

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

HELPING TO BUILD POSITIVE COMMUNITIES

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Sacro aims to make communities safer by providing a range of effective services across Scotland to reduce conflict and offending and by influencing criminal justice and social policy.

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Introduction

This guide is the last in a series of six covering a range of issues related to the setting up and running of community mediation services for the resolution of neighbour disputes. The first five Sacro guides in this series describe the valuable role Community Mediation can play in housing management, models of service delivery, ways of establishing good practice, and measuring service effectiveness, as well as exploring casework strategies: this guide will describe the wider potential community mediation has for assisting in the development of strong, positive communities.

The Sacro guides are part of a broader initiative by Sacro and the Scottish Executive to assist social housing providers in developing the provision of mediation across Scotland to assist in meeting this challenge. All services offered under this initiative are free to Local Authorities and Housing Associations/Co-ops, and include the following:

- Assistance to individual local authorities in identifying appropriate models and levels of delivery for community mediation in their area.
- Assistance in establishing procedures, service standards and quality control measures.
- Hosting of regional seminars on community mediation.
- Provision of training in mediation awareness and mediation skills for local authority and housing association staff.
- Production of a series of 'Good Practice' manuals on a range of issues relating to community mediation services (e.g. "Choosing A Model Of Service Delivery", "Community Mediation: Ensuring Good Practice").

As a provider of direct mediation services and training and consultancy on Community Mediation, Youth Mediation and Mediation and Reparation, Sacro is committed to making communities safer by promoting and developing the provision of alternative methods of dispute resolution. We are grateful to the Scottish Executive for enabling us to extend this work.

1. What Is Mediation?

Conflicts arise in all aspects of our lives and can be resolved in a variety of different ways, both formal and informal. We are all familiar with formal methods of conflict resolution such as those provided by civil and criminal law, and we are all practiced in the use of informal techniques such as negotiation and bargaining. Some types of dispute, however, are not easy to resolve satisfactorily through the courts but at the same time seem difficult for the people involved in the conflict to be able to resolve themselves. Mediation is aimed at assisting in the resolution of such disputes through a process of skilled and principled intervention. As a process, however, it differs from other methods of dispute resolution in some very important respects:

- Mediators are neutral – rather than representing the interests of one party they are there to help both parties reach a mutually agreed settlement.
- The mediation process gives both parties the opportunity to be fully heard, and to hear (often for the first time) the other side of the story.
- Mediators do not pass judgement or impose solutions – the parties to a dispute are encouraged to find their own practical solutions, although mediators will assist in exploring issues and in communication. In short, the mediators focus on the process, and the disputants decide the outcome.
- The dispute is not aired in public – mediation is a private process involving only the mediators and the parties to the dispute, and mediators act under a detailed policy of confidentiality.
- An important part of the mediator's job is to assist in identifying and resolving the underlying causes of a conflict as well as the symptoms – this means that any agreements reached are more likely to lead to long-term solutions
- While mediation usually involves discussion of issues around past events, its main focus is on what is going to happen and how people will behave towards one another in the future.
- Because mediation is informal it can be a quick and comparatively cheap method of resolving disputes. Most services offered by most community mediation organisations are free to individuals.

The use of mediation in the UK is growing rapidly, both in volume of cases and in the number of contexts where it is being applied. The following are some of the main fields of mediation:

Community Mediation - community based conflicts such as neighbour or neighbourhood disputes. This is described in more detail in section 3.

Commercial Mediation – disputes between companies or between individuals and companies over contracts, services etc.

Family Mediation – disputes around the care, custody and access of children where parents are separating.

Peer Mediation – school-based conflicts between children.

Workplace Mediation – conflicts between individual employees.

Mediation is also increasingly being applied in environmental disputes, in the National Health Service, between young homeless people and their families, in organisational complaints procedures, and in a wide range of other situations.

