carry out the engagement. This will determine the key services and/ or partners involved.

Review findings from other engagement carried out on similar subjects, to avoid the risk of consultation fatigue, in asking the same or similar questions and in co-ordinating engagement activity. The App can help with this [Community Engagement – My Council Works](#). This allows for more co-ordination of engagement and sharing of information gathered with less risk of over consultation.

Consideration should also be given to your evaluation method at the start of the process – see step 6 also, and any pre-evaluation surveys or data available.

Step 2: Identify the target audience(s) and the scope of engagement

Who are you engaging with? Define the target audience/s and stakeholders. This could involve discussing ideas with the project team and considering the various stakeholders and audience for the engagement. It is best practice to plan engagement for seldom heard groups, as well as those who may regularly engage. This can be different groups of people depending on the subject or theme of engagement. See contacts in Appendix One for advice and support.

Identifying any challenges or barriers to engaging with the protected characteristic groupings in the Equality Act 2010 can help identify potential hard to reach groups. Equalities questions and guidance can be found at Appendix 5.

Due consideration must be given to equalities considerations under the Equality Act 2010 and an Equality and Socio Economic Impact Assessment (EqSEIA) carried out



if appropriate. Further information can be found here: [Equality legislation and reporting | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/equality-legislation-and-reporting)

In addition to any statutory requirements for engagement which apply to your specific service area, you should also consider our other obligations and legal duties around: Fairer Scotland Duty, island communities, consumers, and children's rights. Under UNCRC legislation, children and young people should be consulted on all matters that affect them. Key messages should be framed in a way that is relevant to the audience. See further details and links to information in Appendix 2.

Step 3: Identify tools and/or facilitation techniques

Once you have decided which method of engagement on the ladder of participation your project sits, this will help to identify tools and techniques. There are a range of communication tools and facilitation techniques available which can be used based on the type of engagement and the target audience/s and a range of different approaches may be required, examples included in table at Appendix Three.

This outlines the key methods and their uses, the benefits and challenges of each and how these can be taken into consideration. In some cases, it may be worth considering a service design approach to incorporate feedback from service users into the design services. Please refer to the Service Design Approach [What is service design? – My Council Works](#) for further guidance.

In most cases a combination of a few of the most appropriate techniques should be used to reach a range of audiences/ groups. It can be useful to go to venues where people already meet (local shops, community hubs, existing groups, launches or events already happening). Having both face to face, in addition to online options, is best for digital inclusion purposes.

In all cases it is important to plan for the engagement method used and to make it as positive an experience as possible and remove any barriers to participation where possible. Contact Community Development team for advice and support if required (see contacts in Appendix One)

Step 4: Develop a communication plan and keep the lines of communication open

Having a communications plan is a good tool to have as part of your overall engagement project, templates are available from the Communications Team. Clarity of communication is key, using positive and accessible language. Some guidance on communication can be found here [Engaging with people | The Hub \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/engaging-with-people)

It is important to use different forms of communication as people take in and understand information in different ways, including visual interest for example.



Pictures, information and diagrams can be useful to get messages across. Ways of positively promoting participation can be considered, including publicity and making it as positive an experience as possible for those taking part.

It is essential to plan for this and to involve the Communication Team in the planning process and for publicising on social media and in the press. It is also important to consider the audience demographics and any language or other communications barriers which should be taken account of. See contacts for the Communications Team in Appendix 1.

Let people know how the information they have provided through the engagement activity will be used and how they will be kept informed. Manage expectations about next steps timescales by being open and honest.

Step 5: Links across council

An engagement event could be a good opportunity to share information on other services or activities which could be relevant. Provide information about any other events coming up which may be of interest.

Having the relevant senior officers, experts in the field and elected members along to answer any difficult questions can be useful, particularly for controversial topics. Peer involvement can help also, if other groups are doing something then others may want to join in also.

