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About the Reference Manual

This manual provides a reference document that draws on established knowledge and experience of community engagement to illuminate issues that may need to be addressed in practice.

It is primarily designed for use by facilitators who are supporting use of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

It is not intended to be read from end to end but to be used as a resource to focus on particular aspects of the standards, as circumstances require.

Except for the section on using the standards, the sections of the manual correspond to the sections of the standards booklet in the standards pack.

The manual has therefore been prepared primarily as a web based document which should be used in conjunction with the standards.
Defining Community Engagement

There are many styles and methods of engagement. The Standards can be used in formal and informal, extensive and intensive community engagement with any groups of participants. The nature of the engagement will determine the standards that require most attention. The standards were written to ensure that they could cover the formal types of engagement that were emerging in the context of Community Planning. To make sure that this was the case the working groups and advisory group for the project agreed the following definition:

*Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences*

This is a definition that focuses on formal, representative, face to face, structures for engagement between public bodies and organised communities, that operate over time to address specified community needs and issues. In the context of Community Planning and regeneration initiatives, such formal engagement will be a common feature of local democracy but formal structures are by no means peculiar to this context. Some examples may help to illustrate the range of such structures that are now commonplace.

1. For the purposes of local community planning there may be a standing structures such as an Area Committee that enables representatives of a neighbourhood community forum to meet with representatives of local authority departments, health boards, police or other agencies. The agenda for such engagement will be clearly identified and there will be sustained effort over a long period to use the working relationship between community groups and agencies to make progress on the priority issues identified.

2. A Local Community Planning Board represents a formal structure for engagement of community representatives with agencies that set and monitor priorities for regeneration of a neighbourhood or for effective response to the needs of a specific interest community.

3. With formal representation from social work, health, housing and other relevant statutory agencies, a Community Care Forum may be established that works with representatives of community and voluntary groups that reflect the interests of care service user groups and carers.

4. A tenant liaison committee may be established between a housing provider and its tenants.

5. Police, local authority and other services may work with community groups in a Community Safety Forum.

6. Representatives of public transport user groups may meet on a formal and sustained basis with transport providers.

Numerous other examples could be given of what has now become a common feature of local governance in Scotland. All of the standards are seen as being relevant to them.

However, the standards have not only been developed with these kinds of structures in mind. Though not all of them will always be applicable most will also be relevant to less formal and sustained types of engagement and to more populist and indirect forms of engagement. Examples may again be helpful:

1. A public agency may seek to engage communities in one-off public consultation meetings that are open to anyone who wishes to attend.
2. Equally public agencies may use much more formal techniques to consult communities. Some of these, such as Future Search conferences, are quite highly structured with defined representation of particular community interests. Others, such as Planning for Real or Participatory Appraisal are structured but open to wider participation.

3. Public agencies may set up Citizen's Panels that are invited to comment on policy issues that they face. In this example the panel may be made up of a large number of people who are selected to represent different age, gender, race or other population groups but they are not people who have a particular 'axe to grind' and they comment at a distance without involvement in direct discussion with the agencies.

4. Alternatively public agencies may use Citizen's Juries. Here a relatively small number of people is invited to review evidence pertaining to a particular aspect of policy or practice and to make recommendations. In this case there will be face to face engagement but the jury will operate only in relation to making judgements about the value of particular policies.

5. Another form of engagement may be through referenda or more limited opinion polling.

6. An agency of partnership may use an event such as an exhibition about public services to create opportunity for dialogue with local people.

There are many other forms of engagement but what is important to note about these examples is that they illustrate differences in terms of levels of formality, time scale, representation and other characteristics. As a result the not all aspects of the standards may be relevant to each of them. Some standards may be applicable to them all, for example, those relating to quality, accessibility and feedback of information. Others standards may only be relevant to some.

When using the standards in relation to these wider types of community engagement it is therefore necessary to think about what is involved in the particular method that is being adopted and to identify those aspects of the standards that are relevant.
The principles on which the standards are based

The focus groups and the working groups involved in creating the standards repeatedly highlighted some key principles that should be present in the conduct of all community engagement. These have been incorporated into the standards booklet. The principles were seen as providing an explanation for the content of the standards themselves. In other words the standards were seen as the means by which principles of good practice could be put into operation. Reading the standards it will be clear that while these principles are more prominent in some aspects than others, they are in fact threaded throughout.

**Equalities:** The first principle, relating to equality, fairness and inclusion, was seen as an overriding principle without which community engagement would fail to address the needs of, and issues affecting, those who have the greatest needs. A key point was to remind users of the standards that they have been developed within a legal and/or policy framework that commits public agencies to equalities. To apply these standards it is necessary that participants have a clear understanding of the equalities principles, law and policies. **Key pieces of legislation are:**

- The Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 & 1986;
- The Race Relations Act 1976;
- The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000;
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Scotland Act 1998.

The Scotland Act 1998: defines equal opportunities as:

> The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of marital status, on racial grounds or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions’.

These are the areas to which an equalities approach to community engagement must give attention. They are elaborated in the Scottish Executive Good Practice Guidance on consultation with equalities groups. It identifies: women, minority ethnic communities, Gypsy Travellers, asylum seekers, refugees, disabled people, people with specific health issues, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, younger and older people, those in specific areas (such as rural areas or peripheral estates), religious/ faith groups and those on low incomes.

Equalities and inclusion have been highlighted as a core principle to stress that there are recognised barriers to the participation of those who are most disadvantaged. Promoting inclusion has been a core policy of the Scottish Executive since its inception. 'Social justice…a Scotland where everyone matters’ (Scottish Executive 1999) sets as a core aim ‘the building of strong inclusive communities’. The ‘Inclusive Communities’: (report of the Strategy Action Team 1999) states:

> ‘An inclusive community is one where people are able to participate in community life’

"
have influence over decisions affecting them, are able to take responsibility for their communities, have right of access to appropriate information and support and have equal access to services and facilities.'

These are goals that should inform all community engagement processes.

One further comment should be made on this principle. Particularly, but by no means exclusively, among the community representatives involved in developing the standards the view was held that the most important determinant of whether engagement was effective was the attitudes and values of those that participate. Equalities practice in community engagement can only be achieved if the participants embrace the principle of participatory democracy and have attitudes that place high value on mutual respect and positive regard for the contribution of others. Of course such respect is not without conditions that are themselves set by the wider principles of fairness, equality and inclusion.

**Purposes and methods:** It may seem self-evident that any community engagement should be clear about its purpose. Many contributors to the development of the standards had nonetheless been involved in engagement processes in which they either felt that the purposes were not clear, or that different parties believed that there were different purposes or that other parties were pursuing hidden agendas. Wherever this had been the case the experience of engagement had been poor. The principle is simple; there should be a commonly agreed purpose or purposes among all participants.

Yet even where the purposes were felt to have been clear contributors also referred frequently to the adoption of methods of engagement that were unsuitable for the purposes that had been set. This principle is pointing out that it is essential not only to know what the engagement is there to do but equally to use methods that are capable of doing it. It is recognised that untried methods need to be tested to assess their suitability. However, in many instances there is substantial recorded evidence of the use of established methods. Those who promote community engagement have a responsibility to investigate the suitability of methods before they are put into operation.

**Learning from experience:** The standards have been developed as an aid to continuous improvement. This can only happen if there is a commitment on the part of all participants to reflect on and learn from their experience. To do this it is necessary to have reliable and relevant evidence. Hence the standards give substantial attention to monitoring and evaluation of practice. The lessons learned should inform new developments and be made available for the benefit of others who are seeking to achieve similar goals.

**Skills:** Again the principle may seem self-evident, however the experience of contributors to development of the standards was that community engagement process frequently founndered on the lack of appropriate skills of those involved. In particular concern was expressed about capacity to ensure: that equalities principles were applied; that a common sense of ownership of the process was established among all the participants; that there was genuinely open communication and opportunity for all to participate. Developing effective engagement depends on application of skills by all participants. The standards development process highlighted that there is frequently a reservoir of skills that can be drawn upon and those relevant skills can be found cross the range of participants. An important
feature of applying this principle therefore involves auditing all the skills that are available and making best use of them. It also involves recognising and compensating for areas in which skills are deficient.

**Knowledge:** Effective community engagement requires the application of a range of knowledge - knowledge of methods of engagement, knowledge of the needs and problems to be addressed, knowledge of the history and experience of the community, knowledge of the competences of the participants, knowledge of relevant policy and legislation, knowledge of resources and techniques that could be used to address issues raised and so on. The knowledge that is needed comes from all the participants, each of whom may contribute in different ways. Specific technical expertise may be a product of formal and specialist learning but other types of knowledge may only be acquired from experiences. Effective community engagement needs to recognise that knowledge is of different kinds and from different sources, but it is the sum of the knowledge of all the participants that is the asset of the engagement process. In any community engagement careful attention needs to be given to assessing what knowledge is necessary for the execution of the task, identifying who may hold such knowledge and how it will be acquired if it is not available.

**Building Capacity**¹: In relation to the discussion of both skills and knowledge it has been recognised that whilst there may be a reservoir of both amongst the participants, there will also be likely to be area in which they need to be developed. As a matter of principle, community engagement should give attention to this and ensure that necessary resources are available. It should be noted that capacity building needs are likely to exist for all participants whether from communities or agencies. It is necessary to be clear what these are and to have access to opportunities to enable them to be addressed. It is worth bearing in mind that the different experience of participants may well equip them to contribute to building each other’s knowledge and skills. Learning from one another is often a helpful contributor to establishing a strong working relationship between all the participants based on mutual regard.