2. Community Mediation

Community mediation is now a widespread and well-established tool for neighbourhood dispute resolution, with hundreds of community mediation centres operating both in the UK and the rest of the world. In Scotland alone, thousands of neighbour disputes have been handled by mediators, most involving two sets of neighbours, but some involving whole neighbourhoods of fifty to a hundred or more households. Community mediation has its own code of best practice developed by the umbrella body Mediation UK (see p), a

How Does Community Mediation Work?

Mediation services will differ in the detail of their practice, but the majority will have a process similar to the one outlined below:

- a) Referrals are taken from the Police; Housing Dept, Environmental Services and a range of other agencies or from people directly involved in disputes themselves. Services usually only need one party in the dispute to agree to try mediation – it is part of the mediator's job to persuade the other party that it is in their interests to participate.
- b) Two mediators then visit one of the parties to the dispute in their home (usually the person who has initiated a complaint), and will explain what mediation involves. They will listen to the first party's description of the dispute, including its origins, the current situation, how they feel about it, what they would like to see happen, and whether they would be prepared to meet the other neighbour in a mediation meeting.
- c) With the first party's permission, the mediators will then visit the second party to the dispute and follow the same procedure. If the second party is also willing to meet, a mediation meeting will be arranged at a neutral venue. If face-to-face work is not appropriate, techniques such as shuttle diplomacy

and exploring strategies for negotiation will be used. Many disputes are settled at this point, without proceeding to a mediation meeting.

- d) The mediation meeting follows a set formula, which includes making sure that everyone has their say, and that the real causes of the dispute are discussed. Firstly, an opening statement is made, describing the purpose and structure of the session, and agreeing behavioural ground rules. Both parties will then in turn be given a period of uninterrupted time to state what has been happening, how it is affecting them, and how it feels. Following this, there is an open exchange where the mediator will help to distinguish the real points at issue, find points of agreement and build on them, and finally help to draw up a detailed agreement as to how both sides will act in the future.

3. The Limits Of Individual Casework

As a tool for intervention in situations of individual conflict, mediation can uncover practical solutions, demonstrate more positive forms of communication, reframe contentious issues into shared problems, and often give disputants a different perspective on the actions of themselves and their immediate neighbours. This in itself will have an impact on the general well being of communities – less individual conflict means more energy is available for other things, as people who are under the immediate pressure of such conflicts are often unlikely to be able to look further than their back fence. In recent years, however, Scottish community mediation services have increasingly realised that individual casework is only a part of the answer to the incidence of destructive conflict in our communities, and can very often get bogged down in treating the symptoms rather than the causes. For people with little power or status, living in poverty and in poor housing conditions, the problem with their neighbour may be low in their list of priorities, something they can afford to expend only limited energy on. Of course the dispute may exacerbate their other problems considerably, but its resolution is unlikely to remove them. In such situations mediation can play a useful, if limited, role given the opportunity, but it should surprise no one if the disputants are unable to summon the considerable effort involved in constructively resolving the dispute.

There is a further point requiring serious consideration. Some critics of community mediation have accused the process of failing to right injustices by perpetuating the status quo. In this argument community mediation is seen as being an instrument by which the oppressed are encouraged to accept situations which should not be tolerated, and to come up with compromises which simply serve to legitimise power imbalances. In the case of council tenants on an estate where the soundproofing is completely inadequate, these critics would hold that to assist neighbours to come to agreement about their respective levels of living noise is not only failing to identify and deal with the real problem, it is hindering any effective action by focussing the issue on the behaviour of the individuals rather than the responsibilities of the landlord. One counter to this argument is, of course, the one previously mentioned - less individual conflict means more

energy is available for other things, as people who are under the immediate pressure of unresolved conflicts are often unlikely to be able to look further than their back fence. It can be argued, however, that this only frees community mediation from part of the criticism – as long as mediation focuses exclusively on individual issues, it can not be said to be assisting in the development of strong, positive and equitable communities.