[Community Engagement – My Council Works Consultations | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

Step 6: Provide Feedback and Evaluate

Share information on the results, provide feedback on the consultation and honour any promises made of what happens next. Add to networks and contact lists as appropriate, seeking GDPR permissions, as appropriate. Avoid jargon and keep messages simple where possible.

Share pictures if you have taken any (with permission) of the events as these are helpful reminders when sharing future updates.

Contact the Communications Team about promoting how you have listened, and to add the 'you said, we did' feedback to the community engagement app – see Appendix 1 for Communication Team contacts.

Some steps for providing feedback after an engagement exercise:

- i. Thank everyone involved in the engagement – ask the Communications Team to issue a thank you on social media and the website and provide the Team with information to share about your next steps (e.g. when findings/ actions will be available).



- ii. Summarise your feedback so it can be shared to all those that took part and outline how the council will act on the results of the engagement process. It is important that participants know how it will influence policy development or service delivery. Including a timeframe for next steps.
- iii. Now you can feed back the results to all those involved and tell them what happens next with the findings. You should always remind them why this engagement exercise was important. We recommend using a You Said, We Did format.
- iv. Arrange for the results of the engagement to be published on the council website via the webteam.
- v. Feedback the results to other individuals who may be interested in this information, for example, councillors, appropriate committees, directors, service managers and partner organisations.

Determine your evaluation criteria and how you are going to evaluate, including short and long term criteria and based on the engagement methods used. Examples could include surveys, and other methods of gathering feedback. Carry out your evaluation and report on the findings and key lessons learned to inform future processes.



APPENDIX ONE: KEY CONTACTS

- Key contact: Suzanne Mason, Engagement and Communities Lead, suzanne.mason@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- Community Engagement Group Chair: Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services
- To discuss online and face to face engagement tools and how to use these - communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk . Tools include webpages dedicated to discussion and community debate, voting tools including real time voting with hand held voting tools.
- To discuss your engagement with community organisations and points of contact in communities – communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- To find information from surveys and engagement identifying needs in community organisations and the wider community - communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk, [Third Sector Interface webpage](#)
- To discuss engaging with young people including Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament – contact Community Learning in Live Argyll communitylearning@liveargyll.co.uk
- Further detail on community learning can be found here [Community Learning - Live Argyll](#)
- Contact details for community councils can be found here [Community Councillors | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
For general enquiries regarding community councils contact communitycouncils@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- To have information from your team included in regular e-bulletins to community organisations – communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- To engage with community resilience groups – contact Council Resilience Team emergencyplanning@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- [Keep in the loop | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#) find out about events, disruptions, changes and consultations.
- [Customer Service Charter](#) summaries our promise to our customers and what they can expect.
- To engage with groups in communities representing those with disabilities - communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- [Find your MSYP - Scottish Youth Parliament](#)

Developing engagement content

- For support in developing your content (questions, supporting information etc) contact the Communications Team – workingtogether@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Promoting/communicating engagement:

- For support in promoting and encouraging involvement with your engagement activity contact the Communications Team – workingtogether@argyll-bute.gov.uk



Help for people in communities who wish to engage with the council

- To represent your community on a community council, or engage locally on matters that concern you – Community Council contacts - [Community Councils \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)
- To get involved in discussions with organisations working locally in what we call Community Planning – Contact details for Governance Team, to join Area Community Planning Groups
- To speak to an elected member about council services – find your local councillor at [Councillors \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)
- To get involved in the decisions that the council makes by becoming an elected member - Contact details for Governance Team
- To get involved in shaping services of the council, where your group can add value to this service in doing so, contact communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk and find more information about this on our webpage: [Find out more about Participation Requests \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Add link to combined contacts list when this is available.



Appendix Two: Policy Context

National Policy Context

Following on from the Christie Commission in 2011, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force. The Act aims to empower communities by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services and making it easier for them to own and manage land and buildings.

The Act changed the tone from community consultation, information and engagement towards community empowerment and co-production and co-design of services with communities and citizens having increased powers and a key role to play.

