

Title of policy:	Engagement & Participation policy
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Owned by	Community Engagement and Volunteering Lead
Approved by/date:	Board of Trustees
Date of next review:	December 2025 [3 years from approval]

This is a discretionary policy which does not form part of a contract of employment. The Board of Trustees of Carers in Bedfordshire may vary or amend the policy as it deems necessary.

The term staff is used in this document as a generic statement to refer to any person working for Carers in Bedfordshire in any capacity and includes volunteers, part time staff, Board members, sessional/ temporary workers and placement students.

Policy Statement

Carers in Bedfordshire is committed to placing carers at the heart of everything we do. We aim to enable each carer to take their own decisions about how our services can best support them. We believe that carer engagement is important because services that reflect and take into account the experience, needs and wishes of the people who use them are more likely to be effective.

This is especially pertinent to carers who can be excluded from decisions about care and treatment of the person they care for, and their knowledge and expertise disregarded. Carers receiving services from Carers in Bedfordshire are fully involved in their planning their support, making choices about take up of services and ongoing review of their requirements.

Our ethos is carer empowerment, enabling individuals to be validated, and to gain in confidence and skills. This is embedded into our governance structure and operational principles.

Key principles

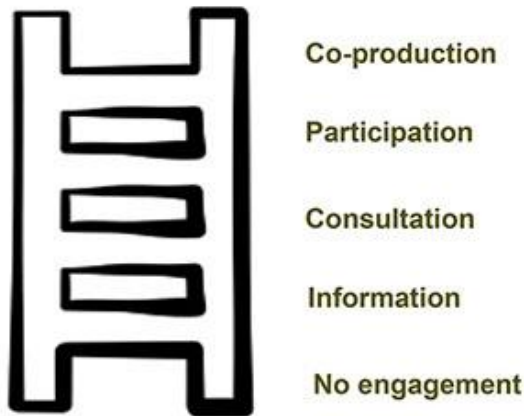
Engagement and participation are more than consultation and involvement, although these are important, but instead are founded on sharing control.

As well as promoting the self-esteem of those taking part, this way of working can raise expectations and reveal new, creative and improved ways of delivering services and developing new ones. It contributes to a culture of continuous improvement.

Engagement is a partnership between staff and carers based on the belief in the value of carers' contributions and the difference their experiences can make to carer support services and to individuals.

We recognise the very real practical and other barriers that may prevent many carers from working with us and will do our best to overcome these where resources allow.

This policy is informed by the Ladder of Involvement/Participation, originated by Arnstein and adopted widely in public and voluntary sector service design:



Implementation

- Formal and informal feedback from carers is actively sought, recorded and analysed and is used to plan future service developments
- Carers are offered opportunities to be involved at different levels of planning, decision making and developing the work of the organisation
- Carers are encouraged, supported and enabled to participate in planning and reviewing local service developments and participating at a strategic level
- We are committed to maintaining and developing further carer involvement throughout the organisation
- We reach out to a range of carers voices that are seldom heard
- We are committed to offering a range of mechanisms so that carers can get as involved as their circumstances allow them, taking into account that some carers will need additional support to contribute
- We will publish the findings from engagement and participation work to carers, to commissioners and to service providers
- At least 50% of the Board of Directors must have past or present caring experience.