4. Is Mediation Concerned With Changing Communities?

Should community mediators be assisting in the development of strong, positive and equitable communities? Mediation is sometimes viewed as a completely neutral process, unaffected by either the beliefs of the mediator or those held by the disputants. Similarly, it is sometimes stated to have no interest in or views on the agreements reached by people in conflict, and some mediators hold that consideration of the justice or injustice, equity or inequity of agreements, is an issue solely for the disputants.

This assumption of absolute neutrality is, however, refuted by many mediators within the field of community mediation, and particularly by many organisations in the field. All organisations work within a system of values, whether explicit or implicit, and it is essential for organisations which serve the public to be clear and open about what values they are committed to. In their Practice Standards for mediation services, Mediation UK describes a set of values and principles it considers to be essential for any mediation service:

Mediation Services are expected to:

Ensure and preserve the neutrality of their mediators regarding the objectives and outcomes of all mediation cases.

Be independent in management and operation or have a strategy to counter the potential influence of a managing or funding agency which might have a stake in the outcomes of specific mediations and threaten the impartial nature of mediation.

Maintain a confidential mediation service in line with management policy, procedures and legal obligations.

Ensure that all activities are free from unfair discrimination and are governed by principles of equal opportunity, with referral criteria that give equal access to mediation for all who come within that service's remit.

Respect and care for all workers, whether paid or voluntary, valuing the contribution of volunteers and not exploiting them.

Be accountable to all who have an investment in the service and continually seek to improve the service offered to clients.

It is possible, though, to develop a broader set of organisational values from which clear operating principles can be derived, and several mediation organisations have done so. Sacro's organisational values as stated in its Strategic Plan and elsewhere are as follows:

- a) Mutual Respect
- b) Equality of Opportunity
- c) Maximising Potential for self-determination

From these general values a further group of more specific values have been developed for the organisation's mediation services:

- Positive and non-violent resolution of conflict.
- Viewing conflict as an opportunity for growth.
- Minimising unproductive conflict.
- Promoting outcomes which do not unreasonably favour one party.
 - Believing in everyone's potential to grow and to change.

These more specific values have been used to develop a description of how Sacro views the role of community mediation in communities, and what the parameters are for the ethical use of mediation.

Sacro MEDIATION SERVICES

Sacro is committed to helping people resolve conflicts peacefully through the process of mediation. We believe that, with support, everyone has the ability to act positively, learn from situations, and grow as a result of their experience. Mediation provides an opportunity for conflict to be a positive force for change, to help people take more control over their lives, and to take responsibility for their own actions. In order to allow this process to happen, we will treat clients with respect at all times, value diversity in people, and counter prejudice wherever possible.

We believe mediation to be a powerful tool which is applicable in a wide range of settings, and which may have no absolute limits in the intensity or complexity of conflicts it can resolve. We are also committed to the principle that participation in the process of mediation should be based on an informed, voluntary choice by all parties concerned. There are, therefore, situations where we believe it is not ethical to use mediation, and where Sacro projects would refer people in conflict to other, more appropriate means of resolution. These are as follows:

- a) *Where participants in mediation have been have been coerced into taking part.*
- b) *Where there is a critical power imbalance between the parties.*
- c) *Where participants are not capable of making an informed choice either to participate or to enter into agreements.*
- d) *Where there is sustained and intractable prejudice.*

For some Community Mediation services at least, then, strengthening and changing communities is central to their aims. This involves working within and seeking to propagate particular ethical frameworks and in this sense the concept of mediator neutrality must be modified. These services would argue that no conflict exists between the following two aims:

- 1) To advocate for the development of more harmonious and equitable communities.
- 2) To assist in the resolution of individual disputes while strictly avoiding advocating for the position of either side.