Links to legislation and a range of guidance available is included at end of this appendix.

National Standards for Community Engagement

SCDC, the lead body for community development in Scotland, has developed 7 National Standards for Community Engagement, which are good practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement. They are designed to reflect the developing policy relating to participation, engagement and community empowerment in Scotland.



Further information can be found here:

[National Standards Community](#)



can

[for](#)

[Engagement | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

For engaging with young people it is worth referring to specific guidance including 7 Golden Rules for participation, Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland.

Further good practice guidance: the Consultation Institute identified the following seven principles, which act as a reference for all those involved in leading consultations.

- 1. Integrity** The consultation must have an honest intention. Consultors must be willing to listen and be prepared to be influenced.
- 2. Visibility** All who have a right to participate should be made reasonably aware of the consultation.
- 3. Accessibility** Consultees must have reasonable access, using methods appropriate for the intended audience and with effective means to cater for all.
- 4. Transparency** Consultation submissions will be publicised unless specific exemptions apply.



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|-------------------------------|--|
| 5. Disclosure | Consultors must disclose all material information. Consultees must disclose significant minority views when representing many parties. |
| 6. Fair Interpretation | Objective assessment, with disclosure of weightings if used. |
| 7. Publication | Participants have a right to receive feedback of the consultation output and of the eventual outcome of the process. |

Local Policy Context

The **vision for Argyll & Bute council** states “We want Argyll and Bute’s communities to be on a level playing field with others around the country - that is why we will campaign for equity for our communities. We will do our utmost to ensure that local voices and needs are taken into account in national decision-making.”
(Corporate plan 2023-27).

The **Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP)** sets out the needs and circumstances of citizens living in Argyll and Bute, identifies the outcomes to which priority is to be given by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), with a view to improving these.

The [ABOIP 2024-34](#) was published following an extensive consultation with residents of Argyll & Bute. Three priority outcomes were identified from 1,978 responses:

- **Transport Infrastructure**
- **Housing**
- **Community Wellbeing**

Argyll and Bute CPP will work collaboratively to achieve improvements across these three outcomes.

The **Community Learning and Development (CLD) Partnership** “works together to improve lives across Argyll and Bute by empowering individuals and communities to lead sustainable, fulfilling and happy lives through continuous learning, cooperative problem solving and **removing barriers to engagement**, health and wellbeing”.



CLD empowers people of all ages to work individually or collectively to make positive changes in their lives, and in their communities, through learning, personal development and active citizenship. A new Community Learning and Development plan is currently being developed and will be published later in 2024.

Equalities

The National Standards for Community Engagement recommends that measures are taken to involve groups with protected characteristics. This refers to the Equality Act 2010, which provides protection from unlawful discrimination and harassment to groups and individuals because of a protected characteristic and also aims to foster good relations.

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

A literature review of community engagement and equalities 2021 found that “Community engagement must be placed in the context of broader democratic innovation and citizenship at regional, national and global scale. The challenge is to enable citizens and community groups to shape the spaces for engagement themselves, decide how they wish to participate, and have a say over the partnerships they are entering into.” (‘Hard to reach’ or ‘Easy to ignore?’ Promoting equality in Community Engagement)

There is a need to understand the challenges and barriers to participation, to reach seldom heard voices in addition to those who are already linked in with consultation and engagement processes. Also adequate resources are required to promote equality, including financial and practical support to facilitate participation, digital access /literacy issues, and staff resources for community engagement.

