



Community Engagement

Did you know community engagement isn't just something you do for a funder or to improve attendance, it's something that should shape every project, service and decision you make?

Community engagement is about building relationships and trust. When people within the community feel heard and involved, they're more likely to use your services and tell other people about the work you do.

Community engagement can take many forms, from informal conversations at a community centre to structured consultations or collaborative planning. It's about having a two-way conversation and ensuring the community has a voice.

Embedding community engagement into everyday practice doesn't need to be complicated. It starts with regular listening. That could mean adding five minutes at the end of a group session to ask for feedback, inviting local people to help create new projects, or asking for input from volunteers and service users.

Top Tips for Effective Engagement

- Start with relationships - People are more likely to engage with people they know and trust
- Go where people are — schools, cafes, libraries, local events or even online community groups
- Use simple language - speak plainly and make people feel comfortable
- Use a mixture of tools – reach as many people as possible and make it easy for them to get involved
- Make it two-way – give people the opportunity for questions, suggestions and shared problem-solving
- Keep it going - Make it part of how your organisation works all the time

The benefits of engagement are huge. As well as funders expecting to see evidence that communities have shaped and supported your work, you'll build stronger relationships within the community and your projects will be more relevant, inclusive and sustainable.

Successful engagement is not just about gathering opinions, it's about acting on what you hear. Let people know what you've learned, what you're doing differently and where their voice has made a difference. This builds credibility and encourages future involvement.

If you want to build confidence in engagement techniques, refresh your approach or share ideas with others, come along to our face-to-face Community Engagement workshop on Thursday 23rd October from 9.30am – 12.30pm in person at our offices at Durham Community Action. The session will offer practical tools, inspiring examples and space to reflect on your current practices with other organisations.

Book your place here or for more information email tara.hallimond@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk