

Key Communication Skills for Engaging with the Public



Effective public engagement is built on trust, clarity, and two-way dialogue

1. Listen First

- Give people time to speak
- Check understanding (“Have I got that right?”)

2. Communicate Clearly

- Use plain language, avoid jargon
- Focus on key messages

3. Non-Verbal Communication

- Using appropriate eye contact, posture, and facial expression – smile/be interested.
- Give your full focus to the conversation, or you will look disinterested.
- Being aware of body language in both yourself and others.
- Ensuring consistency between what you say and how you say it.

Why it matters: **Non-verbal cues strongly influence how messages are received.**

4. Show Empathy

- Acknowledge feelings and lived experience
- Be respectful, even when views differ

5. Be Open and Honest

- Explain what is known, unknown, and why
- Be transparent about constraints but avoid defensiveness

6. Manage Difficult Conversations

- Stay calm and professional
- De-escalate tension, don't dismiss concerns

7. Reflect and Learn

- Review what worked and what didn't
- Use feedback to improve future engagement

Key message: Public engagement is not about persuading people – it's about understanding, involving, and building trust.

For other engagement advice, guidance and toolkits please or visit [Public Involvement](#) or contact the NHS Grampian Public Involvement Team at gram.involve@nhs.scot