



National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

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PRESS RELEASE

New guidance from NICE aims to help communities get involved in decision-making for better health

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's (NICE) public health guidance on community engagement is launched today at the LGA 2nd Sustainable Communities Conference in Liverpool. The guidance makes recommendations about how communities can effectively be involved in the planning, design and delivery of services that can improve people's health and well-being and address the wider social determinants of health.

Involving communities, particularly those who experience disadvantage, is central to national strategies for promoting health and well-being and reducing health inequalities. Community engagement activities typically range from one-off consultation exercises through to longer-term activities which allow communities to participate fully in the planning and delivery of services.

The NICE guidance, which is for those working in the NHS and other sectors who have a direct or indirect role in community engagement, presents four important, interlocking themes which represent the ideal scenario for effective community engagement:

- **Prerequisites for success** - recommendations highlight the need for: coordinated implementation of the relevant policy initiatives; a commitment to long-term investment; openness to organisational and cultural change; a willingness to share power; and the development of trust and respect among all those involved.

- **Infrastructure** - Once the prerequisites have been met, it is easier to set up the infrastructure required to implement effective practice. The guidance highlights the need: to provide support for appropriate training and development of those working with the community – including members of that community; for formal mechanisms which endorse partnership working and support for effective implementation of area-based initiatives.
- **Approaches** (to support and increase levels of community engagement). The recommendations in this section outline how ‘agents of change’ and a range of other approaches such as community workshops and resident consultancy can be used to encourage local communities to become involved in health promotion activities and area-based initiatives to address the wider social determinants of health.
- **Evaluation.** Finally, the guidance recognises that improving the quality of evidence is a continuing process. It makes recommendations about the best ways to evaluate programmes and processes in order to increase understanding of how community engagement and the different approaches used impact on health and social outcomes.

Commenting on the guidance, Professor Mike Kelly, Director of NICE’s Centre for Public Health Excellence, said: “The long-term benefits of involving local communities in activities to promote health and wellbeing, particularly those experiencing social and economic disadvantage, are likely to be substantial. A number of approaches to community engagement have been in existence for several decades. However, many factors prevent them from being implemented effectively including the culture of statutory sector organisations, and the capacity and willingness of service users and the public to get involved. This guidance provides a blueprint for effective community engagement that can help local authorities meet their duty to promote wellbeing, tackle health inequalities and improve the health of their communities.”

Anna Coote, Head of Patient and Public Involvement at the Healthcare Commission and Chair of the Programme Development Group, said: “There is already plenty of guidance on how to engage communities, but this represents the first concerted attempt to draw together evidence on what is most likely to affect the underlying determinants of health. The guidance makes it clear that much depends on statutory organisations being prepared to change the way they think and act, in

order to redress imbalances of power between those who provide services, and those for whom the services are intended.”

Liam Hughes, National Adviser, Healthy Communities, at the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA), said: “Although this guidance will be familiar territory for community development and health practitioners, it is based on the most comprehensive review of published evidence ever undertaken and is, therefore, an important document for local government and its partners. The publication of the guidance chimes well with the government’s drive for social inclusion, and the role of local government in promoting healthier places for the local population. In areas of profound and multiple deprivation, progress depends on the active participation of local people, and the internal generation of the motivation to change.

He continued: “It is likely that strong, engaged and empowered communities will be healthier communities. Given its central role in community leadership, local government is the key to a great deal of health improvement, and this guidance needs to be shared widely across the council and debated within local partnerships for health and wellbeing.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

About the guidance

1. The guidance ‘Community engagement to improve health’ is available on the NICE website at www.nice.org.uk/PH009
2. In addition, the following implementation support tools will be available on the website shortly: a slide set; implementation check-list and audit criteria.

About NICE

3. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
4. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - **public health** – guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
 - **health technologies** – guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
 - **clinical practice** – guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.