

Equality Impact Assessment Template: Please complete alongside the guidance document

Title of work: Introduction to community engagement, consultation, participant relationship management system	Date of completion: November 2023 Reviewed November 2024	Completed by: Marie McIlwraith
Description of work: NHS Highland is procuring and developing a new corporate community engagement, consultation, participant relationship management platform, from Engagement HQ. The platform conforms to accessibility requirements, is safe and secure and is supported by the most up to date technology and methodologies to enable inclusive largescale engagement, decision making and opportunity for more transparent democratic processes. Purpose: To support the implementation of the Engagement Framework and progress the Together we Care strategy ambitions, it is recognised that a bespoke digital community engagement platform would enhance meaningful community engagement at scale across the Highland area. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed methods of engagement and given way to a new age of digital engagement approaches, which are now recognised as an accessible, inclusive, cost effective and favourable method to engage and participate. Scotland after COVID-19 Nesta Currently, we are not utilising digital engagement to its full potential, for example, limited engagement from our younger generations and other key stakeholders who may be seldom heard or find it more difficult to engage through ‘traditional’ channels. Digital inclusion has become a key aspect of our society. Research has shown that the nature of digital exclusion is evolving, although there remains exclusion through inability to access resources, it is becoming less about whether you have the capability to get online and more about whether there are perceived benefits to being online. Although digital technologies will not meet everyone’s needs, a growing number of people find digital engagement easier. Creating an inclusive digital world - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) As an organisation we must recognise this and explore and embed digital engagement tools and techniques to inform, engage and meaningfully involve patients, service users, citizens, and communities in planning and future proofing our health and care services. Following a review of our existing engagement mechanisms, we have identified the need to provide a more interactive, customised, and robust digital engagement platform for NHS Highland This would <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance the rollout of NHSH Engagement Framework values and principles, by having a bespoke customised platform with all informing and engagement opportunities and methods in the one place from the start.		

- Encourage our local citizens to voice their opinions using a variety of question types and rich media in a convenient and guided way.
- The comments will help inform Highland wide strategic and locality planning agendas and provide a basis to begin to reconnect and communicate with our citizens and local communities.
- Use of the available engagement tools would provide a variety of options to engage with both internal and external environments. See below example sites with the engagement tools proposed for use within NHSH: (survey, polls, user stories, virtual post it notes, user forums that could support the Highland 100 Panel for Highland citizens as well as Listening and Learning Panel for NHS Highland staff)
 - [West Yorkshire](#) - Mapping tool
 - [Cornwall Council](#) - Story Tool
 - [Kingston Council](#) - Ideas Board
 - [Coventry Council](#) - including Browse Aloud Plug-in
 - [Demo example](#) of Survey tool
 - [Sussex Health & Care](#)

This way of working would also enable us to establish a suitable governance structure, providing overarching and transparent ways to oversee and support multiple engagement processes. Forming part of our assurance reporting frameworks, ensuring that quality, fit for purpose engagement, is taking place at all levels across the organisation.

There is potential to extend the reach and use of the platform to incorporate and support other parts of NHS Highlands structures. For example, Board committees, functions and potentially Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership, as well as the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership structures. Allowing more inclusive ways to involving people in what is traditionally closed meetings that take place during working hours, which limits their accessibility to most of our population.

Outcome of work:

The platform is well-designed, easy to navigate, and will help us to manage engagement related data, target specific geographical areas, communities, or interest groups, manage consent and permissions of our contacts, track and map engagement touchpoints and monitor how responsive and active stakeholders are. Helping us to understand gaps in engagement and work with identified groups and communities in ways best suited to their preferences and needs. The platform will also help us to understand where people's feedback has influenced policy, change, improvements, and decisions and provide us with a clear means to share this information and provide regular updates, where people can choose their preferred format.

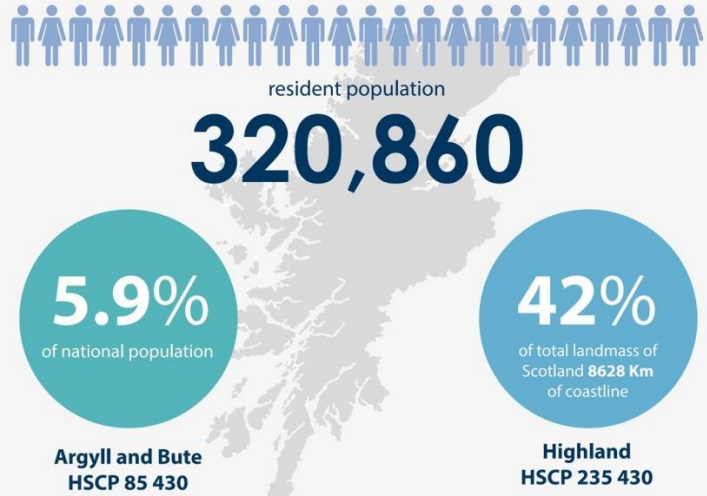
The option of colleague-only areas which will make corporate information more accessible than the current intranet, saving time and improving colleague relationships and satisfaction.

