



Improving Community Engagement in Argyll and Bute

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Listening to Communities to Improve Services

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Introduction

Welcome to Argyll & Bute Community Planning Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy – listening, active involvement, consulting, sharing information and dialogue to improve and shape service delivery to meet local needs, issues, and aspirations in Argyll and Bute.

Community Engagement is all about communities and service providers working together to improve services. This strategy recognises the vast amount of good community involvement activity that is happening all over the area. It seeks to harness, improve and better co-ordinate this work and make community involvement a positive, inclusive and effective experience for all those involved.

This strategy is a framework to help us take steps to improve the way we work with people and communities. We want to enable and encourage them to share in making decisions on the services they use or that affect them. In this way our services can truly meet their needs.

This strategy document is for Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partners, their organisations, departments and staff who provide services. It will help us all to learn more about community engagement and improve the way we work with different communities.

The **Local Government in Scotland Act 2003** introduced community planning and made community engagement a statutory responsibility of all partner agencies. Importantly, it shifted the responsibility for participation, requiring agencies to engage *with* the community rather than asking the community to engage with them.

The Community Planning Partnership will work with communities to

- *ensure that citizens and other key stakeholders in Argyll and Bute have a voice and are able to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives.*
- *inform the way in which services in Argyll and Bute are planned and delivered.*
- *inform the process through which change can be achieved.*
- *develop relationships and ensure that our communication is open and clear, free from jargon and accessible to all.*

The **Scottish Government Review of Community Planning, Statement of Ambition** published in March 2012 makes clear that communities have a key role to play in helping to shape and co-produce better outcomes and that unlocking that potential requires CPPs to have a strong understanding of communities and to provide genuine opportunities to consult, engage and involve them.

To achieve this, we want to work alongside and listen to our communities by enabling communities to get involved in making services better and providing ways for communities to get and exchange information.

The Community Planning Partnership recognises the responsibility of each and every partner agency to actively engage with communities in a meaningful way. This means engagement at an early stage in the policy cycle, support and encouragement for community representatives/stakeholders and training and skill development for their staff.

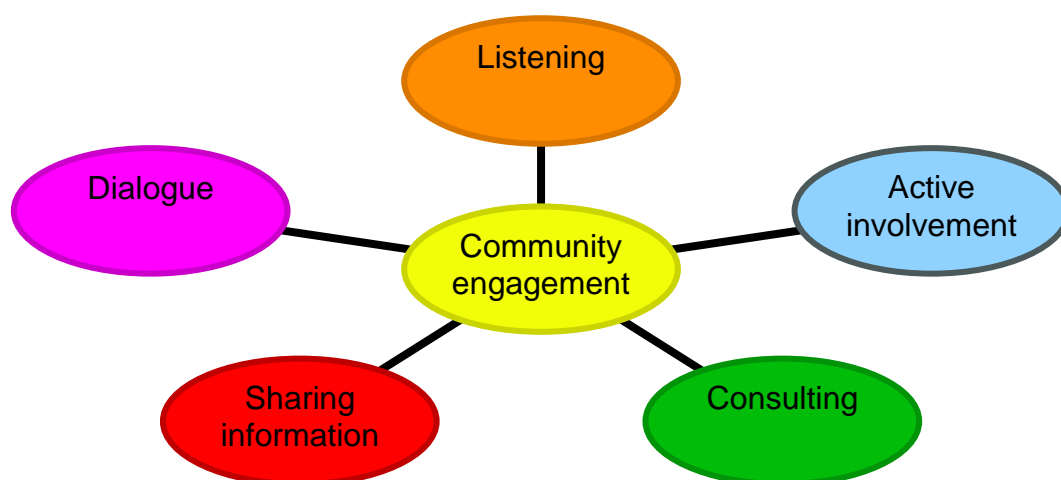
What is community engagement?

Community engagement covers many different activities carried out with the people who make up communities. At its core it is about making sure that people can participate in lots of different ways to make Argyll and Bute a better place to live, work, study and play. The Partnership has adopted the following definition of community engagement:

Community engagement is the process of involving communities in the development and management of services such as health, education and housing. It may also involve other issues which concern us all, or it may be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children. Community engagement takes many shapes and forms. It can involve simple exercises in consultation through the formation of multi-agency partnerships with community representation at the centre. Underlying effective community engagement is the commitment of service providers and planners to listen to those for whom services are being planned’.