This position, which can be described as seeking to strengthen self-determination within the bounds of a specific ethical framework, will inevitably lead to major differences between “ethically-based” and “neutral” services. This can most clearly be illustrated in the context of racism. Sacro services operate under a policy on prejudice which instructs mediators to behave as follows:

- 3) *Conscious, deliberate prejudice - people should be warned that this is unacceptable, and if they persist, you should withdraw from the case.*
- 4) *Behaviour calculated to incite racial hatred (e.g. distributing racist literature) - this should be reported to the police, as should behaviour such as physical assault, intimidation and harassment.*

It is therefore clear that there are limitations to the forms of behaviour that Sacro mediators are prepared to be “neutral” about, and that if these limitations are transgressed mediators are expected to criticize and even initiate sanctions. For mediators and mediation services who espouse a strictly “neutral” approach, there can presumably be no question of criticism or sanction for either party – the role of the mediator is simply to assist in the achievement of a workable agreement between the party displaying prejudice and the party experiencing it. This position has inevitably led to criticism that mediation as a form of social intervention simply upholds and condones structural inequalities in society. As community mediation continues to develop, it is likely that these opposing views will take centre-stage. What is apparent, however, is that community development is likely to be of most relevance and interest to mediation services who act within stated ethical frameworks.

5. What Is Community Development

Before we go on to examine ways in which mediation can assist communities, it will be helpful to look at some definitions of community development and the underlying principles. The following definition is that of the Community Development Foundation:

Community development is a range of practices dedicated to increasing the strength and effectiveness of community life, improving local conditions, especially for people in disadvantaged situations, and enabling people to participate in public decision-making and to achieve greater long-term control over their circumstances.

Community life means activities undertaken voluntarily by people pursuing common interests, improving shared conditions or representing joint concerns. These activities often take place locally, but may equally happen through different types of common interest, need or identity such as ethnicity, age, gender, faith or any other that people think are important.

What is immediately clear is that, like mediation, community development is crucially and primarily aimed at effecting change. The focus is significantly wider, specifying targets such as improved physical conditions, but there is nothing that many community mediation services would disagree with and much that is shared.

6. How Does Community Development Work?

The following is similarly taken from the Community Development Foundation:



The cycle of change: input, process, output and outcome

As with any other planned activity, community development is a planned process of change, which draws on certain inputs with a view to achieving expected outputs and outcomes. In community development, inputs include the material resources of grants, premises, equipment and people. Less obviously, they also include human resources of energy, motivation, time and commitment. Also the policies of government and other agencies which locate and define the work are significant. All these inputs may be found within communities, and in the organisations working in or with them. Processes in community development are the ways in which the inputs are used to lead towards outcomes. They may include developing individual and organisational capacity, providing advice and support, encouraging reflection and planning, assessing power relationships and helping develop strategic thinking. Much of this is the bread and butter of community work. In the ABCD model these processes are summarised as community empowerment. These processes may lead to outputs, such as communities with greater knowledge and skill, resources for childcare, or stronger organisations. These outputs (which can be controlled by the community development agency) can lead to wider outcomes, such as a safer community, or changes in housing policy. Outcomes are not in the direct control of the CD agency, but are part of the vision of a better quality of life which the community has defined. The cycle of input - process - output - outcome can operate on short and long-term timescales.

This diagram above sets out the key relationships in the ABCD model. Along the bottom are the four dimensions of community empowerment which, the model insists must be built into any community development activity, whether with groups of interest and identity, or with communities of place:

- personal empowerment, in other words individual learning, knowledge, confidence and skill
- positive action, or specific work to identify and involve groups excluded by poverty, health, race, gender or disability, and to challenge established power structures

- community organisation, which includes general activity in the community, the range, quality and effectiveness of community based groups and organisations, and the nature and quality of their relationships with each other and the wider world
- participation and influence, through which change in the circumstances of community life are achieved

In the centre of the diagram are the contexts within which change takes place. Government and local government agencies, as well as companies and parts of the voluntary Sector are responsible for policy, management and service delivery in the social, economic and environmental areas. Community development asks them to engage with communities in accordance with the dimensions of community empowerment, in order to work collaboratively towards the outcomes of sustainability, liveability and equitability.

The diagram offers a framework within which all stakeholders in the community development process can locate themselves, and identify the relationships which should be built to achieve change.

7. The Contribution Of Community Mediation

7.1 The Four Dimensions Of Community Empowerment

Which dimensions of the change process are mediation services best equipped to contribute to? On the face of it, there is potential for contributing to all four dimensions: many community mediation services are, after all, located within disadvantaged communities, use local mediators, have policy shaped by local people, and by the very nature of their work are familiar with the power balances (and imbalances) that operate within these communities. It can be argued, however, that special circumstances pertain here, both due to the specific nature of their area of specialisation and expertise, and in consideration of the way community mediation services require to be viewed by communities if they are to be seen to be capable of acting to intervene ethically in situations of local conflict. This may particularly be the case in terms of positive action on behalf of groups who lack power or are discriminated against. Activities such as direct campaigning to challenge established power structures and to improve the position of disadvantaged groups are necessary to effect the types of change inherent in community development – examples would include campaigns against extortionate credit or to improve local disabled access to public buildings

– but are likely to be more effectively carried out by groups whose reputation and expertise lie in these areas. Importantly, such groups are also able to conduct these activities without compromising their ability to make mediation interventions such as, where appropriate, mediating between campaigning groups and public authorities.

Similarly, for community mediation services to effect change through participation and influence in the public arena has a potential for jeopardising public perceptions of their ability to mediate between different interest groups or local organisations. It may, for instance, be more appropriate for a local mediation service to assist tenants in identifying lack of adequate soundproofing as a cause of stress and conflict than to openly pressurise a local social landlord into effective measures.

It can be argued, then, that the most appropriate dimensions of community empowerment for community mediation services to focus their energy on are personal empowerment and community organisation.

7.2 Personal Empowerment

Community mediation is, of course, frequently described by its proponents as being primarily concerned with personal empowerment. The following quotes from users of East Lothian Community Mediation Service are not unusual:

'I found that having mediators involved and facing my neighbour gave me the confidence to say exactly what I felt.'

'The mediator made me feel like an individual and made me feel comfortable about myself.'

Mediators are divided about whether the main purpose of mediation interventions should be to assist clients in reaching solutions (the resolution model) or to assist clients to transform their way of thinking about conflict (the transformative model).

Supporters of both models, however, agree that going through the mediation process often prompts personal change, and will readily quote examples. A quantification of the extent and the nature of this change is a possible future research topic of great potential value.

There are other ways in which mediation services can assist to empower individuals within communities. As has already been stated, many services train local people to act as mediators: this training is intensive and typically involves trainees examining their values/ethical base and undertaking a number of exercises aimed at boosting self confidence and awareness. This training has also been adapted by services to run open training events for local people on dealing with conflict in their own lives.

7.3 Community Organisation

Broader development in the community can also be effectively assisted by community mediation services through working with local organisations to reduce unproductive conflict and increase co-operative working. Mediation is increasingly being used in Scotland to assist organisations and groups within the

community in the resolution of conflicts both internally and externally driven. The following are a small number of examples of this type of work:

- Assistance to resolve a conflict between a traveller community and a local authority.
- Assistance to repair relationships between a sexual health support group and its clients.
- Assistance to resolve conflict between younger families and older residents in a housing estate.
- Assistance to repair internal divisions within a community school.
- Assistance to resolve issues between an entertainment promoter and a residents' association.

As not-for-profit organisations continue to play an increasing part in public life and decision-making, and particularly in service provision, there is clearly considerable scope for growth in this area of activity. An example of the prominence currently being given to this area is the establishment in England and Wales of a mediation scheme specifically aimed at assisting charities in dispute, administered by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

8. Possible Areas Of Activity

8.1 General

Below are listed some of the areas where community mediation services who have an interest in community development should consider developing initiatives. It is by no means an exhaustive list and it is recognised that, for services to engage with any of these interventions, both resources and training may be required – contact Sacro's Community Mediation Consultancy and Training Service for assistance and further contacts.

