

# Top Tips for Positive Engagement

*This resource has been developed by the Aberdeen Equalities Participation Network, to improve communication and engagement with equality-related groups and organisations in the City.*

## Be Accessible

**Make sure communities know how and where to access the information they need.**

Advertise in as many locations as possible, and speak with community groups so everyone knows what you're offering and where.

**Provide different ways to get information and ask questions. Not everyone uses the internet.**

Use leaflets or posters to get the word out, and provide a phone number for questions. Ideally, there should also be a way to speak in person.

**Keep public information up to date, using multiple formats for accessibility.**

Written information should have versions in different languages, large text and easy read. Video is a great way to communicate with people who find reading difficult. It should have subtitles, with BSL and other languages if possible.

**Keep it simple!**

Use plain language, suitable for people without specialist knowledge. Avoid jargon, acronyms, 'business speak' and complicated sentences.

## Reach Out to Communities

**Go to the source.**

When making policies or decisions that affect 'seldom heard' communities, it's important to speak to the people themselves (and sometimes to organisations who work with those people).

**Don't waste people's time.**

Is your question or project relevant for a specific community? Will engagement lead to meaningful change? If change is unlikely, or you're seeking support for the status quo, reconsider whether community engagement is worthwhile.

## Forge Relationships

**Think about why you're contacting a group.**

What's the objective? Do you want feedback on your services? Participation in an event? Help developing a new policy? Be clear about what you need from people, and why it's relevant for them.

**Start early in the process, not as a 'tick-box' at the end. Avoid tokenism.**

Where possible, invite people to be involved at all stages, and ensure a diversity of perspectives are included – one community member is not enough.

**Ask people how they want to be involved, and what would make participation easier for them.**

For example, interpreters or childcare may be required, and certain meeting times, places or formats will work better than others.

**Have realistic expectations.**

Don't expect the group to have all the answers or do the work for you. Seek 'partners not donkeys.'

**Treat everyone with dignity and respect.**

Take a culturally aware approach, and avoid being patronising, paternalistic, or judgemental.

**Ensure people feel genuinely listened to.**

Try to understand context and background, and remember that everyone is the expert on their own life. Avoid talking down to people.

**Be aware of power dynamics.**

Ensure people have real power in the discussion, take their views seriously, and make the process worthwhile for everyone.

**Keep in touch.**

(Not just when you want something.) Make sure to follow-up and tell folk what's happening.