(Communities’ Scotland, Community Engagement How to Guide)

Elements of community engagement



Community engagement can happen in many ways, from citizens’ panels, to focus groups, community radio and websites, through arts, training local people

to research their communities' needs and priorities, community events and much, much more. At the heart of community engagement is the development of relationships, open and clear communication, networking, listening and understanding the diverse nature of the people and geography of Argyll and Bute. This strategy helps guide us all to do this.

Types of engagement

Empowerment	A range of processes and structures enabling communities to gain greater influence and control over decision made that affect them.
Involvement	Involvement and participation give opportunities for individuals, customers and stakeholders to influence the way that services are managed, developed and delivered and can also help to engage the community and voluntary sector in the delivery of services. Involvement helps build trust and understanding and can help to overcome apathy and cynicism.
Consultation	A form of communication that actively invites a response to specific issues. Consultation helps to give people the opportunity to be heard. Clear and agreed objectives should underpin any consultation with agreed ways to feedback the outcomes to those taking part.
Communication	A dialogue or two way process. Active listening and opportunities to feedback experiences and opinions contribute to the process of improvement and learning and demonstrates that people can have influence on decisions and processes.
Information	Making people aware of local issues and initiatives

Benefits

There are many benefits that can be gained by both partner organisations and by citizens. The following can be achieved by listening to and working with communities

- **Plan and provide suitable and localised services that are tailored to the needs of the community** - Community engagement is at the heart of evidence-based policy and practice. It stands to reason that people who live and work in Argyll and Bute and receive the services that we are trying to improve, are best placed to tell us what issues affect them and what is needed to improve their quality of life. The term 'co-production' is increasingly being applied to new types of public service delivery, including new approaches to adult social care. It refers to active input by the people who use services, as well as – or instead of – those who have traditionally provided them. By defining issues and debating problems and solutions with the public, partners can target resources where they are needed and thus provide suitable and localised solutions that are tailored to the needs of the community. This helps

us to provide public services that are more responsive to the needs of the citizens of Argyll and Bute within the resources available to us.

- **Empower people to define the vision for their own community** - People, who belong to, live in or work in particular communities, should have the right to influence the future of their community. If people can be involved in defining the vision for their community, it will create a greater sense of 'community spirit', belonging, and pride.
- **Provide information and opportunities for the public to be better informed** - Sharing information helps the people gain an understanding of public sector agency policies or priorities. It also helps to manage expectations, as the agencies are able to explain what can and cannot be achieved, why something is or is not being done and what constraints exist. Research has revealed that partners who are perceived to be more effective at communicating with the public score higher levels of service satisfaction.
- **Monitor & measure performance** - In an ever-increasing culture of performance management, community engagement, particularly consultation through surveys, is an effective way of establishing base-line data for performance indicators that organisations can use to 'measure' issues such as user-satisfaction etc.
- **Encourage local people to become actively involved in the democratic process** - One likely effect of enhancing community engagement is the reinvigoration of the democratic process and a reversal of the declining trends in voter turnout for both general and local elections. It is important to note that the engagement itself is an exercise in participatory democracy that many people will find much more satisfactory than simply exercising their right to vote.
- **Build on 'responsible citizenship'** - If communities are enabled to play a significant role in improving their neighbourhood, or in planning and developing a project or initiative, they are more likely to develop a greater sense of responsibility or ownership towards it. This will strengthen the role of the community in the management of their neighbourhoods
- **Improves relationship between partner agencies and the public** - Community Engagement makes organisations more open and accessible. Making public services more responsive to people's needs can help to build on and improve relationships.
- **Build capacity** - Community engagement can help to build capacity of participants. If participants are engaged with effectively, their knowledge base and skills are likely to develop. They will learn about their community and the specific issues that are under discussion, and also about organisational structures and processes.

Existing Mechanisms for Community Engagement

Within the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, there are many examples of engagement activity taking place and are working towards Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership objectives.

The CPP recently developed its Better Community Engagement Resource Pack and some of the community engagement and evaluation exercises are available online (<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/community-life-and-leisure/community-development>). In addition, a number of physical resources are available on loan to CPP partners to assist engagement activities. These can be found online at

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/motivating-your-community>), or can be booked from the Council's Community Development team at communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk.

While the list below may not be exhaustive, it does suggest that there is a range and diversity that gives citizens and other stakeholders an opportunity to feel that their views are gathered by various providers of services.