A standard set of equalities questions has been developed for use in engagement—see Appendix 5 and guidance on how to use them. Further information on equalities can be found at: [Equality legislation and reporting | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/equality-legislation-and-reporting)

Key Legislation

- [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010 \(Authorities subject to the Socio-economic Inequality Duty\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)



- Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)
- Employment Rights Act 1996 and Fair Work First [Fair Work First guidance - gov.scot](#)

Forthcoming legislation – the Consumer Duty

Guidance

[Guidance - Decision-making: children and young people's participation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[Children's Rights and Placemaking in Scotland \(improvementservice.org.uk\)](#)

[From Scotland's Young People Manifesto - Scottish Youth Parliament \(syp.org.uk\)](#)

[Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) - Environmental assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[7 Golden rules for participation - The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland \(cypcs.org.uk\)](#)

[Home - Scottish Youth Parliament \(syp.org.uk\)](#)

[Participation handbook - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-people-community-engagement-participation-guidance-updated-2024/pages/4/>

Fairer Scotland Duty:

[The Fairer Scotland Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Consumer Duty

[How to meet the consumer duty: guidance for public authorities \(draft\) \(HTML\) | Consumer Scotland](#)

[How to meet the consumer duty: guidance for senior decision makers \(draft\) \(HTML\) | Consumer Scotland](#)

[Consumer duty guidance: carrying out an impact assessment \(draft\) \(HTML\) | Consumer Scotland](#)

Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (non-statutory guidance)

[Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment \(CRWIA\)](#)

Islands' Communities (which you've already got)

[Island Communities Impact Assessments: Guidance and Toolkit \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Equalities

Detailed guidance: [Assessing impact and the equality duty: an eight step guide | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

[Assessing impact and the Public Sector Equality Duty: Scotland | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#) also available for download at: [PSED-scotland-assessing-impact-and-public-sector-equality-duty-guide.docx \(live.com\)](#)



What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?

The United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#) (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. All countries that sign up to UNCRC are bound by international law to ensure that the rights are given effect to in their country. The UK has been a signatory to the UNCRC since 1990.

Why have the Scottish Government Incorporated Children's Rights into domestic Scots Law?

The ambition of the Scottish Government is for all public services to have an accountability for children's rights, ensuring a proactive culture of children's rights across local and national government and if their children's rights were breached, they were provided with redress.

Find Out More

Complete your training on UNCRC here: [Find learning \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Talk to our children and young people about their understanding of the child friendly version of UNCRC article

Read [Background and introduction to the UNCRC Act - UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024 - part 2: statutory guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

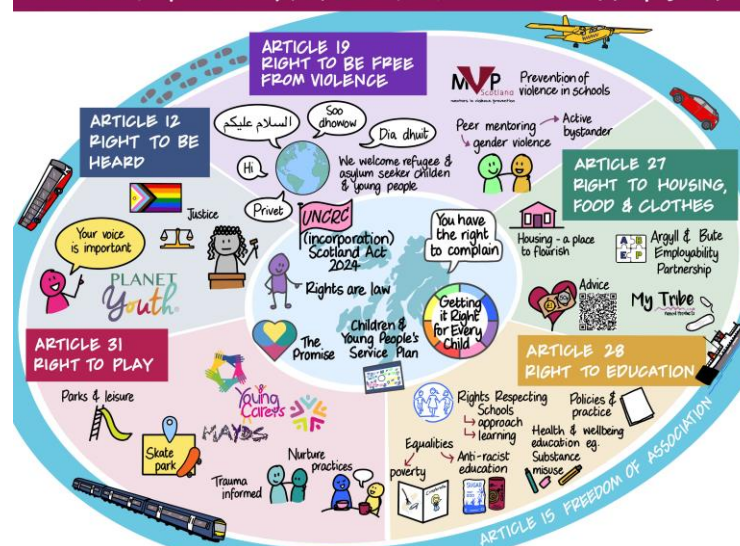
Talk to your team and colleagues about what the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 means in your daily practice.

Visit [Rights for Children and Young People | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

Implications

The impact for all services will be on:
- Involvement & engagement

CHILDREN'S & YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS IN ARGYLL & BUTE



What does this mean?

New duties under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 will come into force in 16th July 2024. The Act aims to ensure that: - Children's rights are respected and protected in the law in Scotland. - Public authorities (including Councils) are legally required to respect and protect children's rights in some of the work that they do.

