

Guidance to support engagement with flood risk communities.

What is community engagement?

Whenever a group of responsible authority staff gather to discuss '*what is engagement with flood risk communities*' a discussion about different language usually emerges. Depending on the situation in which you are working, '*engagement*' can cover consultation, communication, education, public participation, participative democracy or working in partnership.

The [SCDC](#) has developed a useful guide called [community development in 60 seconds](#).

In relation to flood risk management, it can cover all the actions such as awareness raising, community flood action groups, emergency planning, flood protection schemes, new flood warnings, self-help, property level protection scheme and natural flood management. All of the actions in the flood risk management plans can involve some level of engagement with flood risk communities.

For our purposes, '*engagement*' is used as a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and delivering action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

The illustration below outlines the wide range of activities that can be included when engaging flood risk communities.



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The word '*community*' is also a very broad term used to define groups of people; whether they are stakeholders, interest groups, community groups, etc.

A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of interest), or a community of affiliation or identity (such as industry or sporting club). Flood risk communities can be described as communities of geography, place or interest but the realities are often far more refined.

Community engagement can be described as the mutual communication and deliberation that occurs between responsible authorities and flood risk communities.

Community engagement can take many forms and covers a broad range of activities. Some examples of community engagement undertaken by responsible authorities include:

- Informing the community of flood risk management policy directions
- Consulting the community as part of a process to develop flood risk management policy, actions or build community awareness and understanding
- Involving the community through a range of methods to ensure that issues and concerns are understood and considered as part of the decision-making process
- Collaborating with the community by developing partnerships to formulate options and provide recommendations.
- Empowering the community to make decisions and to implement actions to manage flood risk.

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