- Area Community Planning Groups
- Citizens' Panel
- Focus Groups
- Third Sector Area Forum
- Multi-agency Partnership Groups including local people
- Community Care Forum
- Young Scot/Dialogue Youth
- Community Health Partnership - Patient Involvement Activities
- Crime Prevention Panels
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Domestic Abuse Forum
- Feedback Forms
- Elected Members' Surgeries
- NHS Public Partnership Forum
- Community Development Trusts
- Community Councils
- 3rd Sector intermediary organisations and their memberships (e.g. Councils of Voluntary Service, ABSEN)

Hard to Reach Groups

It is important that we inform, consult and involve all sectors of the community who may be affected by actions and decision taken by the CPP or any of its partners. Unless care is taken we may not sufficiently capture the views of important groups of people within our community. This includes hard to reach groups such as disabled people, migrant workers, gypsies and travellers, young people and older people. Through consultation we will ask these, and other, groups about how they would like us to engage with them. Also, the locations where we engage, the buildings used, the support provided and ways of communicating will recognise the constraints of living in a rural area and take into account the different needs of those we will be engaging with.

Equality Impact Assessment

This strategy was impact assessed as it was being developed and all future engagement exercises will be subject to an *Equalities Impact Assessment*. This assessment helps us to ensure that any policies we develop do not discriminate and that where possible promotes equality and good relations between groups. Further assessments will be conducted to monitor the actual effects of this policy and may require the CPP or its partners to take action if there are any concerns that this policy is having a detrimental impact on any of the Equality Target Groups.

Developing the Strategy

Having recognised the number and range of activities already taking place, particularly within existing partnerships, it is essential to ensure that it takes place in a coordinated way.

The nature of Community Engagement is that there cannot be 'a one size fits all' when dealing with a diversity of communities of both place and interest.

However there is a need to develop a framework where good practice can continue and be improved. The framework would also cover new activity which can be piloted in an attempt to harness the views of a wider range of people of all ages and sections of the community who are not engaged in the process at this point.

Action Plan

For community engagement to be effective it must be carried out within the structure of the framework across all levels of the CPP organisations. There is a role to be played in Community Engagement at all CPP levels, by partner organisations corporately, by departments and services, at area level and at unit level.

In response to these needs three over-arching aims have been identified. Under each of the aims specific priorities have been identified. All three aims are of equal importance and the achievement of each aim will impact on the achievement of the others.

AIM 1 - Improve engagement activity that enhances the lives of people and their communities

We will do this by

- Maximising opportunities for individuals and communities to take control over the issues that affect their lives in order to:
 - meet their needs
 - contribute to their economic and social opportunities
 - build active and inclusive communities based on mutual respect
- Providing individuals and communities with the information, advice and support they need to develop their confidence, skills, knowledge and ability to:
 - participate in community life
 - engage with services
 - engage in local decision-making
 - understand and engage with democratic processes
 - come together to take action for themselves

AIM 2 - Improve engagement activity that ensures opportunity for all

We will do this by

- Promoting and supporting processes for effective representation of communities in local and area-wide strategic planning and decision-making
- Developing more creative, tailored approaches that encourage engagement opportunities for all sections of the community

AIM 3 - Improve engagement activity that drives up the quality of services and makes better use of resources

We will do this by

- Improving collaboration between residents, community and voluntary groups, business groups and public organisations to ensure that issues and priorities are identified and action taken
- Improving co-ordination between all partners to ensure more effective planning and implementation of engagement initiatives which take into account existing knowledge, structures and groups and reduces duplication
- Developing the capacity of community planning partners to carry out high quality community engagement that meets the National Standards of Community Engagement
- Ensuring that learning from engagement activity is captured and used to support continual improvement of community engagement in Argyll and Bute