The Articles

There are 54 articles [UNCRC summary-1 1.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](#), number 1-42 places duties on public bodies, for example:
- best interest of the child (Article 3)
- the right of the child to be heard and have their opinion considered (Article 12)
- freedom from violence, abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- the right to housing, food and

What Work Are We Already Doing?

Across Argyll & Bute there is a wealth of work already embedded or underway to ensure we comply and respect children's rights. We are working hard to ensure a children's rights based approach to prioritise children's rights in our work with children and families to improve children's lives through the national GIRFEC framework. Children's rights principles can be seen across other policy areas, many of these are



Appendix Three: Engagement Methods – also refer to Ladder of participation

Engagement method	Description	Benefits/ challenges	How to overcome	Resources
Community/ public meetings	Town hall or community space event inviting key stakeholders to attend.	Attendance may not be high or representative. Barriers such as transport, childcare and health can impact attendance. Can be a bit formal.	Offer a range of methods/ combine with online/ surveys etc. Provide transport, childcare if appropriate.	Can be labour intensive and incur costs for venues, catering etc.
Community workshops	Smaller/ less formal/ structured meetings.	Can allow for smaller groups/ one to one meetings. Less formal/ easier for views to be expressed. Reach is less wide/ need a greater number to gather range of views.	More appropriate for some locations, smaller villages etc	Staff resources and suitable venues, offer refreshments.
Focus or discussion groups	Smaller more focussed discussion.	Can target specific issue or groups. Allow more in-depth discussion. Require trained facilitators. Require planning and can be labour intensive	Can be used to follow up on survey or in conjunction with other methods.	Staff resources and suitable venues.
Online meetings	Online or hybrid meetings rather or in addition to in person meeting. Can have breakout rooms for smaller discussions	Can attract those with barriers to participation – health, transport, childcare etc. Hybrid in particular can be difficult to manage. Lose some value of face to face interaction and can	Use of online where there are challenges with geography/ transport and as an alternative option as appropriate.	MS Teams – can be challenging with external groups. IT equipment/ speakers etc.



		be subject to technical issues with connectivity etc.		
Electronic engagement tools	Can be used for online meetings to facilitate discussions and seek views	Can be useful however can require some explanation if participants are not familiar and also rely on connectivity.	Keep to one or 2 online tools per session or can be confusing and have a back up if technology fails.	Mentimeter, Consul, Miro, Slido, Jamboard
Surveys – in person	Can be carried out by staff or volunteers to gather views			Microsoft forms Googleforms
Surveys - electronic	Can be sent out by email, via mailing lists, published on websites and social media	Level of return may be low depending on topic/ interest/ length of survey etc. Limited reach/ risk of digital exclusion.	Offer paper copies as alternative.	Council website Social media Printing costs.
Social media/ websites	Can be useful for promoting engagement and updating on stages of consultation and outcomes.	As above re. digital exclusion.	Need to combine with other methods.	
Community events	Linking to existing events or planning a specific event.	Can reach new audiences and work in partnership with community organisations to plan events.	Links with other services/ organisations planning events and community organisations.	Can reduce costs if linked to existing event.
Road shows/ pop up stalls	Taking information out to communities into local areas/ facilities etc.	Can reach a wider audience/ people who don't normally engage. Can be limited time for engagement or interest in topic.	Target areas/ locations carefully and link with other activities or incentives for engagement. Promotional information/ materials etc.	Can be labour intensive And cost of materials etc.





Appendix 4: Case studies

Case study 1

Service Area: Customer Services

Role: Social Media Assistant

Engagement Method(s): Informing

A new role was created of Social Media Assistant, primarily focusing on Education which involves managing two social media accounts (Twitter @abc_OCTF, Instagram @abc_octf) with a simple strategy to create a positive platform for sharing educational news and updates within Argyll and Bute.

