

## Engaging with local communities to achieve behaviour change

Engagement with local communities is central to developing targeted behavioural approaches. Community engagement provides the insights needed to ensure that behaviourally informed approaches are effective and accepted by your target group.

### **Purpose**

This guidance has been developed to help local authorities to engage with local communities. It provides actionable and easy-to-use resources to:

- Uncover barriers that prevent residents from doing a given behaviour.
- Develop, deliver and evaluate suitable interventions that address the identified barriers.

Behaviour change interventions will only be successful if we understand, acknowledge, and address the barriers to changing behaviour for all members of a community. This is where the work of local authorities and partner organisations can make a significant difference.

In addition to this guidance and the associated templates, a list of useful resources can be found in the Appendix.

## THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

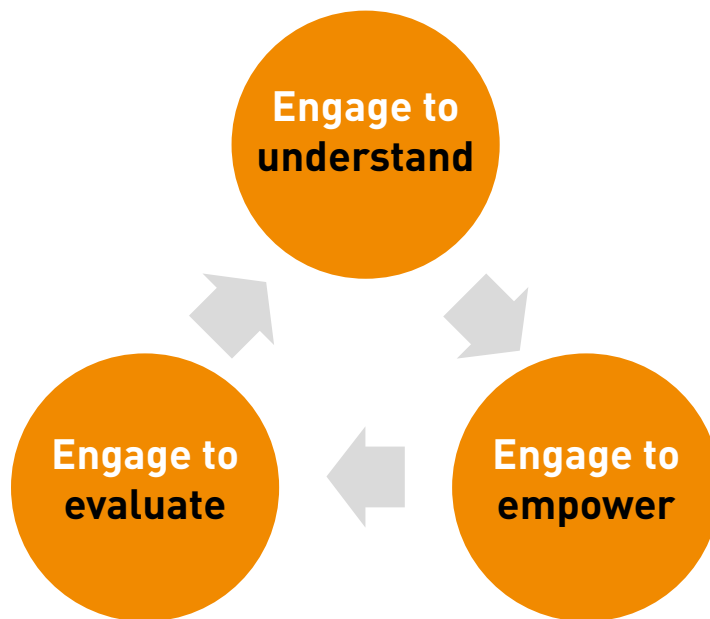
The engagement process ensures that an evidence-informed approach is taken to identify, address, and overcome barriers that prevent people from doing a behaviour.

There are three key stages of the engagement process (See Figure 1):

**Engage to understand**

**Engage to empower**

**Engage to evaluate**



**Figure 1:** The three key stages of the engagement process

It is important to note that these steps are not followed in a linear fashion, rather they emphasise the dynamic and cyclical nature of engagement with community groups.

### **Engage to understand (research)**

**Objective:** To engage with members of the group, either directly or indirectly (e.g., through a local partner organisation), to achieve the following:

- Clarify what is currently understood about your target group from local and national data
- Agree the best way to engage with your target group, the research activities needed, and the timelines
- Understand the barriers and facilitators to behaviour, specific to the target group within the local area. For example, this can be achieved by conducting primary research (e.g., focus groups, surveys and interviews)

- Clarify areas for further investigation based on intelligence collected to date
- Identify key influencers and messengers within the community
- Identify trusted sources of information (where do members of the community get information that they trust?)

**Resources/tools:** The [Engage to Understand template](#) outlines key considerations when planning an engagement exercise, taking into account **C**apability, **O**pportunity, and **M**otivational barriers (in line with the COM-B model).

**Outputs:** At the end of this stage, you will have:

- Developed a plan for engaging with the target group
- Identified barriers and facilitators of behaviour (completed COM-B analysis)
- Identified trusted messengers and the modes of communication

### Engage to empower (develop and deliver)

**Objective:** To apply the insights gained from the previous stage to the co-production of solutions with your target audience.

More specifically, you will:

1. Co-develop solutions with members of your target group to ensure materials are culturally sensitive, appropriate, acceptable and accessible. The solutions will be linked explicitly to the identified barriers, influences and facilitators. You will regularly incorporate feedback from your target audience until all parties involved in the co-creation exercise have agreed that solutions are ready to be implemented
2. Consider how you will implement the co-produced solutions, monitor progress and measure success

**Resources/tools:** The [Engage to Empower template](#) provides a framework for you to list all the barriers identified in the previous stage and plan how to address them.

**Outputs:** At the end of this stage, you will have:

- Co-developed solutions to the identified barriers with members of your target group
- Agreed a delivery plan for how the solutions will be delivered, when, where and by whom
- Detailed ways in which you will be able to check if the solutions are being delivered as planned
- Determined what data needs to be collected so you can assess if your solutions were effective

## Engage to evaluate (measuring impact)

**Objective:** At this stage, the aims are to conduct a process evaluation (i.e., to determine if the interventions are being delivered as intended) and impact evaluation (i.e., to determine whether you successfully changed behaviours) by collecting data and continuing to engage with members of your target group. This will allow for real-time data to be fed back to stakeholders, so that amendments can be made, or additional requirements identified. Below is a list of key actions that can be performed at this stage:

- Pilot the interventions with samples extracted from your target group and make any necessary amendments prior to roll-out
- Put in place, prior to roll-out, methods to collect data so you can conduct both process and impact evaluations (including the collection of baseline data)
- Engage with members of your target group to establish how they feel about engaging in the behaviour
- Follow-up with people who were involved in the 'Engage to Understand' process, for example interviews with individuals or holding follow-up focus groups

**Resources/tools:** See the [Evaluation Guidance table](#) developed by the Cabinet Office for guidance on how to evaluate your projects.

**Outputs:** At the end of this stage, you will have implemented and assessed the impact of your co-developed solutions amongst members of the target group.

## APPENDIX

Communications guidance

Response: A behavioural insights checklist for designing effective communications

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Response%20Playbook%20Final.pdf>

[Engage to Understand Template](#)

[Engage to Empower template](#)

Evaluation guidance table developed by the Cabinet Office

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1049927/6.7837\\_CO\\_Evaluation\\_Guidance\\_table\\_V4.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1049927/6.7837_CO_Evaluation_Guidance_table_V4.pdf)