**Information:** It may seem strange to some that access to timely and accurate information has been elevated to the level of principle. In fact the experience of those who contributed to the development of the standards was that failures in the provision of clear, relevant and accurate information, when it was needed was a common cause of ineffectiveness or even the breakdown of community engagement. It is important to appreciate that without necessary and reliable information it is not possible for people to participate effectively. Community representatives most frequently raised concern about this but it was also an issue for agency staff particularly in relation to access to information held by other agencies.

Making use of the Standards

The standards identify the main qualities that should be found in good community engagement. Each of the ten commitments is accompanied by a set of indicators that enable their users to see whether the standard is being met.

To make use of the standards it is useful to think about three stages: what needs to be considered before embarking on a community engagement process, what the participants need to do as it starts and what they need to do to sustain its effectiveness. In practice the issues in the last two substantially overlap.

**Before starting:** Whenever a community engagement process is being contemplated we would encourage users of the standards to identify those things that it would be necessary for them to address before they start in their particular circumstances. In every situation we think it will be essential to:

- Identify who has an interest in the proposed community engagement
- Ensure that all those with an interest in the focus of the engagement have the opportunity to be involved
- Consider any barriers that may affect the participants and identify supports that may need to be in place
- Gather evidence to clarify the need/s to be addressed
- Identify any skill or knowledge gaps that need to be addressed before the engagement starts and address them

**At the start:** As soon as the participants come together it will then be necessary to:

- Ensure that support needs have been identified and that they are being addressed
- Create opportunity for participants to find out about one another – who they are, what interests they represent, how they see the engagement process
- Define amongst all the participants the shared purpose and scope of the engagement
- Identify and agree what methods will be most likely to serve the identified purposes
- Identify criteria for measuring success and how monitoring and evaluation will be conducted
- Agree the procedures for how the participants will work with one another
- Agree how participants can build knowledge and skills that they will need
- Clarify how information will be communicated between the participants
- Set an agreed plan of action
- Agree on how they will work with others

**Throughout the process:** All these features of the engagement should be kept under review throughout the process. Continuing to work on them should be a normal part of the development of the engagement. Continually revisiting them is essential to enable any problems that are arising to be addressed and resolved. The only new areas that are likely to come into play will be:

- Agreeing how best to feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and other agency staff. Decisions about this will need to reflect the kind of information that needs to be communicated.
- Conducting the monitoring and evaluation of the engagement as it progresses and using the lessons to promote continuous improvement
Unpacking the standards and indicators

In this section we take each standard and explore what is involved in meeting it by examining each of the associated indicators

1. The involvement standard
We will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement.

This standard deals with who should be involved and what characteristics should be evident in the way that they act. The standard places an obligation on all participants but particular obligations are being placed on those who initiate community engagement. In most circumstance this will be a public agency.

Indicator 1:
All groups of people whose interests are affected by the issues that the engagement will address are represented

This emphasises equalities and inclusion. To ensure that everyone whose interests are affected by the engagement is effectively represented requires investigation of the issues and their impact from a community perspective. The importance of doing this is not simply a matter of inclusion, though this is highly important in its own right, it is also a practical issue. When key interest groups are not represented that feel that they should be they may later express dissent about the engagement process that can be undermined as a consequence. It is not uncommon for groups to complain that they have not been represented because they do not recognise those that claim to represent them (see also indicator 1.4 bullet point 5 and 6).

Indicator 2:
Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people who experience barriers to participation

This indicator relates to positive action for groups that may experience discrimination or exclusion. It recognises the reality that some people will find it more difficult to become involved than others and sets an obligation within the standard to encourage and support them to become active. (Areas in which supports may be needed are identified in the support standard indicators 2 and 3.)

In discussing the underpinning principles of equalities and inclusion (see page 5) the range of participants for whom such positive action may be required has already been identified. But within the broad categories listed there will be widely different sub groups. For example: refugees come from many countries, cultures and speak many languages; disabilities are very diverse and have different impact that are further affected by the circumstances in which they are experienced; faith groups have different observances that need to be taken into account and so on. It will be important to consider the characteristics of potentially excluded groups and tailor promotional activity to their needs and circumstances. For example selection of appropriate language and media for communication, recognition of the way in which the focus of the engagement may impact on them in particular. It is important to remember that the experts on the experiences and needs of these groups will be the people themselves. Talk to them about what is proposed and adjust approaches to accommodate their needs.
Where the engagement is broad based it will be important to ensure that consideration is given to any potential conflicts that might arise between different groups and address them before they become an issue. On the other hand, some community engagement will focus on specific groups that commonly experience exclusion. In this case all aspects of the engagement should be tailored to respond to their particular characteristics.

It is important to note that sometimes agencies promoting engagement have been inclined to decide for people how they should participate. Group specific initiatives may be taken which are actually experienced by the participants as excluding them from participation as citizens alongside the community as a whole. It is important to enable people to indicate where they think there is a need to address their interests specifically and where they see it as appropriate that these are part of more general community engagement. Community engagement promoted by specialist service agencies often locks the participants into the agenda of the agencies rather than their own priorities. Opportunity to participate becomes conditional on accepting the definition of need that has already determined the role of the agency. If community engagement is about community empowerment it must serve the aspirations of the community that is being engaged.

**Indicator 3:**
*Agencies and community groups actively promote the involvement of people from groups that are affected but not yet organised to participate*

This is again an indicator concerned with inclusion and equalities. It recognises that not all of those whose interests may be affected by the focus of community engagement may have established means by which they can explore concerns with one another and articulate these on a representative basis. If the engagement process is based around formal structures in which agency and community representatives meet, such interests are inevitably excluded. The outcomes of such engagement run the risk, at best, of ignoring some community interests, at worst, of producing changes that damage their interests. It is therefore necessary to take action to reach out to such sectors of the community. This can mean assisting them to become organised to be able to consider and represent their interests in formal engagement processes or using more informal engagement that enables more open participation. Through more informal means their interests can be fed into more formal processes.

The indicator highlights the need for deployment of community development support that enables communities to become organised or at least for their concerns to be identified. This indicator requires that community development resources are available. They may come from a variety of organisations both statutory and voluntary. It would be appropriate to use local Community Learning and Development Partnerships to identify how support will be provided. (See also: support standard indicator 5)

**Indicator 4:**
*The people who are involved, whether from agencies or community groups:*
  - Want to be involved
  - Show commitment to take part in discussion, decisions and actions
  - Attend consistently
  - Have knowledge of the issues
  - Have skills, or a commitment to developing skills, to play their role
- 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

This set of indicators focuses on the characteristics that should be evident among participants irrespective of whether they come from agencies or communities. Participants and those that they represent need to ask themselves whether the characteristics are evidenced in practice. They have been identified as indicators for participation because they are seen as having substantial impact on the overall effectiveness of community engagement processes.

Want to be involved: Wanting to be involved is a key determinant of positive motivation. Too often engagement suffers as a result of token participation by people who have been obliged to be involved but would rather not be. This is more of an issue for agencies than communities. When people who represent agencies demonstrate positive motivation to be involved, a climate is created in which difficulties will be much more easily resolved.

Show commitment to take part in discussion, decisions and actions: It may seem self evident that good community engagement requires active commitment to take part. Whether this is happening is a very straightforward indicator of the health of the engagement. It has to be recognised that active participation in discussion, decisions and actions are things that require skills and self-confidence. Though they may be highly motivated, not all participants will have these. Exploring what is needed to enable people to participate fully is dealt with under standard 8: Improvement.

Attend consist: Community representatives identify lack of consistent attendance by the same agency participants as a major frustration. In particular they complain about lack of continuity between meetings and the difficulty of not being able to establish a working relationship with a specific person. Though more frequently a concern raised about agency representatives, it can apply equally to all other participants.

Have knowledge of the issues: Knowledge of the issues is essential if there are to be informed discussions, decisions and actions. As noted in relation to the principles (page 7) people bring different kinds of knowledge from different sources (both training and experience) but it is important that all of them know about whatever the community engagement is focused on addressing. To have a full picture they will normally need access to relevant information from other participants. This is of key importance and is dealt with in more detail in standard 6: Sharing information.

Have skills, or a commitment to developing skills, to play their role: As noted in relation to the specific area of participation in discussion, decisions and actions, this requires skill that it cannot be assumed that participants will have at the start of the process. Thus, whilst the standards stress the need for skills to enable people to play their roles, they also acknowledge that they may yet need to be developed. That participants demonstrate commitment to developing their skills and become skilled is an important indicator. Both skill and knowledge development may be needed for agency as much as community participants. Standard 8: Improvement, deals with such development in more detail.
Have the authority of those they represent, to take decisions and actions: One of the most frustrating aspects of community engagement arises when participants are unable to commit themselves to decisions. Apart from causing time delays, more seriously it often leads to anger and confusion as non-participant people, external to the engagement process, actually hold the power to take decisions. It has to be acknowledged that there may be occasions when decisions would have implications that need to be reviewed with those that would be affected, however, if the focus and purpose of an engagement process has been clearly defined (see standards 3: Planning) it should be possible to agree the boundaries of its authority to act. Once this is done the participants should have the authority vested in them by those they represent to act within those boundaries.

Have legitimacy in the eyes of those they represent: Authority to act in a formal representative community engagement process will be dependent on participants being regarded as the legitimate representatives of those on whose behalf they claim to speak. In constituted organisations this is usually a straightforward matter. Senior officers or members can endorse the participation of their representatives. It may be less easy in more informal community groups. Nonetheless confirmation of the legitimacy of representatives is an important pre-condition for effective engagement.

Maintain a continuing dialogue with those that they represent: In part legitimacy of representatives will arise from, and be sustained by, the on-going relationship with those that are represented. Participants who keep their constituency informed of what is going on and listen to and act on their views will retain their legitimacy and authority. Evidence that dialogue is maintained with their respective constituencies by all participants indicates the health of the engagement process. (Standard 9: Feedback, deals further with issues of feedback and dialogue with wider interests).
2. The support standard

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

This standard is essential for the achievement of the equalities and inclusion principles that underpin community engagement. On the one hand it addresses the need to appreciate the individuality of potential participants and to assess any particular barriers that may inhibit their capacity to participate and exercise their role as citizens. On the other hand it requires that the support needs of community organisations as a whole be addressed.

Where interest groups that experience particular barriers to engagement are the focus of activity, there is often more attention to these issues than in engagement with the general public, but it is precisely in the latter context that exclusion from full citizenship is most frequently realised. The attitude that the standard is stressing is one of universal commitment to inclusion for all.

Cost is an issue. As one person commented at one of the consultative conferences: ‘Some may complain about the costs. We need a mindset change, professional representation costs a lot, community involvement is worth investing in but will not be cheap’. Nonetheless, there can be substantial resource implications to tackling some of the barriers identified within the indicators and there may be constraints that are difficult to overcome. Two aspects of the indicators for the standard, coverage of loss of earnings and co-operation of employers in giving time off, may be more difficult to achieve than others. However, they were given widespread support in the working groups, accepted in the pilot projects as best practice principles and are already fully met in some instances. Best practice standards are set in the recognition that performance may require improvement over time.

In the context of formal engagement structures operating on a representative basis, with named and consistent participants, it should be much easier to reach this standard than it would be in more extensive and informal types of engagement. It is therefore reasonable to recognise that it may not be possible to apply all of these indicators in all circumstances. There is, nonetheless, an assumption that, as far as it is in their capacity to do so, those who initiate engagement have obligations to ensure equality of opportunity for those who may wish to participate. In relation to the legislation (listed on page 5) they will also have legal obligations.

It is worth noting that some of the indicators that have been identified for inclusive community engagement might not need to be stated if aspects of public policy, for example, in relation to accessible transport or buildings, were already fully in place.

Indicator 1:
The participants identify what supports each representative needs to participate

A key indicator of the commitment to good practice is whether the circumstances of each person who wishes to participate are properly assessed in order to ensure that full account can be taken of any barriers that might restrict their opportunity to participate. The indicator does not imply that individuals should be taking responsibility for advocating their own needs but that the engagement system, as a matter of course, takes responsibility for identifying the needs of all participants.
**Indicator 2:**

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

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

Removal of practical barriers can relate to a range of aspects of people’s lives. There may be different reasons why particular supports are needed. Suitable transport, for example, may be needed to respond to physical disability or because fear of racial abuse may make public transport a threatening experience. Care of dependents may relate, for example, to children or care of adult dependents. If substitute care is to be provided to enable people to participate it must meet the highest standards and be positively experienced by those that are cared for. In relation to disability sensitive general assistance with practical tasks should be available and disabled people who employ personal assistants should be able to assume that they will be enabled to provide necessary supports for participation.

Communication barriers may result from a range of factors, hearing or visual impairment, English not being the participant’s first language, difficulty in articulating or presenting your ideas. Hence there is a need to provide a variety of types of support as appropriate, including the use of advocates.

The accessibility of premises is usually considered in terms of physical access irrespective of disability, which is of course vital. But there may also be other barriers to accessibility for example the use of premises with particular religious or political affiliations or outside the territory in which young people feel comfortable.

Certain aspects of these standards may be difficult to resolve in the interests of all participants. For example, though timing of meetings can be a real practical barrier for each individual, different people may prefer different times. There will sometimes be a need to negotiate with participants what is the most suitable solution within different preferences. However, discriminatory attitudes are not uncommon. For example, public holidays and religious festivals of the majority community would never be dates for meetings. The same standard is not always respected in relation to minority community festivals.

The specific co-operation of employers is sometimes available to enable community participants to be available in normal working hours, for example some employers encourage employee volunteering. This standard would be relevant to formal, on-going engagement of the type within the definition but it is recognised that it may not be commonly achievable.

Overcoming practical barriers will often affect the methods, process and pace of the engagement, for example involving interpreters or advocates. This needs to be taken into account particularly in relation to the standards for planning (section 2) (especially those concerned with timescales), in relation to how the participants work and communicate with one another (sections 5 and 6) and in
terms of the methods that are adopted (section 4). The practical barriers may also apply to the wider community to whom feedback is required (section 9).

**Indicator 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 (e.g. loop systems, interpreting, advocates)
- timing of meetings

The areas identified in this standard largely overlap with those in the previous one, however the focus here is on the costs that may be associated with removing the practical barriers. The standard indicates that if public agencies initiate and promote community engagement, they have an obligation to ensure that any consequent costs of participating are met. This applies to care costs for dependents, transport and other out of pocket expenses, additional employment cost associated with extending the roles of personal assistants, costs associated with enabling effective communication or with particular meeting times.

As noted in the introduction to this section, whilst compensation for loss of earnings is recognised as an important principle, it is often difficult to resource.

It is important to repeat that meeting of costs may be realistic in the context of the formal definition of community engagement (page 2) but not be so in more extensive and informal approaches. Agencies initiating community engagement need to be able to predict costs and set budgets. This is only possible if the number and needs of participants is predictable, as in approaches where specified people represent particular interests.

**Indicator 4:**
**Community and agency representatives have access to equipment they need (e.g. computers, telephone, photocopying)**

One of the difficulties that community participants frequently identify is their lack of access to equipment that enables them to participate fully. It is frequently a major disadvantage if you do not have computing facilities or, even more fundamentally, a telephone. It is in the interest of the whole engagement system to ensure that all its members can communicate effectively and efficiently with one another and that community representatives can communicate effectively with the wider community. Some responses to this standard have been to treat it as if it was a privilege to have such facilities. Such attitudes are not appropriate. If community involvement is seen as the basis for better government, enabling representatives to participate equally is a necessity.

**Indicator 5:**
**Impartial professional community development support is available to community groups involved in community engagement**

This standard indicates that community organisations that become partners in a community engagement processes should have access to community development support. It should enable them to develop skilled approaches to
building on community strengths to address needs and issues that affect their communities. Such support is particularly valuable as groups are establishing themselves but is also frequently beneficial to well established groups.

The standard is saying that such support should be available if requested. Groups are under no obligation to work with community development staff. Community representatives involved in developing the standards nonetheless referred frequently to the importance that they attached to such support. Their ideal was that such support should be independent of the agencies that were promoting community engagement and/or delivering services in their areas. Whilst it was recognised that this was sometimes possible, for example, where groups obtain funds to employ their own support workers, it was generally not the case. The key concern amongst community representatives was that they could trust the community worker to support them to represent their communities as they saw fit. Workers who were seen as carrying primary accountability to agency agendas were regarded with suspicion. It was felt that they were used to try to influence communities to act in ways that reflected the interests of the agencies rather than the community. Where there was no difference of view between them this was not a problem but where there was it became a source of conflict.

The key point of the standard is that community groups should be confident that community development staff are not acting as agents of the agencies that employ them but genuinely assisting the community to organise itself to represent its concerns and visions for improvement, irrespective of whether these coincide with those of the public agencies. Many examples were cited where this was already the case but criticism was still common. Meeting the standard requires agencies to promote impartiality in the remit of community development staff and recognise that when there are conflicting views it is the legitimate role of these staff to support groups to express the views of their communities even where these challenge agency policies or priorities. Any other stance undermines the democratic purpose of community participation.

**Indicator 6:**

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

Whilst the previous indicator relates to the specific value of community development support it is recognised that there are many other types of professional advice that community groups may need. These will relate to development of particular skills such as research or communications or to specific knowledge relating to issues that affect the community. The latter category may include understanding of law and policy or of procedures for addressing issues. Such professional advice is readily available to agencies that employ specialist staff in a range of roles to ensure that they are properly equipped to carry out their responsibilities. Community representatives are frequently at a disadvantage in community engagement because they are involved in a process in which other participants are better equipped to speak authoritatively because they have access to specialist professional advice. If community groups are to represent their communities effectively, they also require access to professional advice when it is needed. Such advice needs to come from sources that are not already compromised by acting for other parties to the engagement.
The word ‘professional’ is used to denote recognised competence in relation to a specified area of knowledge or skills. From this perspective, professional advice can include recognised experience and demonstrated competence as much as formal qualification.
3. The planning standard

*We will gather evidence of need and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken*

This standard focuses on an essential part of the early stages of community engagement. It points out the importance not only of clear planning but of doing it in a fully participatory manner. The associated indicators give attention to how the issues that the engagement will address are understood, what the resources are that will enable a response and who will take what specific actions and when.