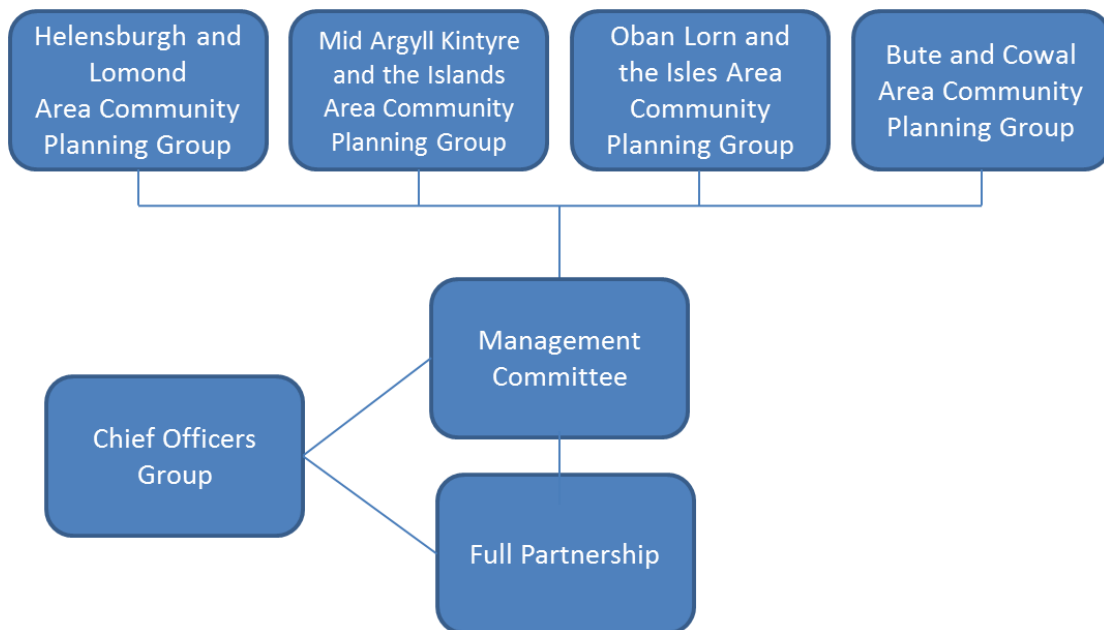
The strategy takes into account the context for community engagement in Argyll and Bute. The Community Engagement Action Plan (Appendix 1) sets out a programme of work to deliver under these three key aims.

How well we are delivering these actions will be monitored through the CPP's Performance Management Framework and progress will be monitored and reported annually.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Community Engagement will be monitored and evaluated by creating and monitoring annual community engagement plans.

This Community Engagement Strategy is part of a suite of "How we do things" which includes a **Planning and Performance Management Framework** (PPMF); a Community Engagement Strategy; a Communications Strategy; and a Public Performance Reporting Strategy. The CPP framework within which this Community Engagement Strategy sits is encapsulated in the following diagram:



High level Community Engagement aims are translated into priorities which influence the corporate plans of the Council and other partners. A Community Engagement Action Plan linked to the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement will form the basis for monitoring the impact of community engagement, as well as measuring engagement against the National Standards for Community Engagement. (Appendix 2)

Conclusion

This strategy and associated Action Plan sets out an ambitious series of activities to widen and deepen community engagement across Argyll and Bute. It builds on much of the existing activity and indicates a commitment and determination, as a partnership, to deliver improved services for the people of Argyll and Bute.

Appendix 1

Action Plan

Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of the outcome	Risks	Funded by
CPP CES 01	Improved engagement activity that enhances the lives of people and their communities	Maximise opportunities for individuals and communities to take control over the issues that affect their lives in order to: - meet their needs - contribute to their economic and social opportunities - build active and inclusive communities based on mutual respect						
CPP CES 02		Provide individuals and communities with the information, advice and support they need to develop their confidence, skills, knowledge and ability to: - participate in community life - engage with services - engage in local decision-making - understand and engage with democratic processes - come together to take action for themselves						
CPP CES 03	Improved engagement activity that ensures opportunity for all	Promote and support processes for effective representation of communities in local and area wide strategic planning and decision-making •						

Ref	Outcome	Actions to achieve outcome	Success measures	Key dates	Lead	Source of the outcome	Risks	Funded by
CPP CES 04		Develop more creative, tailored approaches that encourage engagement opportunities for all sections of the community						
CPP CES 05	Improved engagement activity that drives up the quality of services and makes better use of resources	Improving collaboration between residents, community and voluntary groups, business groups and public organisations to ensure that issues and priorities are identified and action taken						
CPP CES 06		Improving co-ordination between all partners to ensure more effective planning and implementation of engagement initiatives which take into account existing knowledge, structures and groups and reduces duplication						
CPP CES 07		Developing the capacity of community planning partners to carry out high quality community engagement that meets the National Standards of Community Engagement						
CPP CES 08		Ensuring that learning from engagement activity is captured and used to support continual improvement of community engagement in Argyll and Bute						

Appendix 2

National Standards for Community Engagement

THE INVOLVEMENT STANDARD

We will identify and involve the people and organisations that have an interest in the focus of the engagement

THE SUPPORT STANDARD

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

THE PLANNING STANDARD

We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and time-scale of the engagement and the actions to be taken

