

Moray Community Planning Partnership

Community Engagement Strategy

1. PURPOSE

Community Planning is a process outlined in the Local Government Scotland Act 2003 which places a duty on local authorities to work with other public services to jointly co-ordinate and plan together with communities to deliver services which address inequality.

The Moray Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is the name given to the body in Moray which leads this with representatives from Highlands and Islands Enterprise • Highland and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) • Moray College UHI • NHS Grampian • Police Scotland • Scottish Fire and Rescue Service • Skills Development Scotland • **tsiMORAY**. The Moray Council (lead)

These bodies are known as the ‘partners’ and this strategy reaffirms their commitment to work together to support the development of strong and resilient communities in Moray which are able to influence decision making and take shared action to progress priorities.

2. Community Engagement

Community Engagement at its most basic is about involving people in decision making and trying to ensure that community perspectives shape and influence the way services are delivered. Consultation is therefore a part of community engagement but not an end in itself.

The National Standards for Community Engagement describe it as a “purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to help them to 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.”

Engagement is a long term process of building positive relationships with communities and organisations based on a shared understanding of local needs and priorities. When people feel they have more say and influence over things that are important to them then they also become better connected to others in their community and are more likely to become involved in civic and community groups. Collectively this increased connectedness builds what is known as ‘social capital’ – the networks and relationships that sustain and grow community.

In workshops with third sector and community partners the importance of relationship building was identified as being key – in line with the principles which underpin the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#). When this works well there is a synergy where partners and communities ‘join together where forces overlap’.¹



The key strategic driver for the CPP is the Local Outcome Improvement Plan known as the LOIP. The focus of the LOIP is to address inequalities, and this strategy supports that as it seeks to widen community involvement in decision making to ensure that a wider representation of community voices contribute to identifying and meeting local needs. The [Community Empowerment Act](#) is a key piece of legislation which states that partners will work together to ‘contribute appropriate resources to improve the priority outcomes’ in the LOIP.

¹ Feedback from stakeholder consultation jamboard discussion

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) also requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

This strategy therefore recognises the importance of effective community engagement for the design and delivery of the LOIP as well as its wider significance in enhancing democracy and ensuring that citizen voice is actively sought and supported across the CPP.

3. **Our Theory of Change**

Community Engagement is now a norm in public sector service delivery and should underpin our work in communities of place and with communities of interest. We believe that good community engagement leads to better outcomes for our communities because solutions are based on a shared understanding and have been influenced by the people who are experiencing the issues.

We believe that community engagement provides a means to ensure that public services are planned, developed and delivered in response to community needs and aspirations.

We know that community engagement can result in communities participating or taking a lead role in identifying and meeting their own needs and aspirations – and that often all our third sector and community partners want us to be is enablers in helping them develop local solutions. We also recognise that communities often initiate change themselves when they feel that there are gaps in public service delivery or in relation to specific local needs.

We believe that engagement is built on trust and is an ongoing process in which the various strengths and assets in communities and across public and private sector agencies are used effectively to deal with the issues communities face. We will not always get it right, but the intent and objective is to build positive relationships between communities and public sector bodies which build trust and make joint action possible.

We recognise the need to build a better infrastructure to co-ordinate and shape ongoing engagement with communities and will develop an action plan alongside this strategy.

Who is engaging?

In terms of the LOIP priorities, there is a further challenge around how effectively we engage and who we engage with.

The LOIP has a focus on geographic communities where people have been most affected by structural inequalities (New Elgin and Buckie) – and the challenge in this and **all our engagement** is to continue to find ways to increase participation and involvement and better represent the diversity of our local communities. People will engage when they are confident that the process leads to change in response to community needs.

One third sector partner identified the challenge as ‘...*how to meaningfully draw on community experience in Community Planning – how do we make it relevant and worth investing your time in?*’

There is an intersection between community engagement and inequality. Inequalities in health, wealth, income, education and so on, can be arguably seen as stemming from inequalities in power and influence. Therefore, community engagement processes can simply reproduce existing inequalities, unless they are designed and facilitated to distribute influence by ensuring diversity and inclusion.