**Indicator 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)

This indicator refers to the involvement of all parties in planning from the start. This was felt by contributors to the development of the standards to be particularly important. The exclusion of any party from these early stages of setting out the agenda and the action that should be taken was challenged both on grounds of principle and practicality. Policies that describe themselves as participatory must live up to the reasonable expectation that those who are affected have a right to be involved in decisions that may impact on them. In relation to community engagement there are few more important decisions than what the process will be for and how it will be conducted. If some parties are not involved in this they are placed at a disadvantage. They are left with a choice of joining the process later and accepting the purposes and approaches that have been set, joining the process but challenging the basis on which it is being conducted or deciding not to be involved. The first is likely to lead to harboured resentment, the second to conflicts, whilst the third defeats the very purpose of community engagement.

The indicator goes on to focus on identifying and defining the issues that the community engagement will address. Here the principle that everyone’s knowledge has a contribution to make is very important. Agencies and communities have relevant knowledge though it may come from different sources. For the former understanding of issues and community needs comes most commonly from research and involvement in service delivery. For communities it comes primarily from direct experience, though increasingly community organisations are using research to investigate their own needs in a more systematic way. These different sources of knowledge may provide different perspectives.

Finally indicator 1 focuses on the need to share in the choice of methods of engagement that will be used. The issue of appropriate methods is dealt with more fully in section 4 of the standards. However it is important to note that selection of methods is an important part of planning.

**Indicator 2:**

*Participants express views openly and honestly*

It follows from the discussion of indicator 1 that if the parties to the engagement bring different perceptions of the issues to be addressed and what methods they
may favour, it is essential that these are fully discussed between them. The indicator talks about an: ‘open and unambiguous expression of views’. Methods for conducting discussion need to enable everyone to participate and feel comfortable doing so (see section 5 of the standards).

It is really important to try to ensure that all the views held by all those who will play a part are brought out in the discussion and that any lack of clarity is resolved. This will not necessarily mean that there are not strongly held differences that may be a source of conflict. Sorting out such differences at the start is essential. The working group members frequently referred to this as being at the core of establishing relationships of trust. If it is not done resentments will frequently fester and emerge later in the process with much more damaging consequences for the engagement process than they would have if properly addressed at the start.

It is of course possible that such conflicts cannot be resolved fully. Nonetheless decisions can usually be taken about the potential for or boundaries of the community engagement that will be developed around those things that all parties can agree on. Even though some differences may remain, it is essential that all participants recognise and agree the boundaries within which they can collaborate effectively.

No single engagement process can tackle all the issues that might be identified. The exploratory discussions are essential as a basis for determining the priorities. It will also be essential to take account of the resources that can be made available for action (see indicator 6) and the time that may be available (see indicator 9).

In some circumstances the parties may need to agree that without a common basis for joint working and mutual trust there is no purpose in pursuing the proposed engagement.

**Indicator 3:**

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

This indicator has been included to stress the need to recognise that agreeing what the engagement will be about and how it will be conducted requires time but must also avoid seemingly unending negotiation. It is seen as sensible to agree a period in which the necessary exchange of views and consequent decision-making will take place. There is no prescription for how long this may be; it is a matter for judgement between the parties depending on the complexity and of the issues and scope of the engagement.

It may be tempting for agencies that initiate engagement to push the pace. This usually reflects a pre-determined commitment to the engagement having a specific focus and form that reflects their particular interests. The result of not giving time to addressing other perspectives is the imposition of a process that will not be owned by all the parties who will feel ‘bounced into action’ but whose contributions are necessary to make it a success. On the other hand the result of not having a clear point at which an agreement of purpose will be drawn up is that it may be perceived to be continually negotiable. The result of this is that debate of purpose rather than practical action often continues to dominate the agenda and generate frustration.
**Indicator 4:**
The purpose of engagement is identified and stated in relation to the evidenced need/s, agreed by all participants and communicated to the wider community and agencies that may be affected

Those that precede it imply this indicator. It is not just saying that a clear purpose for the community engagement should be agreed but it is also emphasising that this should reflect the evidence that is available. As noted in relation to indicator 1 all parties will contribute knowledge that enables the evidence to be assessed. However it will be important to clearly distinguish between evidence and opinion.

This indicator recognises that the purpose of the engagement needs to be agreed between all the parties. It refers not only to identifying the purpose but also to stating it. Putting it on record provides a reference point for all participants and the wider community or agencies that may be affected. It is essential that these wider interests are made aware of the purpose of the engagement. This enables them to comment on any implications that they may feel need to be taken into account.

Failure to meet this indicator is liable to have consequences for later work - different expectation cannot be satisfied by the same outcomes. Reaching agreed purposes might require compromises based on recognition of the legitimacy of the aspirations of other parties and the practical difficulties that may be involved in achieving some goals. Whilst understanding that each party would have its own interests, the contributors to the development of the standards stressed the importance of encouraging all of them to acknowledge needs that others might have and seek the greater good.

**Indicator 5:**
Public policies that impact on the engagement are explained to the satisfaction of the participants and the wider community

The focus of community engagement frequently relates to issues in which there is established law or public policy. This may have a very significant influence on what resources are available or what forms of action are possible. These are powerful influences that lie beyond the authority of local community engagement. All parties will need to take account of them. However, some participants may be much more familiar with them than others.

Generally agency participants are in a stronger position than those from communities, but even the former may know little about relevant policy or law that affects agencies other than their own. The indicator is making the point that for all the participants to work together they need to understand the policy context - what it encourages, permits or prevents. Those involved in developing the standards frequently commented that though polices might be explained all participants did not necessarily understand them. This is why the indicator requires the explanation to be satisfactory to those to whom it is presented. It also indicates that the explanation of policy should be available to the wider community that may be affected.

**Indicator 6:**
The participants identify existing and potential resources that will be available to the engagement process and to achieving its purpose/s (e.g. money, people, equipment)
There is always a need to ensure that any purposes that are set are achievable. This does not imply that there should be lack of ambition but that it is necessary to take care to ensure that what will be likely to be involved in reaching particular goals has been appreciated and that the resources that may be required will be available. Indicator 6 is stressing the need to audit the resources of the parties to the engagement.

Whereas community engagement may primarily seek to address needs and issues, examining resources is about assessing the strengths that the parties bring to the process. As the principles section stressed all parties will bring knowledge and skills. They may also bring physical resources and budgets that can be applied to implementing the plan. Assessing resources enables realistic goals to be set. Over-ambition that results in failure can do long term damage to the process of community regeneration. At the same time failing to address the things that really matter to people is equally demoralising. It is often necessary therefore to have, amongst all the parties, an active approach to acquiring additional resources in order to address issues.

**Indicator 7:**
*Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are agreed and recorded*

This indicator flows logically from the previous one. A clear understanding of the relationship between the needs and the resources enables the setting of intended results that are clear and precise. The indicator makes the point about realism discussed above, but also stresses the need to be specific about what the results should be and to ensure that it will be possible to say whether the result has been achieved. As in other parts of this section emphasis is given to ensuring that all parties agree the results that will be sought. Similarly attention is drawn to recording the intended results. This is essential for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation of progress (see section standard 10).

Those that are familiar with the idea of SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-scaled) objectives will note that, combined, indicators 7, 8 and 9 reflect this approach.

**Indicator 8:**
*The participants assess the constraints, challenges and opportunities that will be involved in implementing the plan*

Just as assessing resources enables realism, so too does careful thought at the start about the factors that will help and hinder the achievement of the intended results. The factors will differ but since it is the interaction of the participants with one another as much as the actions of particular parties that determine the way the process will work, it is important that the assessment is shared. It may be useful for example to conduct a SWOT exercise in which participants identify the strengths and weaknesses that they may have and identify the opportunities that may be open to the them and the threats that might undermine their ability to achieve their goals. Account can then be taken of factors like competing commitments and demands on resources, statutory duties or particular skills and experience. Standard 5 elaborates on this by examining the way that the parties to the engagement work with one another.

**Indicator 9:**
*The participants agree the timescales for the achievement of the purpose/s*
Whereas indicator 3 focused on identifying the time to be given to agreeing the purposes of the engagement, this one refers to the time within which the purposes should be achieved. The time scale that is appropriate will depend on the complexity of the issues and the resources that are available to tackle them. In some circumstances there may be externally imposed timescales. In this case timescale may become a critical factor in deciding what results it is realistic to try to achieve. Overall, timescale, needs and resources need to be in balance.

There may be practical considerations in terms of setting timescales that relate to maintaining enthusiasm. These may differ for different groups - young people for example may need to see more immediate benefits. Setting of a timescale also concentrates attention on maintaining progress that may otherwise drift.

It is also important to note that in a complex process of community engagement that may have several goals, each will have different levels of complexity and may need to be pursued within a different timescale. A mixture of goals that can be achieved in shorter and longer timescales can be an important basis for maintaining the commitment of the parties.

**Indicator 10:**
*The participants agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the purpose/s*

Planning is not only about deciding what should be done and how, it is also about agreeing who will do what. Roles and responsibilities need to be agreed. Everyone needs to be clear about their own role and responsibilities and about what they can expect and hold others to account for doing. Clarity about this is an essential basis for monitoring and evaluating progress.

