



Together We're Better: Guide to Engagement and Consultation

Together We're Better Engagement Principles:

This document sets out the standards and methodology for engagement and consultation on any issues arising from the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). It is expected that all consequent public engagement and consultation will comply with this guidance. The risk of non-compliance is that STP plans will be blocked and potentially subject to judicial review.

At its heart, this guidance is intended to support meaningful public engagement – not just a presentation of solutions asking for the public feedback on these. It is therefore essential that there should be engagement as well as formal consultation.

What is Engagement?

Engagement is about having an open conversation with the public which will allow public views and ideas to be incorporated in the planning, design and development of options for change, giving the local community more of an active, participatory ability to have their say based on personal experience and knowledge.

What is Consultation?

Formal consultation is a statutory process that seeks the views of the public on proposals put forward. The normal expected period of consultation is 12 weeks. Consultations must be open and accessible, and occur when there is still the opportunity to influence the outcome of the decision.

All Together We're Better engagement and consultation should be compliant with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Compact. Our Key Principles are that all our engagement should be:

-  **Transparent:** Always be clear about our purpose for engaging
-  **Thorough:** Every effort made to reach out to the whole community
-  **Timely:** Time to gather and conscientiously consider public feedback
-  **Relevant:** Ensure appropriate information is given to informed
-  **Honest:** Be clear about what can and cannot be influenced
-  **Responsive:** Provide regular feedback, and listen to any concerns
-  **Proportionate:** Taking into account the scale of change proposed

Together We're Better Guide To Engagement

1. Establishing the case for change

- Identify issues, analyse the current situation and develop evidence for and against any need for change
- Vital that patients and the public are involved at this stage
- A review of similar and previous consultations at this stage may help shape any future consultation. An initial impact assessment will help identify those who may be affected by the changes that are being considered
- The focus should be on enabling people to gain an understanding of the need for change, and what the financial or other resource restrictions are, so they can help develop the best options
- In addition to public perception data, secondary data must be used to help justify/clarify the need and to triangulate with public voice data

2. Pre-Consultation Engagement

- This should occur over an appropriate length of time, with timescales that allow for a series of public engagement activities to support meaningful engagement. The aim is to test the early development of scenarios and their likely impact, and to develop a robust set of options for the potential change to present in the consultation process. Involving the public at this stage means issues related to service delivery such as transport can be discussed
- Overseeing the engagement process should be a reference group with strong representation from patients and the public (at least 5 individuals who represent communities where there will be an impact)
- A full Impact Assessment should be undertaken to identify the sections of the community that will be most affected. This should involve members of the public and use a range of evidence. Using this information, those sections of the community should be prioritised for discussion
- Meaningful engagement must be conducted, and this could be through networks of patient/carer groups, service users, voluntary sector organisations and directly with Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent residents
- A clear audit trail of all engagement activities must be created and maintained

3. Consultation

- This is the process where the options developed are presented to the wider population, seeking their views to help make a better and more informed decision
- Consultations should be undertaken for an appropriate and proportionate length of time taking into account the time of year and the changes being proposed within the consultation
- Clear information should be made available about the reason for change and the options being put forward. This should include the information about the pre-consultation phase
- Public consultation should be as accessible as possible to include anyone directly affected by the proposed changes, as well as the wider public who may access services in the future
- To ensure accessibility, multiple methods should be used, including interpretation and translation services if required
- It should be clear how people can respond to and give their views on the proposals
- An impact analysis should be presented alongside the options, and updated based on findings
- Opportunities should be available for the public to discuss the options
- If there are any changes to the proposals or related information, these should be made available to the public
- In presenting options for change, clinicians should be involved and able to answer questions from the public.
- There should be clear and obvious involvement and engagement with frontline staff
- People should be told how they can be kept informed and involved in future developments e.g. through Healthwatch

4. Post Consultation

- Time needs to be built into this phase properly to consider the findings of the consultation and use these to inform any decisions
- During this phase, the final decision is communicated, alongside how the feedback from the public has informed that final decision, including what has changed in the approach taken, evidencing how feedback was used to influence this
- Where the decision is different from the majority of public opinion, this should be explained, and a rationale given
- The findings of the consultation should be easily accessible and available to the public
- At this stage, the decision making process and next steps need to be fully explained