The professional package provides opportunities for us to collaborate with other departments, working seamlessly and in partnerships with programme and project teams on active engagement processes. For example, Estates capital projects, Service redesigns and Public Health initiatives like strategic commissioning.

Ultimately, it will help to improve our communications, engagement and general relationships with the public, staff, and partners. Improving people's perception, patient, and staff experience, which will promote NHS Highland as a responsive, person centred and transparent service provider and place to work.

Who:

This work has the potential to affect everyone who lives and works in the NHS Highland area. Including different staff groups, patients, carers, and people who need social care services, from urban and rural communities and protected or vulnerable groups.



[Our population and people | NHS Highland \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk)

Minorities

2001

5,826 ethnic population
= 2% of total Highland population

Language

5.4% of population speak Gaelic - Main other languages spoken include Polish, Spanish, Arabic and Latvian.
(from requests for interpretation in 2021)

Life expectancy

77.6 years – male

Child poverty

23.5% children aged 0-15 live in poverty

Health inequality and deprivation

9% of population live in deprived areas

Education

95.7% - 1 or more pass at SCQF level 4

64.9% 1 or more pass at SCQF level 6

Unemployment rate

3.4% of over-16s

2011

16,561 ethnic population
= 5.2% of total Highland population

81.8 years – female

24.3% Scottish average

96.2% Scottish average

66% Scottish average

3.8% Scottish average

How do you know:

We have conducted a desk top exercise to understand potential impacts on different groups within our communities, using a range of sources, data, and reports.

The findings and suggested actions within this report have been shared with several partners and colleagues for sense checking. Findings of the most recent Scottish Government surveys suggest that update and usage of the internet, online methods to community and technology are increasing from previous studies.

What will the impact of this work be?

Age

The engagement platform would enable us to reach a wider age range of people, including people of working age, young adults, and younger people. It would also help us to understand different priorities and values for these different groups, by creating opportunities on a digital platform that they can interact with in ways and times that suit them.

Younger people traditionally tend to be underrepresented in community engagement activities; the introduction of the Engagement platform may offer opportunities for increased participation. According to Scottish Government research, 100 percent of young people aged 16 to 24 uses the internet. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>

Use of the internet by age, 2021

Answer	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 or over	All
Internet user	100%	99%	100%	98%	91%	71%	95%
Does not use the internet	0%	1%	0%	2%	9%	29%	5%
All	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	400	900	1,050	2,160	3,210	1,310	9,030

Age Scotland report that 25% of people aged 65 and over in the UK do not use the internet. They suggest that older people who are without digital skills risk losing access to key services such as banking, shopping, and health services, as well as communications platforms that keep people connected. [Helping older people improve their digital skills | Age UK](#)

Their research found that the most common reasons for people aged 65 and over not using the internet were:

1. A lack of skills.
2. A lack of trust on the internet.
3. A lack of access to good enough equipment and/or broadband access.

Confidence in pursuing activities when using the internet by age, 2021

Answer	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 or over	All
Send and receive e-mails	98%	100%	99%	96%	94%	82%	96%
Use a search engine	100%	100%	99%	98%	95%	84%	97%
Shop online	94%	100%	98%	95%	89%	72%	93%
Use public services online	90%	98%	98%	93%	87%	69%	91%
Identify and delete spam	92%	98%	96%	93%	84%	71%	91%
Be able to tell what websites to trust	94%	97%	95%	92%	82%	66%	90%
Control privacy settings online	92%	96%	94%	87%	75%	62%	86%
Base	120	300	340	670	950	330	2,720

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>

We plan to work with partners to identify and reach nondigital members of communities to ensure people can share their experience and participate in engagement opportunities, in ways that suit their needs.

Sex

The engagement platform would enable us to reach a wider range of people, including people of working age, young adults, and younger people. It would also help us to understand different priorities and values for these different groups, by creating opportunities on a digital platform that they can interact with in ways and times that suit them.

There are no known impacts relating to sex

Disability

Disabled people face many barriers to community engagement, typically due to financial concerns, physical accessibility, and a lack of understanding regarding the different issues that they face ([Attree et al 2011](#)).