8.2 Personal Empowerment (Work With Individuals)

- a) Direct training of local people in general conflict resolution skills.
- b) Direct training of local people in community mediation.
- c) Collaboration with local further education establishments in establishing conflict resolution courses, including distance learning packages and evening classes.
- d) Input on conflict resolution skills in local school curriculums
- e) Articles in local media on conflict resolution in everyday life
- f) Local advertising campaign on the benefits of constructive conflict resolution
- g) Provision of resource packs for adults on strategies/resources to deal constructively with interpersonal conflict

- h) Provision of resource packs for schoolchildren on strategies/resources to deal constructively with interpersonal conflict
- i) Training of representatives of public agencies to increase ability to intervene and defuse potentially destructive conflict situations (e.g. community wardens, community workers, leisure centre staff)
- j) Collaboration with police in providing “quick track” conflict resolution service where enforcement is not appropriate (e.g. street mediation service)

8.3 Community Organisation (Work With Groups)

- a) General “group mediation” service to groups/organisations in the community (both statutory and non-statutory) who are experiencing conflict between each other.
- b) General “group mediation” service to groups/organisations in the community (both statutory and non-statutory) who are experiencing internal conflict.
- c) Short training programmes for committees/boards etc on constructive conflict resolution in group/organisational settings.
- d) Collaboration with other relevant local agencies (e.g. Community Education, Councils for Voluntary Organisations, Tenants Federations, Councils for Racial Equality) in devising community capacity building strategies and structures for collaborative community decision making.
- e) Input into local authority and other statutory planning procedures e.g. Community Planning/Community Safety strategies.
- f) Engaging in proactive work in the community (including arts-based approaches) to increase understanding between groups (e.g. intergenerational, interfaith, interracial).

9. Future Developments?

It is clear from all of the above that community mediation services have at least a potential role in the wider development of communities, particularly in terms of personal empowerment and community organisation, and that such activity is likely to be congruent with the ethics and values of many services. Indeed, it has also been argued that community mediation services who target their activities solely on resolution of individual conflicts may in effect be perpetuating or even strengthening structural injustices.

Many services already play a wider role in their communities, and recent trends in partnership working and inter-agency initiatives are likely to further encourage such developmental perspectives. Some possible short to medium term possibilities have already been listed above, but what is the longer-term future for

community mediation services in terms of community development? Two distinct and divergent futures can be anticipated:

- a) Community mediation services will routinely be used as a specialist resource for communities and community agencies, called in to use their professional skills to help resolve conflicts and promote positive conflict resolution in all walks of life.
- b) As community mediation and conflict resolution skills spread within the community and conflict resolution becomes a basic social skill, taught in schools and elsewhere, the services of professional mediators will become less and less necessary for communities.

This tension is, of course, one which is to some extent present for any activity with a primarily developmental or educative aim, and the second outcome is clearly an ideal one in terms of community development aims and principles. This however is the very long perspective, and in the meantime community mediation services should be encouraged to widen the scope of their community interventions as far as possible, and local communities should be encouraged to maximise their use of them.

Further Assistance

Where Can I Find Out More?

For information on the free services offered to social housing providers in Scotland contact:

Sacro

Scottish Community Mediation Centre

29 Albany Street

Edinburgh EH1 3QN

Tel. 0131 624 9200

Fax: 0131 624 7269

Email info@cmconsultancy.sacro.org.uk

For information on all forms of mediation and training providers in Scotland, contact:

Scottish Mediation Network

18 York Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EP

Tel: 0131 556 1221

Email info@scottishmediation.org.uk

Community Mediation Services In Scotland

UPDATE

The following are the services we are aware of currently operating in Scotland, although at the time of publication a number of additional services were at the planning stage:

Aberdeen Community Mediation
18 Little Belmont Street, Aberdeen AB1 1JG
Tel. 01224 – 627201

East Lothian Community Mediation , Port Seton Community Centre
South Seton Park, Port Seton EH32 0BQ
Tel. 01875 - 815503

Edinburgh Community Mediation
27 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3HP
Tel. 0131– 557-2101

