



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. What we are trying to achieve through *public engagement*

The County Council recognises that local people should be involved in decisions about public services and policies that affect their lives. We aim to:

- keep people well-informed about our services and policies
- listen and respond to people's views and concerns through consultation
- engage people in decisions about changes to our services and policies
- improve our accessibility and accountability to local people, and
- build trust

Through public engagement we look for the following benefits:

- early warning of potential consequences of a decision
- the wisdom of a wide range of people, including stakeholders
- new ideas and solutions
- an understanding of the range and strength of opinions
- an understanding of what the people of Nottinghamshire want from their county council
- opportunities for people to share different viewpoints
- opportunities for people who are affected by a proposal to express their views
- the chance to balance a range of perspectives
- improved decision-making processes and better decisions
- better public understanding of an issue
- greater public ownership of decisions
- more trust in decision-makers
- greater legitimacy and sustainability of decisions
- a greater sense of citizenship
- increased participation in local democratic processes.

2. Public engagement values ¹

Professional standards around public participation have been defined by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). We propose to use seven core values which closely reflect those defined by IAP2 to underpin our public engagement work:

1. The public should have a say in decisions that affect their lives
2. Public participation should include an intention that the public's contribution will influence the decision

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3. The process used should reflect the level of public concern and the public's preference about the way it is engaged
4. The process should ensure that people affected are helped to be involved
5. Participants should be involved in defining how they should participate
6. The process should include providing people with all the information they need to participate fully
7. The process should inform people about how their input affected the decision.

3. When we will engage the public

We will engage the public:

- ❖ When considering options for a decision that will have a significant or widespread impact
- ❖ Before deciding to make a significant change to a County Council policy
- ❖ Before setting the County Council budget
- ❖ When we are required by law to consult
- ❖ To listen to feedback about our services, performance and approach and to inform decisions we make about the way they are run and improved
- ❖ To improve the way we scrutinise decisions services and policies which affect people in Nottinghamshire

4. How we will engage the public

We will plan, prepare and carry out public engagement by:

1. clearly defining the issue or decision involved
2. determining the **level of public engagement** we are seeking and making it explicit
3. choosing appropriate **techniques** and ensuring that our approach is proportionate to the scale and impact of the issue or decision, is carried out in the most sustainable and inclusive way possible and at a reasonable cost
4. identifying opportunities to combine our consultation with that of other partners where possible
5. checking that all of our public engagement activities will meet our standards *before* they are carried out
6. publishing our public engagement plans so our activities are open and visible
7. reporting back on the results of our engagement as part of the decision-making process
8. being clear about how we have taken account of the outcomes of public engagement in making a decision
9. publishing our decision and providing feedback to members of the public in ways which they prefer.

In making our commitment to provide feedback, we recognise that this is critical to build trust and maintain integrity in the way we engage the public.

5. Who we will engage

In planning public engagement we will take account of the impact of any decision or issue on:

- ***the public***
- ***service users and people who might become service users***
- ***carers of service users***
- ***stakeholders and partners***

We will plan to engage one or more of these groups as appropriate.

We will ensure that the diversity of our community is taken into account in the way we choose to engage people, that we are sensitive to different cultural needs, and that we seek out voices that are less likely to be heard and take steps to ensure they are included.

6. How we will use the results of public engagement

The results of public engagement will be used to inform decisions taken by the County Council and we will also consider ways in which they can influence the way that we work with partners, for example, by informing community plans. At the time of planning public engagement, consideration will be given to the way in which public engagement outcomes will be taken into account in the final decision. Results will be made available to decision-makers and the account taken of them will be recorded. In making decisions, appropriate and relevant issues raised through public engagement will be considered. Where issues that are not directly relevant are raised and therefore cannot be taken into account in making the decision, we will consider whether they should be taken into account in making other council decisions or whether they need to be referred to an appropriate partner.

We will also bring together the results of all our consultation and engagement work so that we continue to develop a picture of public concerns and attitudes to inform the council's future planning.

We will evaluate the processes, outcomes and impact of public engagement to ensure that our effectiveness improves.

7. The public participation spectrum ²

In planning public engagement in a decision, it is important that the level of engagement is determined. At one end of the spectrum this simply means ***informing*** people. Taking this a stage further, ***consultation*** means we seek the views of people. Involving people takes the consultation process deeper, perhaps by ***involving*** people in an ongoing advisory role. ***Collaboration*** means working in partnership with the public to reach a decision. Finally, ***empowerment*** means placing the decision in the hands of the public.

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Increasing level of public impact



INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE EMPOWER

It is important to determine the extent of public participation when planning public engagement. This will depend on the extent to which the decision-maker is prepared or able to involve the public, and the context for a particular decision.