However, for some disabled and/or older people, digital methods may provide opportunities to participate without the common barriers of having to travel far or sit/stand for long periods of time ([Edwards 2001](#)).

The Office for National Statistics data suggests that the number of disabled people using the internet is generally lower, however there is a decreasing number of people who have never used the internet. [Internet users, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

TABLE 3B: RECENT AND LAPSED INTERNET USERS AND INTERNET NON-USERS, BY AGE GROUP (YEARS) AND DISABILITY, UK, 2014 TO 2020

Persons aged 16 years and over

		Used in the last 3 months							Used over 3 months ago							Never used							
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	%
All	Equality Act Disabled ¹	64.9	67.8	71.0	73.4	76.6	78.3	81.4	4.6	4.5	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.5	30.3	27.4	25.0	22.5	19.6	18.2	14.9	
	Not Equality Act Disabled ²	90.8	91.7	92.9	93.6	93.9	94.8	95.7	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.8	7.5	6.6	5.7	5.1	5.0	4.1	3.4	
16-24	Equality Act Disabled	95.7	95.2	97.3	97.1	98.0	98.0	98.6	0.9	1.1	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	2.9	2.8	1.6	2.3	1.5	1.2	1.0	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	99.2	99.3	99.4	99.5	99.4	99.4	99.7	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	
25-34	Equality Act Disabled	94.0	95.2	96.2	96.9	98.0	98.1	98.0	1.4	1.5	1.7	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.6	4.2	2.8	1.6	2.4	1.8	1.4	1.4	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	98.8	99.0	99.3	99.4	99.4	99.6	99.8	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	
35-44	Equality Act Disabled	89.9	92.0	94.6	94.8	95.9	96.8	96.4	3.1	2.6	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.2	0.8	6.9	5.1	3.9	3.4	2.4	1.9	2.4	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	97.9	98.2	98.9	99.1	99.1	99.3	99.6	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	1.2	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	
45-54	Equality Act Disabled	80.9	85.0	87.4	89.2	91.6	92.8	94.4	5.3	3.9	3.4	2.9	2.7	1.8	1.1	13.6	10.9	9.1	7.6	5.4	5.3	4.4	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	95.0	95.8	96.8	97.9	98.2	98.7	98.9	1.3	1.2	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	3.4	2.8	2.1	1.4	0.9	0.8	0.6	
55-64	Equality Act Disabled	72.3	76.0	77.6	80.4	83.9	86.4	88.8	5.4	4.9	5.1	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.7	22.1	18.9	17.1	15.7	12.4	9.8	7.4	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	88.9	91.0	92.5	93.8	94.8	95.9	96.9	2.5	2.1	1.7	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.8	8.5	6.8	5.7	4.8	3.8	2.9	2.2	
65-74	Equality Act Disabled	55.4	60.5	65.0	69.4	73.5	75.8	79.4	6.2	6.1	5.8	4.6	5.0	4.3	4.2	38.4	33.2	29.1	26.0	21.5	19.7	16.3	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	71.2	76.1	79.1	82.2	83.9	87.2	89.0	4.5	4.6	3.5	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.3	24.3	19.3	17.2	14.4	13.2	10.1	8.7	
75+	Equality Act Disabled	25.8	27.4	30.8	34.0	38.8	40.7	47.0	5.0	6.2	4.5	7.8	6.5	6.9	8.3	69.1	66.0	64.7	57.9	54.6	52.2	44.6	
	Not Equality Act Disabled	39.3	40.0	48.1	48.1	48.9	54.1	62.1	5.3	6.0	5.1	6.7	4.8	5.2	5.7	55.4	53.9	46.6	45.1	46.1	40.6	32.2	

Some percentages sum to less than 100 due to "don't know" responses.

Source: Office for National Statistics

[Iriss](#) found that accessing the internet can improve social interaction in people with disabilities ([Kyndland, 2012](#)), and can provide independent ways for people with learning disabilities to have a private life separate from carers. ([Löfgren-Mårtenson, 2008](#)). The engagement platform could support people with disabilities to engage with NHS Highland on matters important to them, in a range of ways, that can be tailored by the individual to suit their needs and preferences. Alternative methods for engagement will also be available directly from NHS Highland or via trusted partners.

Ethnicity

There are no known impacts relating to Ethnicity. The engagement platform is moderated and monitored by Engagement HQ to ensure people can participate in a safe and supported environment.

Religion

There are no known impacts relating to religion. The engagement platform is moderated and monitored by Engagement HQ to ensure people can participate in a safe and supported environment.