**Indicator 11:**
*Plans are reviewed and adjusted in the light of evaluation of performance (see standard 10)*

Whilst participatory approaches to planning are essential at the start of any engagement, it is rare that things actually go precisely to plan. All sorts of factors may affect the plan, for example, new resources may enable more speedy progress or competition for resources may have the opposite result, policies may change or key participants may move on. It is essential therefore to review and reformulate plans to take account of experience. For this to be done evaluation needs to be built into practice and planning and evaluation need to be seen as interdependent activities. Standard 10 deals with the evaluation aspects in detail.
4. The methods standard

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

This standard focuses on the way in which community engagement is conducted. It recognises that there will be a range of possible approaches but emphasises that the choices made must reflect the issues being addressed and the circumstances of those who will participate. The key message is that methods should enable the involvement and support standards to be met whilst also ensuring that the purposes can be achieved. The indicators for this standard provide a checklist against which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the methods that might be adopted.

The standard cross-refers directly to the ‘How to Guide’ on methods of community engagement provided by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration ([www.comunitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.comunitiesscotland.gov.uk)).

Since participants may be unfamiliar with methods that they might use, the choice of methods may also require attention to building skills for their use. In these circumstances the improvement standard (standard 8) becomes relevant.

**Indicator 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

This indicator begins by emphasising that there is a range of possible methods of engagement and highlights two key criteria for selecting the approach that will be adopted. Firstly attention is needed to assess the preferences and characteristics of those who will be participating. Standard 3 indicator 1 has already made the point that all participants should be involved in choosing the methods of engagement. This is the basis on which preferences between different approaches are reviewed. In relation to suitability for their needs, account will need to be taken of the fact that some methods may have better capacity to enable barriers to be overcome than others (see support standard 2).

Secondly attention is given to the capacity of different methods to achieve the purposes that have been defined (planning standard indicator 4). Purposes may be short or long term, they may address single or multiple issues. Different methods are designed to support different purposes and should be selected accordingly.

**Indicator 2:**

*Methods used identify, involve and support excluded groups*

Throughout the development of the standards equalities and inclusion principles have been paramount. This indicator sets out to ensure that these principles will be reflected in the methods that are selected. It is indicating that built into the method should be means by which review of their performance in terms of inclusion is possible and attention can be given to responding to evidence of such review by reaching out to involve excluded groups. However, as discussion of the support standard has indicated, such inclusion will require attention to providing support to overcome barriers. The methods should enable the application of the support systems that participants may need.
**Indicator 3:**
*Methods are chosen to enable diverse views to be expressed, and to help resolve any conflicts of interest*

Recognising and valuing the expression of diverse views is a theme of the standards. It is also recognised that conflicts will be inevitable and necessary in a democratic process. Hence they should be treated as a normal part of community engagement. Valuing diversity of opinion enables different perspectives to be addressed openly and constructively with the result that conflict can become a positive feature of community engagement. The methods adopted must enable this approach. It cannot be guaranteed that conflicts can be resolved to the satisfaction of all participants, but methods that encourage open dialogue, whilst maintaining a focus on the purposes of the engagement, create a climate in which this is much more likely.

Diverse perspectives will frequently be held by different agencies as much as by different community representatives. The fault lines may therefore arise in different places – between agencies, between community representatives, between agencies and communities or between different sub groups within the process.

**Indicator 4:**
*Methods are fully explained and applied with the understanding and agreement of all participants*

Another consistent theme of the standards is that the quality of community engagement benefits when participants fully understand the process that they are involved in. Hence attention has been given, for example, to explanations of policy and procedure. Here attention is focused on the need for all the participants to understand what may be involved in adopting different methods, what difficulties and benefits may arise. This enables informed participation in selection of methods and shared ownership and responsibility for the approach that is taken. Such shared involvement in decisions about the way that a community engagement process will work is likely to pay dividends if difficulties arise. Shared responsibility for choice of approach is likely to lead to shared commitment to resolving difficulties rather then recriminations over past decisions that participants felt they were unable to influence.

**Indicator 5:**
*Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback*

Whilst there is a specific standard (section 10) that addresses the conduct of evaluation, its importance is acknowledged in several other standards. Here the point is being made that the methods that are adopted should be a focus for what is evaluated and that, since evaluation is integrated into practice, the evidence that is fed back from it should be used to adjust the methods that are being employed or the way that they are being applied.
5. The working together standard

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

This standard focuses on the quality of the working relationships between the participants in the process. Many features of the indicators for this standard have been implied in standards and indicators in the preceding sections, for example the commitment to open and honest expression of views (planning standard indicator 2), commitment to explanation of public policies and methods (planning standard indicator 2, methods standard indicator 4), and the references to supporting effective communication (support standard indicators 2 and 3). The indicators for the working together standard spells out clear principles that address how the participants should behave towards one another throughout engagement in order to maximise the effectiveness of the process. They should build on features of the planning process.

Because these indicators deal with emotive themes like honesty, openness, trust, and respect they arouse strong feeling amongst those whose experience of engagement has not reflected them. The process of developing the standards left us in little doubt that the quality of the human relationships experienced in community engagement are of fundamental importance. Once trust has been lost it is extremely difficult to retrieve it. Small contraventions of these standards by just one or two participants can sour the whole climate of the engagement. Such distrust may then be transferred to new engagement initiatives.

This section sets indicators for individual and organisational behaviour and applies equally to all participants. It is not possible for individuals to meet these expectations if they are constrained by organisations that set conditions on their participation that contradicts them. Equally it is not possible for organisations as a whole to sustain positive relationships if their individual representatives fail to meet these expectations.

It is important to recognise that because of the sensitivity of the issues, the stakes are high in regard to this standard.

**Indicator 1:**

The parties behave openly and honestly – there are no hidden agendas, but participants also respect confidentiality

This is probably a much easier indicator to state than it is to meet or to assess. As noted elsewhere in this guidance community engagement is an arena in which participants pursue their particular interests. In such circumstances participants are liable to think tactically about the best way to maximise their interests relative to those of others. Hence there are apparent incentives to behave deviously.

Such behaviour is much more likely if the process of establishing the purposes, methods and actions has not been fully participatory. Transparent and open behaviour will be much more likely where there is an established consensus about purposes and actions. It is unlikely therefore that this standard can be achieved without earlier standards, especially those related to planning, having been met.

The issues involved in this indicator were extensively discussed at all stages of the consultation process in relation to the standards. Instances, in which it was alleged that parties to engagement processes were seeking to use it for purposes
other than those that they had declared, were the most commonly cited cause of breakdown of trust and irresolvable conflict. The loss of trust was greatest when other parties thought that agreement about purposes and actions had been reached. Ultimately therefore, such hidden agendas became self-defeating because they undermined the process as a whole. From this perspective hidden agendas may not be in the self-interests of those who harbour them.

Despite the importance attached to open and honest communications, the indicator nonetheless recognises that there will be areas in which confidentiality is required. These will relate particularly to personal or commercially or politically sensitive information. For example, in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour, agencies cannot divulge personal information relating to individuals or families who may be seen locally as a source of the problems, similarly agencies involved in tendering processes for contracts affecting local communities cannot reveal commercially sensitive information. It is essential that all participants recognise the difference between confidentiality and hidden agendas. Further comment about confidentiality and how it should be tackled is given in the sharing information standard.

**Indicator 2:**
*The parties behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory manner*

Again the equalities principles underpinning the standards are highlighted. In the discussion about the standards, minority groups frequently referred to experiences of not feeling positively valued and of having to deal with discriminatory behaviour and attitudes. This is not acceptable.

It was generally recognised that the mutual positive regard and respect needed to be in place. To put it bluntly you reap the consequences or rewards of your own behaviour. Several times participants talked about ‘behaving in the way that you would expect others to behave towards you’. The expectation was that everyone has an unconditional right to respect from others and recognition of their positive potential. This should be sustained despite differences of views between participants. However there are boundaries to this that relate to the responsibility of all those involved to directly challenge and eliminate discriminatory behaviour that contradicts the underpinning values set out for community engagement.

**Indicator 3:**
*The parties recognise that participants' time is valuable and that they may have other commitments*

Community engagement involves commitment of time and energy from all participants. They all have other demands on their time and other commitments. Attention needs therefore to be given to the most efficient use of each other’s time. The parties to the engagement need to ensure that the actual demands of the process take account of the reality of people’s lives and that commitments that will be involved are carefully assessed at the start. As work progresses demands on time should be monitored to ensure that commitment remain within reasonable limits.

**Indicator 4:**
*The parties recognise existing agency and community obligations, including statutory requirements*
All parties come to formal community engagement with an established role and responsibilities. The engagement process and actions that it may propose has to take account of these existing commitments. They may be set down in policy or indeed be legal requirements that have to be performed. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for community engagement to lead to questioning of policies or legal obligations, those who are accountable have to continue to deliver them until such time as there is a change of policy or law. The product of engagement may be to seek such changes but those involved have to recognise that authority to determine how resources are used will commonly, and appropriately, lie beyond the direct powers of the engagement process. For changes to be brought about those with authority, be they a council, the Scottish Executive, a health board or a community planning partnership will need to be persuaded of the need for change.

This indicator relates closely to Sharing Information standard which points out that it is not only that existing commitments should be respected but also that they should be explained. It also relates to the commitment in Planning standard indicator 5 to explain public policies.

**Indicator 5:**
The parties encourage openness and the ability for everyone to take part 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

This indicator brings together a series of features of the way in which the parties will work with one another that will lead to inclusive and open participation.

The reason for this straightforward language should be self-evident. Clarity will ensure that communication is effective between all parties. It should apply to written and verbal communication.