THE METHODS STANDARD

We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

THE WORKING TOGETHER STANDARD

We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

THE SHARING INFORMATION STANDARD

We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

THE WORKING WITH OTHERS STANDARD

We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement

THE IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants

THE FEEDBACK STANDARD

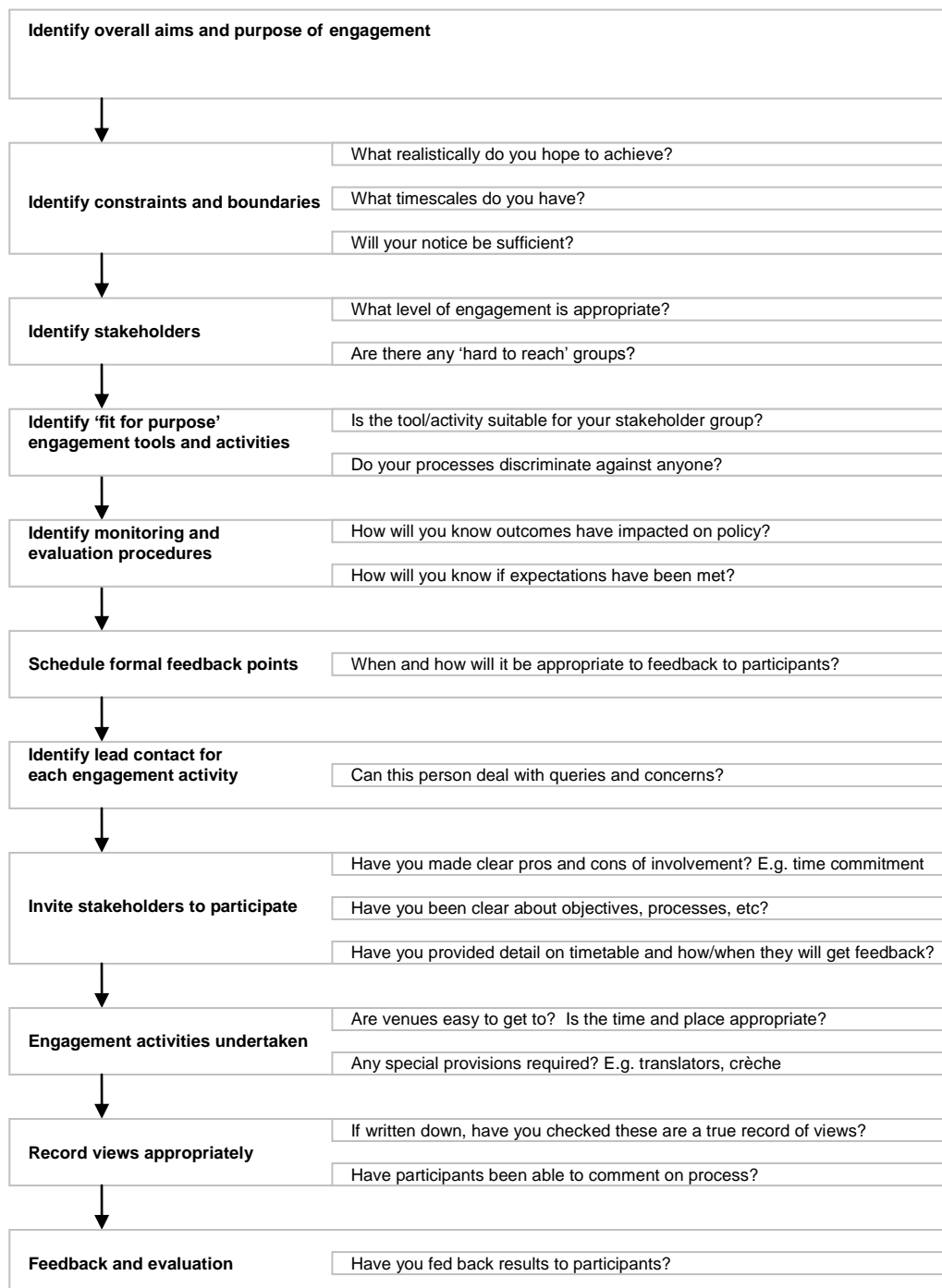
We will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARD

We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

Appendix 3

Guidelines for planning community engagement



Glossary of Terms

Active Citizenship	Active citizenship is where local people become involved in community life, either formally, through local groups and institutions, or by taking part in events or activities that help define local issues and bring about changes in their local area that aim to improve the overall quality of life. Active Citizenship is one of the key elements of Community Empowerment.
Capacity Building	Capacity Building is the provision of support to ensure that organisations, individuals or networks have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to realise their full potential. Capacity building support can take many forms, including direct facilitation and training, transferring knowledge and expertise, through financial investment or in any combination of these.
Citizens' Panel	The Citizens' Panel is made up of a representative sample of local people across Argyll and Bute (approx. 1000), who are asked to provide their opinions about the efficiency and effectiveness of local services and how they might be improved.
Community	<p>Communities of place – the 'community' is defined by an area with physical boundaries, e.g., neighbourhood, ward, village, town, etc.</p> <p>Community of interest – the 'community' is defined by a shared interest, experience or demographic characteristic – i.e. young people, people with disabilities, working population, ethnic minorities or gay/lesbian/bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT).</p> <p><i>People can belong to more than one community. It is also worth noting that members of defined communities may not necessarily regard themselves as such and consideration must be given to this when approaching different 'communities of interest'.</i></p>
Community Empowerment	The term community empowerment refers to the development of strong, active and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face, and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. Community empowerment involves three essential elements: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs. Its practical process is community engagement.
Community Engagement	Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well being of those people. Consultation, involvement, participation and research are all terms that are regularly used, often interchangeably, to describe community engagement activities.
Community Development	Community Development is the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structures to

	remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. Community development is strongly influenced by values which include equality, accountability, choice, mutuality and continuous learning, community development practitioners are one of the basic support needs to harness community action (see above) .
Co-production	Co-production means designing and delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours.
Equalities	Elimination of all types of discrimination and giving equal access to services
Equalities Impact Assessment	An assessment tool designed to flag up any detrimental effect a policy or organisational function may have on specific equality target groups.
Focus Groups	A focus group is a group of people who have been brought together to discuss a particular subject in order to solve a problem or suggest ideas.
Hard to reach groups	is a widely recognised term to describe those groups or communities who experience social exclusion and are generally perceived by agencies as being difficult to access and are thus 'disempowered'. However, it is important to note that many of these communities are not actually that 'hard-to-reach' and do not consider themselves as such. It is simply that to date partners have not been successful in seeking their views.
Area Community Planning Groups	Each of the 4 administrative areas of Argyll and Bute has a range of Local Community Planning Groups, which brings together representatives from the Community Planning Partners to identify and address the needs and concerns of local areas at a local level. Area level groups monitor and review achievement of the local delivery of key outcomes identified in the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement by ensuring appropriate performance measures are in place. To support, and encourage effective collaboration and co-ordination between and within community based organisations operating in the local area. To give effect to the Community Engagement Strategy at a local level.
Local Action Plans	Local action plans result from a process of structured community engagement, undertaken by local people, with the aim of developing a comprehensive, shared vision for that community. The process of developing local action plans has grown and matured to be a powerful vehicle for community engagement that delivers huge rates of participation within communities.
Performance Indicators	Performance indicators are a set of standards which partnerships can use to measure performance over time.
Planning and Performance Framework	The systematic means of planning of the delivery of objectives, monitoring progress and amending actions where required to ensure outcomes are delivered
SOA – Single	The Single Outcome Agreement is an agreement between

Outcome Agreement	the Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government. The regulation of SOA's is set out within government guidance in a way that gives freedom and flexibility to local government to choose its own priorities and targets, including how success will be measured.
Social Enterprise	(see also: <i>Community Enterprises</i>) Social enterprises are enterprises with a primary social purpose. They have some form of social or community ownership structure and recycle surplus profits instead of paying out to shareholders or owners. Social enterprise is often seen as a way of supporting public service delivery through combining social aims with creating earned income, thereby generating financial sustainability.
Stakeholders	All organisations and individuals with an interest in a particular issue or service.
Third Sector	Third sector is the overarching term for organisations and groups that operate other than for private profit. In general, the sector is made up of voluntary and community organisations together with social enterprises and social firms. Charitable status is not a defining characteristic and the definition includes organisations that have registered as companies or are involved in campaigning and advocacy.
Tool-kit	Term used to describe a guidance document to help others implement actions.
Voluntary sector	Voluntary Sector is a generic term for the wide field of non-profit making organisations that operate across many different themes. The voluntary sector is generally considered to refer to larger more formal charities or organisations, rather than the smaller community sector organisations which tend to be place-based. Many national voluntary sector organisations and networks employ large numbers of staff and have significant turnover in either fundraising, endowments or earned income. At the other end of the scale, there are many self-help voluntary groups which share a common interest or cause and are largely run by volunteers