Falkirk Mediation Service
4 Orchard Street, Falkirk FK1 1RF
Tel. 01324 – 503700

Fife Community Mediation
24 Hill Street, Kirkcaldy KY1 1HX
Tel. 01592 - 597063

Orkney Resource Project
4b Laing Street, Kirkwall KW15 1NW
Tel. 01856 – 875815

Scottish Borders Mediation Service
Housing Dept, Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA
Tel. 01835 – 824000

South Lanarkshire Mediation Service
Brandon Gate, 1 Leechlee Road, Hamilton ML3 0XB
Tel. 01698 - 452773

Stirling Council Mediation Service
Community Services, Viewforth, Stirling FK8 2ET
Tel. 01786 - 443087

**Scottish Community Development Centre
Standards For Community Engagement**

1. Involvement

Parties with an interest in the subject of engagement are identified and involved.

1.1 All groups of people whose interests are affected by the issues that the engagement will address are represented

1.2 Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people who experience barriers to participation

1.3 Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people from groups that are affected but not yet organised to participate

1.4 The people who are involved, whether from agencies or community groups:

- Want to be involved
- Have knowledge of the issues
- Have skills, or a commitment to developing skills, to play their role
- Show commitment to taking part in discussion, decisions and actions
- Attend consistently
- Have the authority of those they represent to take decisions and actions
- Have legitimacy in the eyes of those they represent
- Maintain a continuing dialogue with those that they represent

2. Planning

Evidence of need and resources is used to agree purposes and actions

2.1 All parties are involved from the start in:

- identifying and defining the issues that the engagement should address, and the options for tackling them
- choosing the methods of engagement that will be used (see standard 4)

2.2 Participants express views openly and honestly

2.3 Participants agree the amount of time to be allocated to the process of setting the purpose/s of the engagement

2.4 The purpose of engagement in relation to the evidenced need/s is identified and stated, agreed by all participants and communicated to the wider community and agencies that may be affected

2.5 Public policies that impact on the engagement are explained to the satisfaction of the participants and the wider community

2.6 Participants identify existing and potential resources available to the engagement process and to achieving its purpose/s (for example money, people, equipment)

2.7 Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are agreed and recorded

2.8 The participants assess the constraints, challenges and opportunities that will be involved in implementing the plan

2.9 The participants agree the timescales for the achievement of the purpose/s

2.10 The participants agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the purpose/s

2.11 Plans are reviewed and adjusted in the light of evaluation of performance (see standard 10)

3. Support

Support needs of the participants will be identified and met.

3.1 The participants identify what support each representative needs to participate

3.2 There are no practical barriers to participants in community engagement. Where needed, they should have:

- suitable transport
- care of dependants
- general assistance
- personal assistants
- access to premises
- communication aids (loop systems, interpreting, advocacy)
- meetings organised at appropriate times
- co-operation of employers

3.3 There are no financial barriers to participants in community engagement including:

- out of pocket expenses
- loss of earnings
- suitable transport
- care of dependents
- personal assistants
- communication aids (loop systems, interpreting, advocates)
- timing of meetings

3.4 Community and agency representatives have access to equipment they need (for example computers, telephone, photocopying)

3.5 Impartial professional community development support is available to groups involved in community engagement

3.6 Specialist professional advice is available to groups involved in community engagement

4. Methods of engagement

Methods of engagement are identified and agreed.

4.1 The range of methods used is:

- acceptable to the participants
- suitable for all their needs and their circumstances
- appropriate for the purposes of the engagement

4.2 Methods used identify, involve and support excluded groups

4.3 Methods are chosen to enable diverse views to be expressed, and to help resolve any conflicts of interest

4.4 Methods are fully explained and applied with the understanding and agreement of all participants

4.5 Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration has produced a 'How to Guide' on methods of community engagement that is available at:

www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

5. Working together

Procedures for how the parties will work with one another are agreed and implemented.