Some examples of work delivered so far – providing specialist support by sharing messages from the central team as 'Reels' or short videos.

The engagement method used was **informing**, as the main purpose was to pass on information in a format to reach a wider audience. One example featured Heads of Service explaining available support and nuances related to maximizing attendance, which was well-received by the target audience. This approach made the content more relatable and easier for the audience to understand.

Information has also been shared for various consultations, such the Gaelic School consultation and the Kilchrenan Primary School closure. Regular graphics were posted to keep the public informed about the remaining time to participate.

There are also live updates from events across Argyll and Bute to create content with schools. This helps to keep the channels updated in real time and allows for the creation of unique pieces of content with within Education settings, such as the STARS24 video with pupils or promotional videos for hard to fill job adverts.

The two channels she currently run is Education Instagram account @abc_octf and Education's twitter/X @abc_OCTF

So far this role seems to be making a difference and have been positively received. Some examples:

STARS24 event real-time coverage, featuring pupils

[Media posts by Argyll and Bute Council Education Service \(@abc_OCTF\) / X](#)

[Argyll and Bute Council's Education Service \(@abc_octf\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)



Showing faces behind the Education Team, creating more transparency across the service & stakeholders, including a focus on managers.

Careers Fair posts, which have been successful for both the Education service but also the departments involved in taking the time to visit schools –

[Media posts by Argyll and Bute Council Education Service \(@abc_OCTF\) / X](#)

[Media posts by Argyll and Bute Council Education Service \(@abc_OCTF\) / X](#)



Case Study 2

Service Area: Roads and Infrastructure

Role: Business Support Team leader

Engagement Method(s): Informing, Consulting

The postholder has considerable experience of community consultation and combines a detailed project management approach with a commitment to really listening to people.

Example - organising public meetings

The engagement method was **consultation** based on the purpose to seek views of residents with limited opportunity for further involvement in the outcome, which was set by legislation, the context was enforcement of parking charges.

Bringing her experience to play in how to run public consultations and making them more interactive, more about talking with people rather than talking at them. This included publicising events widely and providing information in different formats and different ways of expressing their views. This allows officers to manage and diffuse situations where negative voices and opinions can become the dominant voices. The **consultation** event travelled around several locations. The events were staffed by at least 4 people and were organised in an exhibition format, with a welcoming party, offering support to participants, as required.

Practical steps:

- Book a large hall and invite the community, particularly key stakeholders.
- Create an entrance area, with a meet and greet.
- Explain to attendees how the event is being run and offer them some leaflets, perhaps with maps or other project detail.
- Ask them to sign in to provide a record of attendance.
- Limit the numbers entering the exhibition area to small groups of 4-6.
- Provide more than one exhibition space, staffed by a project worker, who can then talk through the project and answer questions.
- This allows conversations with at least 10 people at one time, with the smaller groups allowing more a more collaborative approach.
- Also provide leaflets at a seating area, so that people can write down their feedback, whether positive or negative, given anonymously
- Commit to providing feedback, perhaps on a website.
- Providing tea and biscuits at this stage or at reception also helps.

The above format provides participants a variety of options for giving their views, whether verbally, in writing with support provided if required and feeling that their contribution has been valued.



She explained: “Your objector can become your biggest ally if you can get them talking and understanding that you’re not the enemy and that you want to be accommodating where you can”.

Case Study 3

Service Area: Community Planning and Community Development

Engagement Method(s): Consultation

Consultation to identify priority outcomes for a new 10 year Strategy

The chosen method was **consultation** as the views of local residents would influence the priorities within the plan. When the Community Planning team were required to **consult** on a new Outcomes Improvement Plan, they knew they had to get as much input as possible – and from the right people and with the right methods.

Firstly, reviewed the information already available – data, plans and reports. This led to a focus on 6 themes which they wanted to know more about, and a plan.

The Community Development Team and the Communications team were brought on board to roll out the consultation, which was delivered by an online survey, promoted through the Council’s social media sites, emails to key stakeholders, such as community councils as well as through posters on notice-boards.