[What Works Scotland](#)

4. AIMS

The specific aims for the Community Engagement strategy are to:

- ✓ Develop and support capacity in our communities to influence decisions making and participation in the design and delivery of services.
- ✓ Recognise the importance and value of community led responses - and the enabling role partners have when *invited to* provide support
- ✓ Involve those in our community who experience poorest outcomes or who may find it difficult to get involved;
- ✓ Drive the development and implementation of community engagement and participation;
- ✓ Promote the improvement and co-ordination of community engagement;
- ✓ Build a more detailed knowledge and understanding of experiences of living in Moray.
- ✓ Act as a framework to evaluate the impact of community engagement in Moray and to continually adapt and refine our processes to both enhance the quality of partner engagement and to ensure that communities have appropriate support when they want it to develop their own solutions

5. OBJECTIVES

We hope that by pursuing the aims above, we will achieve these outcomes:

Increased Participation and Community Involvement.

- ✓ More people in our communities are motivated to join in through excellent, well supported engagement activity;
- ✓ More of the people who experience the poorest outcomes take part or join the conversation;

Improved co-delivery of services.

- ✓ More of our activities, services and plans are influenced by the communities they serve;
- ✓ Our communities' ability to address their own needs and aspirations is improved and enabled by support from partners.

Enhanced Partnership Working

- ✓ We are more successful in developing a shared understanding between providers and communities that helps us to design the future together;
- ✓ The impact of community engagement is increased as a result of partners' co-ordinated approach.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

The LOIP is a ten year plan which seeks to address structural inequalities in Moray communities. It uses statistical data and other qualitative information to inform work in specific localities and also anticipates that partners take this into account when '*developing their corporate plans, strategies and policies whether on an individual partner or partnership basis*'.²

CPP partners have a particular focus on Buckie and New Elgin as the LOIP priority settlements and have followed a process built on...

² [From LOIP 2 – Our Area](#)

- i. Diagnosis – exploring needs based on statistical data and community perspectives
- ii. Community Strengths (Asset Based Approach) – working with communities to identify what is working well, what we can do more of and where there are gaps/opportunities to develop new solutions.
- iii. Develop Local Action Plans - Communities have reviewed their initial three year plan to inform the development and delivery of their next Plan – to run concurrently with this strategy.
- iv. The delivery element is the ongoing engagement with the community stakeholders to deliver on their stated priorities and the continued identification of new and emerging community needs and priorities.

These stages in locality based community engagement are transferrable and can inform all aspects of the work of partners.

7. GOVERNANCE

There is a need to refresh the Governance structure around community engagement to maximise the opportunities for community involvement in community planning and to make it easier for communities to make sense of the different planning processes within and across the CPP.

The Community Engagement Group (CEG) is a Partnership group of the Moray Community Planning partnership and has an overarching role in relation to the Empowering and Connecting Communities strand of the LOIP as well as a wider focus on promoting good community engagement in Moray.

The CEG will be chaired by a delegate from the community/third sector and facilitated with support from the CPP and will be a space where

- ✓ The needs and aspirations of communities of interest and place are represented
- ✓ Partners share and learn from good practice locally and elsewhere and foster a culture of continuous improvement to improve the quality of community engagement in Moray.
- ✓ Partners will be updated on progress with the LOIP work in Buckie and New Elgin, and respond to requests for support to progress work with those communities. Where appropriate the CEG will communicate the community perspective to key partners including the Community Planning Board.
- ✓ Partners will also discuss **wider community engagement processes in Moray** with a view to identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- ✓ Whilst there will be a core membership of the CEG attendance will be fluid to ensure that the most appropriate community delegates are able to contribute to discussions and actions as appropriate.
- ✓ A fit for purpose Community Engagement online space will be created by partners and will become a one stop shop for information relating to community consultation and engagement in Moray. This space will be a repository of information which will be accessible to partners and the wider public.

8. HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THINGS ARE WORKING?

We will review the outcome of our engagement and take account of feedback on an ongoing basis to ensure we develop and enhance future community engagement activity based on experience.

We will know we have been successful if:

- There is an increase in the number and diversity of people in our communities participating in engagement activities.
- Partners can evidence more involvement and engagement from people who experience the poorest outcomes or who may find it difficult to get involved
- The design or delivery of more of our activities, services and plans change as a result of engagement with the communities they serve
- There is evidence that more communities instigate action to identify and address their own needs and aspirations.
- More people in our communities can explain the challenges, issues and options for providers and communities to work on together
- Moray reports an increase in the percentage of residents who respond positively to the statement *"I can influence decisions affecting my local area"* in the Scottish Household Survey

DATE OF AGREEMENT (

First year monitoring (1 year from agreement)

Planned Review Date (3 years from agreement)