

Overview

This standard is about making contact and initiating relationships with key people and organisations in a community to find out about its issues and concerns. It involves gathering existing information and supporting communities to generate new information, in order to better understand the needs, strengths and circumstances of communities.

This standard is relevant to all community development practitioners.

The community development standards are arranged in six key areas:

1. Understand and practise community development
2. Understand and engage with communities
3. Group work and collective action
4. Collaboration and cross-sectoral working
5. Community learning for social change
6. Governance and organisational development

This standard is within Key Area Two.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. make contact with different groups within a community
2. explain own and organisation's role to people within the community
3. record details of the people and groups contacted for future community engagement
4. review the record of contacts to identify and fill gaps
5. establish contacts and links across all sections of the community
6. use a variety of research methods and participatory strategies to produce a community audit
7. establish processes for periodically reviewing and revising the community audit
8. adapt own role in response to community audits

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the effects of structural factors on communities
2. the impact of diversity on community development within and between communities
3. how legislation and policies affect communities
4. the role and the contribution of community development practitioners who work with communities
5. how to identify community priorities and concerns through participatory approaches
6. different methods and styles of engaging with a range of individuals and communities
7. how informal networks can be used to increase the number and quality of contacts that can be used for the benefit of communities
8. the importance of taking time to build relationships and foster trust and respect

Values

Community development is underpinned by a set of values which distinguish it from other, sometimes related, activities in the community. These values are at the core of community development and underpin each of the standards. The values are:

1. Social justice and equality
2. Anti-discrimination
3. Community empowerment
4. Collective action
5. Working and learning together

The following examples illustrate how each of the community development values might inform practice in this standard. These statements are not part of assessment requirements.

1. environmental, political, cultural, economic and social contexts are built into community audits
2. contact with people from diverse and marginalised communities is actively pursued
3. the views of community members and groups are clearly articulated and represented
4. community members are involved in the gathering and interpretation of information
5. working relationships based upon respect are developed and maintained

Glossary

Collective action

Working together with others to achieve a common aim.

Community

The web of personal relationships, groups, networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour that can develop among those who share a geographic area or identity or interest.

Community audit

A technique of using participatory approaches to research communities to inform actions, strategies or policies.

Community development practitioner

A person doing community development work as a paid worker, unpaid worker, group member, community activist or volunteer.

Community Engagement

A way to build and sustain relationships within and between communities, community groups or organisations, public sector, third sector and other agencies. It provides a foundation for collaboration helping them to understand and collectively take action.

Empowerment

A process where people gain control (eg confidence, knowledge, skills, resources) to affect decisions impacting on their communities.

Learning

Can be informal, formal and non-formal:

- Informal refers to experiential and personal learning
- Formal learning refers to what we gain from courses, academic studies and continual professional development
- Non-formal education is that which can be informal or formal but occurs in non-traditional settings e.g. in communities.

Organisation

Any collection of people in the community, voluntary, public and private sectors and any hybrid configuration across these sectors. It refers to community groups, charities, community and social enterprises, statutory agencies, businesses.

Resources

This covers any physical or human resource that supports the community development process and could include technical equipment, IT-based resources, buildings, sources of specialist knowledge, local assets

Structural factors

Powerful social processes that impact on people's lives, even before birth, and include: cultural, economic, ecological, social, political and demographic factors that manifest at

community, national, international levels; and which are often inter-connected to affect the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

Support

The work a community development practitioner may undertake to ensure the group can pursue its aims. The types of activities may include: providing information, moral and motivational encouragement, researching particular topics, identifying sources of help, listening to group members' ideas and thought processes and reflecting them back, facilitating decision-making, acting as an advocate, coach, mentor, critical friend.

Technology

This refers to both hardware and online tools/apps which can be used in practice and communication (including social media).

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