The parties:

5.1 Behave openly and honestly – there are no hidden agendas, but participants also respect confidentiality

5.2 Behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and nondiscriminatory manner

5.3 Recognise participants' time and other commitments

5.4 Encourage inclusion and openness by:

- Communicating with one another using plain language
- Ensuring that all participants are given equal opportunity to engage and have their knowledge and views taken into account when taking decisions
- Seeking, listening to and reflecting on the views of different individuals and organisations, taking account of minority views
- removing barriers to participation

5.5 Take decisions on the basis of shared knowledge

5.6 Identify and discuss opportunities and strategies for achieving change, ensuring that:

- key points are summarised, agreed and progressed
- conflicts are recognised and addressed

5.7 Manage change effectively by:

- focusing on agreed purpose
- clarifying roles and responsibilities for agreed actions
- delegating actions to those best equipped to carry them through
- ensuring participants are clear about the decisions that need to be made

- ensuring that, where necessary, all parties have time to consult with those they represent
- co-ordinating skills
- enhancing skills where necessary
- agreeing schedules
- assessing risks
- addressing conflicts
- monitoring progress
- learning from one another
- seeking continuous improvement in practice

5.8 Use resources efficiently, effectively and fairly

5.9 Support the process with administrative arrangements that enable the structure to work

6. Sharing information between the participants

Agreement is reached and implemented about how information will be communicated between the participants.

6.1 Information relevant to the engagement is shared between all parties

6.2 Information is accessible, clear, understandable and relevant, with key points summarised

6.3 Information is made available in appropriate formats for its users

6.4 Information is made available in time to enable people to fully participate and consult others

6.5 All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted

6.6 Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to all information that is relevant to the community engagement

7. Working with others

Agreement is reached and implemented about how the participants will work with others.

The parties to the engagement:

7.1 Identify other structures, organisations and activities that are relevant to their work

7.2 Establish and maintain effective links with such other structures, activities and organisations

7.3 Learn about these structures, activities and organisations, to avoid duplication of their work and complement it wherever possible

7.4 Learn from others and seek improvement in practice

7.5 Encourage effective community engagement as normal practice

8. Improvement

Skills, knowledge and confidence of the participants are developed.

8.1 All parties to the engagement process are committed to maximising the understanding and competence of community and agency participants

8.2 All participants have access to support and opportunities for training or reflection on experience to enable them and others to participate in an effective, fair and inclusive way and meet the standards set out in this document

8.3 Each party identifies its own learning and development needs and together the participants regularly review their ability to play their roles

8.4 Where needs are identified, potential of the participants is developed and promoted

8.5 The competence and understanding of the engagement system as a whole is regularly evaluated by the participants as it develops

8.6 Resources, including independent professional support, are made available to maximise the competence and understanding of individual participants and the engagement system as a whole

8.7 There is adequate time for competence and understanding to be developed

8.8 Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose

8.9 Participants share their skills, experience and knowledge with community and agency colleagues

9. Feedback to those who are affected

Results are fed back to the wider community and agencies affected.

9.1 Organisers of community engagement regularly feed back, to all those affected, the options that have been considered and the decisions and actions that have been agreed. This is done within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source

9.2 Feedback is provided regularly to communities and organisations on the outcomes and impact of these decisions and actions, within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source

9.3 Explanations as to why decisions and actions have been taken are shared along with details of any future activity

9.4 The characteristics of the audience are identified to ensure that

- o Relevant information is provided using understandable language
- o A suitable range of media and channels is used constructively to reach them

9.5 Information identifies opportunities for involvement in community engagement and encourages positive contributions from groups in the community

9.6 Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes

10. Monitoring and evaluation

Performance of the engagement is monitored and evaluated.

10.1 The engagement process and its effects are continually evaluated to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices

10.2 Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants (see standard 2.7)

10.3 The participants agree what information needs to be collected, how, when and by whom, to understand the situation at the start of the engagement and as it progresses

10.4 Relevant participants collect and record this information

10.5 The information is presented in a user friendly and accurate way

10.6 The participants agree the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results and changes

10.7 The participants act on the lessons learned

10.8 Progress is celebrated

10.9 The results of the evaluation are fed back to the participants and the wider community

10.10 Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other agencies and communities