The Community Development team were tasked with identifying and reaching out to those groups of people who traditionally are under-represented in public consultations. This team have good relationships with a wide variety of third sector groups, and were able to arrange invitations to coffee mornings, lunch clubs, community events and playgroup sessions. The team were able to liaise with those groups that knew their clientele best – whether they were likely to prefer to work with paper questionnaires, to vote with tokens in jars or to read a QR code and download the online survey on their mobiles.

About halfway through, the community planning team, who had been keeping an eye on demographic information, noticed that there was a very low response from men, so the Community Development team again sought out men’s groups to improve this ratio and ensure a representative a group as possible were involved.

All in all, nearly 2,000 people were included of whom over 25% were from people with protected characteristics.

Case study 4:

Service Area: Community Planning and Community Development



Method(s) of engagement: Consultation, collaboration (on design of consultation)

Working with the Learning Disabled Community: as part of consultation on 10 year strategy

The method chosen was **collaboration** to work with a specialists to develop information in a suitable format for a specific group. The Community Development team wanted to include people who usually have some challenges or barriers to being included in consultations, often because of their issues of cognition and communication. The team reasoned that with the support of the experts, who work with them daily, that these difficulties could be overcome.

First a meeting was held with the manager of the local centre who invited several of the staff to attend. A draft of the survey was shared at that meeting. The staff were really helpful and came up with solutions that they could deliver and support.

An outline of the requirements was designed using Easy Read principles and graphics:

	<p>Argyll and Bute CPP are doing an online survey.</p>
	<p>We want to find out what is important to you</p>



	<p>You can choose 3 things from our list of 7 things.</p>
	<p>You can tell us about other issues too.</p>
	<p>You can fill out our survey online here: [link]</p> <p>Improving lives in Argyll and Bute (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p>
	<p>You can phone us and ask for help on: 01631 567960</p>



	<p>This will help us to plan services for everybody in Argyll and Bute</p>
	<p>Thank you.</p>

Images were added to the survey. The support staff took copies of the survey out to the homes of the people they supported and helped them to complete it if they wanted to.

After a few weeks everyone was invited to the Centre for a discussion and some cakes. They discussed the 7 themes and people could ask questions. After that they had a chance to place dots on a wheel with the 7 themes.

During the session we were also able to capture comments and feedback on the themes.



Appendix 5 Equality Monitoring Questions

The questions below provide a question set for inclusion in consultation or engagement activity, there is accompanying guidance here (add to guidance when available/ published)

Whilst it is important to gather equalities information, the number of questions should be balanced with the length of any survey or consultation.

Sex and gender identity

What is your sex?

Female Male Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

Yes No Prefer not to say

Age

Age Under 15 16-24 25-29 30-34 35-39
 40-44 45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64
 65+ Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity?

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong. Please tick the appropriate box

A White

Scottish Other British Irish Polish

Gypsy/Traveller Roma Showman/Showwoman

Other White background, please write in:



B Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

Any mixed or multiple ethnic background, please write in:

C Asian, Scottish Asian, or British Asian

Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani

Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian

Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi

Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese

Other, please write in

D African, Scottish African, or British African

Please write in (for example, NIGERIAN, SOMALI)

E Caribbean or Black

Please write in (for example SCOTTISH CARIBBEAN, BLACK SCOTTISH)

F Other ethnic group

Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab

Other, please write in (for example, SIKH, JEWISH)

Do you have a disability?

Yes No Prefer not to say

Sexual orientation

Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?

Heterosexual/straight Bisexual Gay or Lesbian Other

Prefer not to answer



Religion or belief

What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

None

Church of Scotland

Roman Catholic

Other Christian (please write in)

Muslim, write in denomination or school

Hindu

Buddhist

Sikh

Jewish

Pagan

Another religion or body, please write in

Prefer not to say

Link to supporting guidance to be added when available.