It is often difficult to achieve equal opportunity for engagement because participants come to the process with different levels of experience, confidence, skills and knowledge. Those who hold minority views may find it particularly difficult to make sure that their voice is heard. In any group process there are straightforward methods that can be used to help everyone to participate. For example, informal settings and procedures for conducting discussions may enable those who are less confident to participate. Use of small group discussions and feedback to larger groups, use of written methods such as recording key opinions on post it notes or graffiti walls may be helpful. Techniques like drawing visions for the future may change the balance of confidence or power in a group. Whatever approach is taken should take account of the standard for support addressing barriers to participation.

Seeking, listening to and reflecting all views follows from the previous principle. The point recognises the need to encourage and support all parties to participate by seeking out their views and ensuring that all views are given considered attention including minority opinion. It is often tempting to think that there is only one response to a particular issue. This one-size fits all mentality can be very
Removing barriers to participation is the subject of the support standard. Reference to this is repeated under the working together standard to stress that performance in relation to such barriers needs to be kept continuously under review and be addressed wherever necessary.

**Indicator 6:**
The parties take decisions on the basis of shared knowledge

This is a further extension of principles set out in indicator 4. It reinforces the value of the combined wisdom of the participants. Whilst recognising that there will be differences between participants it guards against the temptation to think that any one party has a monopoly on relevant knowledge. Again there is a link between this indicator and the standard for Sharing Information.

**Indicator 7:**
The parties identify and discuss opportunities and strategies for achieving change, ensuring that:
- key points are summarised, agreed and progressed
- conflicts are recognised and addressed

This indicator continues to reinforce themes in the section. Effective responses to issues require suitable means of achieving change. It is a shared responsibility for participants to identify and review the options and to do so in a manner that ensures that everyone understands what is being done. This is the reason for noting the importance of summarising arguments, agreeing what the key points and associated actions will be. Once again the possibility of conflicts is acknowledged (see also planning standard indicators 2 and 8 and methods standard indicator 3) and attention is directed to ensuring that these are addressed.

**Indicator 8:**
The parties 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 the application of skills
- enhancing skills where necessary
- agreeing schedules
- assessing risks
- addressing conflicts
- monitoring progress
- learning from one another
- seeking continuous improvement in practice

At the core of any community engagement process will be the achievement of change in relation to whatever issues have been seen as necessitating it in the first place. This indicator sets out core characteristics that should be in evidence.
They are largely self-explanatory. They involve making best use of the overall resources available and clarity about roles and responsibilities. They require procedures that enable all aspects of the process of managing change to be given attention.

**Indicator 9:**
The parties use resources efficiently, effectively and fairly

Planning standard indicator 6 highlights the need to identify resources that can be used to achieve the purposes of engagement. This indicator focuses on the ongoing responsibility to work together to use them well. Efficiency means getting the maximum benefit from what is available. Effectiveness means ensuring that they are used to address the agreed purposes of the engagement. Fairly means using them to ensure that all those that should benefit do so.

Resources are frequently in short supply but in their shared work the participants need to give attention to ensuring they are not only used efficiently and effectively in relation to the purposes set out but that all the participants feel that they have been used fairly to respond to the needs of communities.

**Indicator 10:**
The parties support the process with administrative arrangements that enable it to work

A frequently cited weakness of community engagement is that when parties come together there is a lack of adequate resources to support the process administratively. This includes a range of tasks; calling and arranging meetings, drafting minutes, distributing information, correspondence, administration of expenses and so on. Part of the problem is that in a partnership no-one may see it as their responsibility yet its absence can be a source of difficulty. Participants in the preparation of the standards felt that agencies that initiate engagement have a prime responsibility to arrange administration, however other agencies may also be able to contribute. In doing so they need to recognise that these resources will serve the needs of the engagement system as a whole. It is unlikely that most community organisations will be able to contribute to this aspect of engagement.
6. The sharing information standard

We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants.

This standard is an extension of the working together standard and focuses on a specific aspect of these relationships that is seen as of particular importance. Access to information that is relevant and understandable is a vital ingredient of good community engagement. Not being informed puts those participants in a disadvantaged position that will potentially have repercussions for all the others. Information needs to be available from and accessible to all parties. It enables them to come together to review issues and determine action on a common basis. Different kinds of information will be relevant in different kinds of community engagement, the indicators therefore focus on how and when information should be provided rather than on what it should contain.

**Indicator 1:**

*Information relevant to the engagement is shared between all parties*

It is fundamental to equal opportunity to participate that everyone has access to all relevant information and can communicate information that they wish to. It should be normal practice therefore for a distribution network to be in place between all parties to the engagement. Capacity to do this may be dependent on having met support standard indicator 4 relating to equipment that participants need.

**Indicator 2:**

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

Distribution of information is only purposeful if those to whom it is sent can understand it. One of the most frequent complaints of community representatives is they receive information that uses unnecessary technical language and is presented in a generally unattractive and inaccessible manner. Another frequent complaint of all participants is that when they are involved in community engagement they are deluged with information that they cannot make use of.

Whenever participants provide information they should think clearly about what is really relevant to the focus of the engagement and ensure that every one else is not wasting their time sifting through extraneous material. Good administrative support can help with this (see working together standard indicator 10).

Sometimes, however, the complaint is that information is simply not provided, with the consequence that decisions may lack proper consideration of all relevant matters. Parties to the engagement should keep under review the experience of the participants of the quantity, kind and style of information that they are getting and make adjustments that maximise efficiency and effectiveness.

**Indicator 3:**

*Information is made available in appropriate formats for its users*

This standard returns to the theme of removing barriers to participation. If a proper assessment as been done (support standard indicator 2), needs of participants for particular formats will have been identified. These may include, large print, Braille, languages other than English, audio or visual material.
Sometimes combinations of formats may be required, for example, Urdu in large print. It may also be necessary to use intermediaries with specialist language or communications skills to support provision of information to and from some participants, for example, signers, advocates or interpreters.

**Indicator 4:**
*Information is made available in time to enable people to fully participate and consult others*

Not only do participants in community engagement complain about the volume and clarity of information they also frequently complain that they do not get it in time to enable them to digest it fully themselves let alone share and reflect on it with others with an interest. This is particular keenly felt by community representatives who have placed on them the expectation that they will maintain a consultative dialogue, not only with fellow members of their groups, but also with the wider community that may be affected. To carry these responsibilities requires respect from other parties for the complexities of the processes that may be involved. Agreeing the timing of access to information needs to take full account of the pace of consultative processes that may be required. The challenges of effective communication need to be taken into account when setting the time scales for activity (see also planning standard indicator 3 and 9).

**Indicator 5:**
*All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted*

Reference to the need to respect confidentiality has already been made in relation to working together standard indicator 1. Since the alleged need for confidentiality has sometimes been experienced as a tactic to avoid providing information that could be publicly available, community participants in particular are suspicious about it. To reduce such suspicion, this standard places an obligation on all participants to explain why confidentiality is necessary in particular circumstances.

**Indicator 6:**
*Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to all information that is relevant to the community engagement*

Those that precede it imply this indicator. Apart from the bounds of confidentiality all parties need equal access to information to enable them to participate on an equal footing. Contributors to developing the standards expressed frequent frustration about circumstances in which relevant information was held by one party but not inserted into the discussion until a very late stage. Whilst this was sometimes a product of poor practice, it was suggested that it could also be a tactic to promote self-interest. Whilst there is always the risk or seeing a conspiracy that may not be real, the application of this indicator helps to avoid such tension.
7. The working with others standard  
*We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.*

In this standard recognition is given to the fact that community engagement does not operate in isolation. Many other activities will be going on around it that have a bearing on it. In the context of geographical communities there may, for example, be other community engagement process in other neighbourhoods that relate to the same policies. In the context of Community Planning, for example, community engagement relating to local plans needs to relate to similar engagement at local authority wide level and thematic plans need to relate to area plans. National organisations or partnerships may be addressing issues that are pertinent at local level or visa versa. All of this requires parties to specific community engagement processes to think about with whom they may need to have working relationships and how these will be conducted.

**Indicator 1:**  
*The parties identify other structures, organisations and activities that are relevant to their work*

This indicator seeks to ensure that the parties to the engagement investigate the context of their own activity to identify who else is doing work that is relevant to, or may have a bearing on, their own activities. This will potentially include other community engagement structures or partnerships, or specific organisations at local, regional or national levels. In the context of Community Planning it might be expected that the overall structures would identify the range of initiatives that is underway and how they relate to one another.

**Indicator 2:**  
*The parties establish and maintain effective links with such other structures, activities and organisations*

This indicator extends the responsibility of the parties to making contact with those other structures and organisations. The purpose of this is to pursue their mutual benefit by exchanging information that is relevant. To do this links have to be established that enable relevant information to be exchanged. This is unlikely to involve most participants and may best be conducted either through specific intermediaries who take responsibility for monitoring what is happening or through intermediary agencies whose function is to foster such networking, for example, at national level the Scottish Regeneration Centre or the Community Health Exchange, at local level the community planning officers or the local council for voluntary service.

**Indicator 3:**  
*The parties learn about these structures, activities and organisations, to avoid duplication of their work and complement it wherever possible*

Establishing links is only purposeful if it enhances performance. In a situation where there may be potential for duplication of activity and possibly tensions between priorities being pursued at different levels, it is essential that initiatives and organisations involved in them find out about one another. This involves clarify their particular roles and seeking to maximise efficiency by avoiding duplication and, where possible, making use of each others assets (e.g. knowledge and information, tools and techniques, specialist advisers). It is a core purpose of Community Planning to rationalise and integrate planning responses to community needs. Complementary relationships between initiatives are therefore an established goal. It is possible, for instance, that other initiatives may
already have collected relevant information that is relevant. Making use of it avoids consultation fatigue, enhances efficiency and adds value.

