

NHS HIGHLAND

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 - Participation Requests

Annual Report 2019-2020

Background

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 aims to empower communities. It strives to do achieve this by giving them the power to request to participate in decisions and processes

Participation Requests are intended to provide communities with the opportunity to be pro-actively involved in improving outcomes, to help groups highlight community needs and issues and become involved in change or improvement.

It is not intended to replace existing good community engagement and participation, but to enhance them and give communities the further chance to establish formal dialogue. There are a range of possible uses for Participation Requests; the Scottish Government guidance identifies four broad categories:

- To help people start a dialogue about something that matters to their community through highlighting needs, issues or opportunities for improvement
- To help people have their voice heard in policy and service development through contributing to decision-making processes
- To help people participate in the design, delivery, monitoring or review of service provision, through contributing to service change or improvement
- To help people challenge decisions and seek support for alternatives which improve outcomes.

Receiving a Participation Request triggers a set of procedures and timeframes to ensure that the public body and community participation bodies are engaged in discussion in a supportive and constructive manner. This is to ensure that any exercise is well thought out, appropriate and focussed on improving community outcomes.

Public authorities have a responsibility to promote Participation Requests. They should let people know about the opportunity to make them, and provide information on what they can be used for. The Regulations provide that the public service authority must promote the use of participation requests by publishing information on a website and through social media explaining how a participation request may be made to that authority.

Activities

In compliance with Section 32 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the following requires to be published annually. With regard to NHS Highland's activity covering the year 1 April 2019-31 March 2020, the following can be reported:

Activity	Frequency
• The number of requests received	0
• The number of requests agreed and refused	0
• The number of requests which resulted in changes to a public service provided by, or on behalf of, the public service authority	0
• Any action taken by the public service authority to promote and support the use of participation requests	See below

Promotion

NHS Highland has created a prominent link on the front page of its website specifically dedicated to Community Empowerment. The webpage provides a definition of a Participation Request, clarity on who can make one, how to do so, contact details of local District/Locality Managers and contact details for a single point of contact.

The website confirms that the Board Secretary has been designated the first point of contact for Participation Requests. It also details the process which should be followed, together with the associated timeframes and Scottish Government guidance.

NHS Highland has been involved in a range of ongoing engagement activity over the last year, focussing on the redesign of health and social care services across the Board area. Major redesign is underway in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross, Badenoch and Strathspey and North Coast in Sutherland. Significant pre-engagement work has taken place in Caithness prior to going through an options development and appraisal process.

There has also been significant engagement across a number of communities relating to out of hours and other areas of re-design

These activities have provided avenues for public participation and engagement and probably explain why no formal public requests under the Community Empowerment legislation have taken place. There has been some presentations and sharing of information with some communities especially around possible future use of buildings.

Internally, the process has been supplemented with training exercises within Operational Unit senior management teams.