Sexual orientation

There are no known impacts relating to gender reassignment. The engagement platform is moderated and monitored by Engagement HQ to ensure people can participate in a safe and supported environment.

Gender reassignment

There are no known impacts relating to gender reassignment. The engagement platform is moderated and monitored by Engagement HQ to ensure people can participate in a safe and supported environment.

Pregnancy and maternity

The engagement platform would enable people to choose to engage with us at a time most suited to them, which would support people with young children and families. People would be able to access information in a range of ways and choose a method of engagement that best suits their personal circumstances and needs.

Unemployed

The engagement platform would enable people to engage with us at a time that suits them best and people would be able to access information in a range of ways, best suited to their personal needs and circumstances.

It would not replace alternative methods for engagement or working with partners to ensure that engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may not use digital approaches.

People on benefits

Research suggests that digital engagement is a preferred method for most groups within society, particularly with the rise in access to smart phones and other mobile technology. The engagement platform would enable people to engage with us at a time that suits them best and people would be able to access information in a range of ways, best suited to their personal needs and circumstances.

Improved access to community or shared WIFI means people can use their own technology to go online in more public places (City WIFI) as well as access communal desk top devices in public libraries and community and educational centres.

The engagement platform would not replace face to face engagement, where this is most appropriate, or working with partners to ensure that engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may prefer alternative forms of engagement, or who do not use digital or have access to digital technologies.

Lone parents

The engagement platform would enable people to choose to engage with us at a time most suited to them, which would support people with young children and families. People would be able to access information in a range of ways and choose a method of engagement that best suits their personal circumstances and needs.

Care experienced children and young people

Research suggests that children and young people prefer to use digital platforms for social and engagement activities, and the platform would support us to reach and hear from a range of young people in easy and familiar ways.

Iriss suggests, [Children in care and their use of mobile devices and the internet for contact | Iriss](#)

- the use of mobile devices and the internet are a normal part of everyday life for children and young people, including those in care.
- A balanced view of use of devices and the internet by children and young people in care is to appreciate both opportunities and risks associated with use.
- There are a number of factors known to increase the vulnerability of children and young people online.

Links to appropriate support as well as the built-in moderation, would help to provide a safe space for vulnerable people, including, young people and young carers, people with disabilities and care experienced people. [Inclusive Digital Safety Advice Hub | Internet Matters Internet-Matters-Report-Vulnerable-Children-in-a-Digital-World.pdf \(internetmatters.org\)](#)

The engagement platform would not replace other forms of engagement and working with partners to ensure that safe and meaningful engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may not have access to or use digital technology, would be an important part of any engagement plans and strategies.

Carers (including young carers)

The engagement platform would enable people to choose to engage with us at a time most suited to them, which would support people with caring responsibilities. Carers would be able to access information in a range of ways and choose a method of engagement that best suits their personal circumstances and needs.

Homeless people

People who are homeless make widespread use of phone and internet; almost as much as the wider population ([Lemson and Crane, 2013; 2015](#)), but their experiences of use (and barriers) are different. [Digital inclusion, exclusion and participation | Iriss](#)

The [Digital-Exclusion-of-Homeless-People.pdf \(peopleknowhow.org\)](#) report, states that 'Much of the digital inclusion in the homeless community is reliant on public spaces. As a report by Heather Williams shows, of those who used the internet, '41% used public buildings ...31% used private wi-fi ... Public wi-fi hotspots were also popular at 29% usage, and only 6% had a 3G contract.' (Williams, 2017). The public sphere is very important to this community to gain digital inclusion but as much of the literature shows there are several issues within it that are causing exclusion.'

We will work with Highlife Highland and other trusted partners as part of the development and implementation of the platform and engagement framework roll out, to ensure there are meaningful and appropriate ways for homeless people to share their experience and engage with NHS Highland.

Those involved in the community justice system

Serving a prison sentence can often mean being excluded from changes in technology and software. Without proper access to, and current skills in, digital technology there is risk to reintegration into society ([Toreld, 2018](#)).

[Digital inclusion, exclusion and participation | Iriss](#)

We will work with HRM Prison leads and other relevant trusted partners as part of the development and implementation of the platform and engagement framework roll out, to ensure there are meaningful and appropriate ways for people who are part of the justice system, to share their experiences and engage with NHS Highland.

People with low literacy/numeracy

Following the Covid 19 pandemic, more people can access and are familiar with using the internet and technology as part of their daily lives, for learning, socialising, information and keeping in touch. The Scottish Government facilitated a range of interventions to help people access equipment and learn digital skills, to support people during a time when almost everything was only available online.