**Indicator 4:**
The parties learn from others and seek improvement in practice

Others who are involved in parallel and linked activities will be developing expertise that may be highly beneficial. Equally our own experience may contribute valuably to others. This indicator is seeking to recognise that particular community engagement initiatives are usually part of wider systems that should be giving attention to their mutual learning. On the basis of this it will be possible to improve practice. There is no point in committing mistakes that others have already learned from or any excuse for keeping to ourselves evidence of what works that may be beneficial to others. As noted in indicator 2 exchanging such information may be fostered by intermediary agencies.

**Indicator 5:**
The parties encourage effective community engagement as normal practice

The final indicator in this section highlights the fact that despite the frequency with which policy promotes it, community engagement is not yet common practice in all areas or sectors. All of those who are committed to the approach and to high standards should see it is a part of their work to encourage others with whom their work brings them in to contact to adopt community participation as normal practice. This is a core goal of Modernising Government and the Scottish Executive’s 21st century government strategy.
8. The improvement standard

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

Achieving all the standards for community engagement is the basis for effective practice. Meeting this standard is a key means of enabling this to happen. This set of indicators focuses on the importance of addressing the learning needs of all the participants in community engagement to enable them to contribute more effectively and, in turn, to enable the whole engagement system to be more effective. Resources need to be in place to support this.

This process is frequently referred to as capacity building, which simply means improving ability to do things. It is relevant to all participants from agencies and communities. Giving attention to how to improve performance is good practice even where a high level of competence already exists. Every participant will bring different abilities and different learning needs that should be addressed. Equally, the sum of the competence of the participants and their collective ability to make effective use of them represents the capacity of the engagement system as a whole. Ultimately, learning together is the key to enhancing the competence of the system. Drawing on the abilities of individual participants and their organisations, learning together can often mean learning from one another.

This is frequently a sensitive area. People often feel that being seen as needing to achieve new knowledge and skills implies a negative judgment of their overall competence. It is important to approach development of learning opportunities with a commitment to celebrating the abilities that people already have and to see the task as enhancement of competence not compensation for incompetence. One of the benefits of mutual learning is that it enables people to see themselves as contributors to as well as consumers of learning.

It is particularly important not to confuse qualifications with capacity. Qualifications should be a mark of competence but demonstrated ability is the critical factor. This may have been acquired by different means. In particular it should be recognised that community representative who directly experience the problems that are being addressed bring with them expertise from which others should learn.

This set of standards will be most relevant to formal processes engagement of the kind identified in the definition (page 2) that involve long term collaborative action between the partners.

**Indicator 1:**

*All parties are committed to maximising the understanding and competence of community and agency participants*

This indicator sets down a commitment to developing the abilities of the participants to their full. What is being sought is a mutual commitment amongst all participants to a culture of learning that improves performance. Frequently participants resist recognising learning needs in themselves though they may be quick to point out those of others. It is a challenge for all those involved to see themselves as potential learners. Emphasis in recent years has frequently been given to the idea of community capacity building. Communities have often resented this. They argue that it is agency capacity that is frequently in need of improvement. The reality is that the standard should apply equally to agency and community representatives.
The indicator identifies the importance of understanding and competence. Competence refers to the ability to act effectively and confidently. But action needs to take place with understanding of the issues to be addressed and the context in which they are arising. Understanding also relates to awareness of the way that the community engagement processes work and how they relate to the wider context of the work of the agencies and community organisations that are involved.

**Indicator 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*

It follows from the commitment to maximising understanding and competence that there must be access to opportunities for learning. The indicator refers also to the importance of support. This is in recognition of different levels of confidence and the need to ensure that everyone is enabled to develop. It is easy for learning support to feel patronising but sensitive use of mentoring and ‘buddying’ systems will potentially be helpful.

The indicator also refers to different ways of learning. It is frequently assumed that the best way to meet learning needs is to provide training. This is not always the case and, even where it is appropriate, it often needs to be supported by opportunity to reflect on the application of what has been learned. When asked to identify the sources of their competence to do things people will refer to learning from experience – ‘the university of life’. A conscious and deliberate approach to improving ability, whilst recognising this, will also give attention to opportunity to reflect systematically on experience as much as formal training opportunity. Since community engagement is a shared experience this should be an activity that involves all the partners. It ties in closely with the process of evaluation (see monitoring and evaluation standard).

This indicator also highlights the importance of capacity building for achieving the overall standards of community engagement. In particular it points out that failure to create access to learning opportunities will not only impact on the effectiveness of the community engagement but may also result in exclusion of some participants. Building capacity is one means of realising the equalities principles that underpin community engagement.

**Indicator 3:**
*Each party identifies its own learning and development needs and together the participants regularly review their capacity to play their roles*

This indicator places an obligation on all participants to take responsibility for identifying their own learning needs, whether in relation to understanding or competence. However it simultaneously sets an obligation on all the parties to take shared responsibility for reviewing their ability to play their respective roles. Both are likely to be sensitive areas. Firstly, if the climate is not supportive and positive all parties are liable to be reluctant to identify areas of weakness. Secondly, whilst each participant may have their own perception of their learning needs others may see them differently.

In order to review individual learning needs and the overall competence of the community engagement system effectively there needs to be mutual respect and
positive working relationships (see working together standards). As noted in the introduction to this standard, this will be much easier if there is a climate in which the contributions of the parties to the engagement are recognised and celebrated. It will also benefit from humility on the part of all parties.

It may be important to keep in mind that the performance of the community engagement process will be dependent on how well all its parts perform. Creating a working relationship in which people are able to identify weaknesses as well as strengths and in which there is recognition of the interdependence of the system will be important.

**Indicator 4:**
*Where needs are identified, potential of the participants is developed and promoted*

This indicator is self-explanatory. It simply sets down the expectation that if a learning need that impacts on the community engagement process is identified, a response will be made. There is frequently a gap between the rhetoric of continuous improvement through learning and the commitment to carrying it through.

**Indicator 5:**
*The competence and understanding of the engagement system as a whole is regularly evaluated by the participants as it develops*

Previous indicators have already highlighted the importance of the participants reviewing their capacity to play their roles. This indicator makes two key points, firstly that all the people involved in the engagement are part of a system that has to be competent and knowledgeable as a whole – it is the sum of the competence of its parts that determines its overall effectiveness. Secondly it is indicating that learning is a continuous process.

As work develops conditions change bringing with them potential needs for understanding and competence that have previously not been required. For example, at the time of writing the emergence of Community Planning is creating a new environment that needs to be understood but is also demanding new skills or the adaptation of established ones. Similarly, whilst it is important to retain consistent participation (see involvement standard indicator 4) there will inevitably be new participants who become involved bringing new learning needs with them. It is also common for community engagement to move on to new issues that need to be understood and addressed. By definition learning for continuous improvement needs continuous evaluation of the needs of the participants. Their needs should be assessed in the context of the performance of the engagement system as a whole. Learning for individuals should be geared to supporting their contributions to a collaborative and collective activity.

**Indicator 6:**
*Resources, including independent professional support, are made available to make the most of the competence and understanding of individual participants and the engagement system as a whole*

Learning needs cannot be met without resources. It will be important when planning long-term community engagement to identify resources that will be available for this purpose. However, given the value of mutual learning, it is
important to recognise that many of the resources required may lie within existing agencies and community organisations.

Nonetheless the indicator specifically refers to the value of independent professional support. This may take various forms. It may be trainers with particular expertise in, for example, investigation methods, evaluation techniques or partnership skills. It may be consultants who facilitate review of experience or play mentoring roles. There will often be particular value in learning being promoted with the assistance of people who are not directly involved in the engagement process. This may be especially so where the focus is the learning of the community engagement system as a whole.

**Indicator 7:**
*There is adequate time for competence and understanding to be developed*

In the planning standards attention is given to the need to think carefully about the time required for planning and implementation. Similarly it is important to recognise that acquiring competence also takes time. The pace of the engagement process needs to be related to the time that will be required for people to develop the understanding and skills that they require in order to contribute effectively. For example in some regeneration programmes the idea of a year zero has been used. This is time to establish skills and working relationships before taking action on issues.

**Indicator 8:**
*Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose*

People learn in different ways and feel comfortable with different approaches to learning. Different participants also have different experiences, skills and barriers as learners. They may also have quite different kinds of learning needs. The methods that are adopted need to be sensitive to these differences. When people are learning together a mixture of approaches that responds to different preferences will be required. Everyone needs to feel included and the pace needs to meet the needs of them all. When learning together participants should reflect on the fact that the approach has to be designed to meet a range of needs not just their own.

Whatever methods are adopted they should be capable of achieving their purposes in terms of the understanding and competence that is sought. Whilst learning is much more effective when it is enjoyable, enjoyment is not the purpose!

**Indicator 9:**
*Participants share their skills, experience and knowledge with community and agency colleagues*

If the community engagement leads to learning it is a transferable asset that should be beneficial more widely. Sharing acquired competence arising from community engagement can enhance overall organisational performance and community well being. Sustainable change depends on the transmission of skills that can be applied to new circumstances by other people. The modernising government process that is a key context for the development of these standards anticipates a culture shift towards more participatory democracy. Each initiative
within this larger project should not be approached in isolation from the wider strategic change of which it is ultimately a part.
9. The feedback standard

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

One of the most frequent frustrations expressed by community representatives involved in developing these standards was their experience that they could be involved by public agencies but sometimes were themselves not informed what the impact of this had been. Even more frequently they complained that little effort was put into communicating with the wider community that was affected and that, without adequate resources, they were left to do the job. This was a common cause of tension between communities and agencies. These indicators therefore set out principles for feedback.

**Indicator 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

This indicator not only states the principle that feedback should be given to all those that are affected but also begins to identify ways in which it should be given and what its contents should include. All those affected will not only include the agencies and community groups that are directly involved but the wider community and agency staff on whom any decisions or actions resulting from the engagement may have an impact.

Feedback should be regular. This does not indicate a specific frequency, as that will need to be judged in the context of particular engagement processes. But it does indicate that those that are affected know when they should expect to have information. This is the reason for reference to feedback within an agreed time. It is seen as important that those affected are made aware not only of the specific decisions and actions that have been taken but that they should also be made aware of what the options were that were considered.

The indicator also suggests that the format in which feedback is given needs to be agreed. Feedback is only purposeful if those to whom it is addressed make use of it. Feedback can take many different forms verbal, visual or written.

The stipulation that feedback should come from an identified source is to ensure that those that are affected can identify how they can become engaged in the process through responses to the feedback or know where to seek feedback if it has not been forthcoming.

**Indicator 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

This indicator extends the previous one focusing on the need to maintain feedback over time to give both people in communities and staff of organisations information about what the results and effects of decisions and actions have been. Timescales should be set and formats and sources agreed so that people know what to expect and when. As in the previous indicator, the identification of the source of information ensures opportunity to become involved and to provide accountability.
**Indicator 3:**
*Explanations as to why decisions and actions have been taken are shared along with details of any future activity*

Again the indicator extends the requirements for the content of feedback. The contributors to developing the standards were clear that it was not enough to know what the options, decision and actions had been. It was also essential for those affected to have an explanation of them. In part this was felt to be helpful because it would enable people to appreciate the factors that had had to be taken into account. But it was also felt to be important for people to have the opportunity to question the rationale for, or logic of, decisions. This emphasises the need to avoid seeing those who are affected as passive recipients of whatever action is decided but to encourage commentary, critical or otherwise as a means of promoting active democratic citizenship. For the same reason the standard indicates that those affected should also be made aware of details of future activity that is planned.

**Indicator 4:**
*The characteristics of the audience are identified to ensure that*
  - Relevant information is provided using understandable language
  - Relevant information is provided in appropriate languages
  - A suitable range of media and channels is used constructively to reach them

To maximise the effectiveness of the feedback, this indicator emphasises the need to know the audience. On this basis it is possible to be confident about adopting methods of feedback that are appropriate. In some forms of community engagement there will be common characteristics that are relevant to all those affected. The appropriate language and media that they are likely to have access to and use will be the same, though it is quite possible that it will require specialist skills to use them, for example, in the context of a specific disability or a particular minority ethnic group. However, more commonly the audience will have diverse characteristics and there will be a need to consider using a range of methods and possibly several languages to ensure that inclusion is achieved. Whatever the language, to make sure that the messages are understood, the way that it is used should be straightforward.

**Indicator 5:**
*Information identifies opportunities for involvement in community engagement and encourages positive contributions from groups and individuals in the community*

In the commentary on indicator 3 the importance of not treating those that are affected as passive has been noted. This indicator focuses on the recognition of the potential for them to become actively involved in the engagement process, directly or indirectly. The overall objective of renewing democracy can only be achieved by encouraging wider involvement. It should be part of the purpose of any community engagement to foster this.

**Indicator 6:**
*Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes*
This proved to be a indicator that was very difficult to express. It is important to be totally clear about what it does and does not mean. It is not saying that the views, activities or behaviour of all members of any community necessarily deserve to be treated positively. For example, racist or criminal elements should be the focus of challenge. They have no positive image to be projected. This is why the term ‘population groups’ is used rather than alternatives like groups in the community. A population group consists of a category of people, for example people in a particular age band, people with learning disabilities, gypsy travellers or gays and lesbians. Any such group has an unrestricted right to equality of opportunity and regard by others. Hence the point that is being made here is that the image of all such population groups should be presented positively in information that is provided.

The reasons for this should be evident but they reflect the support standard that highlights that different people have different barriers that inhibit their involvement. Some of these come directly from negative public images and stereotypes, for example, in relation to disability, sexuality, ethnic origin, age and other factors. Good practice in community engagement challenges such prejudices and a particular area in which this can be achieved is the manner in which feedback (and indeed any other information) portrays people.
10. The monitoring and evaluation standard

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

The final standard relates to monitoring and evaluation. Though it appears at the end, the point has already been made in discussion of the planning standard that monitoring and evaluation should be continuous activities that feed into the ongoing improvement of the process and its results. Hence planning monitoring and evaluation are integrated and mutually dependent activities. Planning sets out purposes and criteria for success, monitoring ensures that information is recorded relating to actions and evaluation judges the benefits that have resulted and the lessons that have been learned. In a cyclical process the lessons feed back into future planning. Even when an engagement process ends and a final evaluation is conducted lessons should still feed into new examples of engagement. All of this is reflected in the standards.

Another key feature of this standard and its indicators is that they present a model of monitoring and evaluation that reflects the participatory principles of community engagement. Just as planning is a shared activity so too is assessment of progress. This should not be taken to imply that there is not also sometimes a case for independent external evaluation. However, it is important to recognise the potential power issues involved in who commissions this. If community engagement is to be an empowering process it has to avoid evaluation that is conducted from the particular interest of one party.

There are many useful participatory evaluation and quality improvement tools\(^2\) that can assist in the context of community engagement. Many participants will be users of them and can bring this experience to bear in agreeing and applying suitable approaches.

**Indicator 1:**
The engagement process and its effects are continually evaluated to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices

This indicator stresses that evaluation is not an event but a process. It is something that should be integrated into practice as a continuous means of learning and development. The evaluation applies both to examining the way in which things have been done and the effects that they have had. The purpose of doing this is to measure what progress has been made, to use the learning to identify and develop skills and, where necessary, change the ways in which things are done. Hence evaluation is connected to all the other standards and indicators.

**Indicator 2:**
Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants (see planning standard indicator 7)

The starting point for developing any evaluation procedure is the purpose for which the activity to be evaluated has been established. Planning standard indicator 7 focused on the need to set and record clear purposes that would,

\(^2\) See for example: EFQM Excellence Model, (www.efqm.org) LEAP (Learning Evaluation and Planning) and its derivative LEAP for Health (www.scdc.org.uk), How Good is Our Community Learning and Development (www.hmie.gov.uk), Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD) (www.scdc.org.uk), the Big Picture (www.scvo.org.uk)
amongst other things, be measurable. This indicator links planning and evaluation. However it is important to realise that what is planned may not be what results and that it is therefore essential to focus on what did happen not just whether the intentions were achieved.

**Indicator 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

Since this is a participatory approach, just as all the parties needed to agree on the purposes of the community engagement so too they need to agree on what sorts of information will provide them with evidence to measure progress. This information needs to be gathered in a systematic manner as work proceeds. It is necessary therefore to agree how it will be gathered, at what time it will be best to gather it and who will take responsibility for doing so. Information will need to be gathered at the start of the process. This is to provide a benchmark or baseline against which change can be measured. It will then need to be gathered at appropriate points in the progress of the engagement. When these are will be determined by the particular character of the process.

**Indicator 4:**
*Relevant participants collect and record this information*

This indicator follows from the previous one and simply ensures that information is actually collected and recorded. It also indicates that the information needs to be analysed in relation to progress against intended results to identify the messages that should be taken from it.

**Indicator 5:**
The information is presented in a user friendly and accurate way

Once analysed information needs to available to all the participants. As in other aspects of the standards this needs to be in a straightforward and readily understandable form and languages suitable for the particular participants.

**Indicator 6:**
The participants agree the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the result and changes

In the light of the evidence presented the participants need to review the lessons that they think should be drawn from it. As with all other aspects of reaching agreement all parties should be enabled to play their part in the discussion. There may, of course, be disagreement about the lessons and it is important to explore this fully.

**Indicator 7:**
The participants act on the lessons learned

To complete the evaluation and planning cycle the lessons need to be built in to new plans and acted upon.

**Indicator 8:**
*Progress is celebrated*
The idea of celebrating progress was seen by those involved in developing the standards as particularly important. In order to build up the commitment of everyone involved, positively recognising that progress is being made is vital. Of course lack of progress should be acknowledged but too often community engagement founders on frustration and recrimination about failure whilst successes go largely unremarked.

**Indicator 9:**
The results of the evaluation are fed back to the participants and the wider community

The results of evaluation are a particularly important aspect of what needs to be fed back to the wider community and agencies. The feedback to them should include celebration of progress. This indicator needs to be progressed in the light of the feedback standard indicators.

**Indicator 10:**
Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other agencies and communities

This indicator links in with standard 7 on working with others. It indicates the importance of recording and sharing lessons from evaluation with others. A culture in which this became normal practice would be beneficial to all. Networking agencies like the Scottish Centre for Regeneration can be useful intermediaries in this respect.