Digital solutions have been developed to support people to access information and utilise technology, that can be beneficial for individuals with low literacy and numeracy skills.

The digital platform for engagement presents a range of opportunities and choices that could support people with low literacy or numeracy levels, to engage with NHS Highland about things that are important to them or that could affect them. For example, information can be presented in different formats, like video, BSL, audio and documents written in plain language, can have immersive reading and translation ability.

Data and technical information could be presented in visual and easier to understand ways, with audio descriptions to help make the information presented, clearer and meaningful.

The Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic guidance states the following statistics around adult literacy in Scotland:

- In 2020 **324,700** adults in Scotland had low or no qualifications.^[1]
- Data from Scotland's Census showed that 7,796 (0.15%) of people aged 18+ did not speak English at all and 46,993 (0.92%) of people aged 18+ did not speak English well.^[2]
- Evidence from national numeracy surveys suggests while Scotland performs slightly better than average

for the UK in terms of adult numeracy skills, there are still around 56% of adults with low numeracy skills. This is the equivalent of 1.9 million working age adults.^[3]

- Scottish Prison Service data shows that 24% of the Scottish prison population have difficulties in using a computer. 18% of the prison population report difficulties with writing and 17% report difficulties with numeracy.^[4]

The engagement platform would not replace alternative methods for engagement, or working with partners to ensure that engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may not use digital or have access to digital technologies.

Those living in most deprived communities

The [Scottish Household Survey](#) results indicate that people from the most deprived areas in Scotland are between 3 and 34% less likely to have access to technology like a computer or laptop. As part of redesign or engagement planning, NHS Highland will work with partners and communities to establish strong connections. Working in partnership to create localised plans and opportunities for meaningful engagement for protected and vulnerable groups, including those who may not have access to or use digital technology.

Answer	Quintile 1 - 20% most deprived	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 - 20% least deprived	All
A personal computer or laptop	68%	71%	77%	79%	84%	76%
Digital, cable or satellite television	27%	29%	28%	31%	35%	30%
Mobile phone, for example iPhone / Smartphone	89%	90%	87%	87%	90%	89%
A games console, for example Playstation / xBox	17%	17%	12%	13%	15%	15%
A tablet - iPad/Playbook or similar	50%	53%	53%	56%	61%	55%
Another way	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Any excluding a personal computer or laptop	94%	96%	93%	95%	95%	95%
Base	1,040	1,370	1,840	2,080	2,010	8,330

Remote and rural communities

Research suggests that digital engagement is a preferred method for most groups within society, particularly with the rise in access to smart phones and other mobile technology. The engagement platform would enable people to engage with us at a time that suits them, and people would be able to access information in a range of ways, best suited to their personal needs and circumstances. For rural communities, this would mean they would be able to engage with us on important matters and topics of interest, without the need to navigate lengthy and difficult journeys, removing barriers for those in our most remote locations. The Scottish Government's plans for levelling up broadband coverage is underway and the staggered rollout of 4g and suitable broadband

provision across the country. The [‘A Changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world’ document](#) states “geography, background or ability is not a barrier to getting online and benefiting from digital technology, and we capitalise on the potential of digital technology to sustain and invigorate rural and island communities;”

The engagement platform would not replace alternative methods for engagement or working with partners to ensure that engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may not use or have access to digital technologies.

Given all of the above what actions, if any, do you plan to take?

Engagement HQ will provide comprehensive implementation training and allocate a dedicated engagement expert to support the NHS Highland team.

They also provide 24/5 online chat function and 24/7 email support as well as a comprehensive online help desk library to help people to engage through the platform.

An implementation plan, training and awareness package will be created to support people, both internally and externally, to fully engage with the platform. This will include working with different partners like [Ability Net](#), and Internet Matters [Online safety issues - advice to support children](#) | [Internet Matters](#) to ensure people have access to the right type of support, to help them to access and engage with us safely online.

The online platform would not replace alternative ways to engage with people, or working with partners to ensure that engagement opportunities exist for protected and vulnerable groups, who may not have access to or use digital technology, such as contactable telephone numbers, paper forms or surveys with freepost or return options, available on demand, and face to face engagement where preferred and appropriate.

As part of the implementation of the engagement framework we plan to work with partners and groups to develop our networks and approaches and establish preferred methods of communication and engagement for people with lived experience across the Highland area.

The use of the platform will be monitored and scrutinized as part of our reporting framework and ongoing evaluation of engagement methods will be adopted and reviewed as part of the implementation of the Engagement Framework, with a view to ongoing improvement and improving access and experience.

Approved by: Ruth Fry, Head of Communications and Engagement