

How to... Understand who you need to speak to - mapping your stakeholders

1. What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is an **individual, group or organisation interested and/or potentially impacted** by the outcome of a project or programme.

They can be inside or outside of the organisation leading the project. They may have views, expectations and agendas in relation to the project. They may not be aware of your project yet, for example those experiencing health inequalities, but you need to proactively engage with these groups to understand the potential impact on them.

Understanding your stakeholders' levels of interest and their influence is helpful in deciding how best to work with them.

2. Why is stakeholder mapping important?

Effective stakeholder mapping provides several benefits:

- **Defining and shaping your projects**

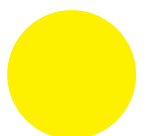
You can use the opinions of your stakeholders to help define your projects at an early stage. These stakeholders will then more likely support you, and their input can also improve the quality of your project.

- **Access to wider networks**

Gaining interest and support from stakeholders can help you to access wider networks and communities where you may not have reach.

- **Building understanding**

By engaging your stakeholders early and throughout your project, you can ensure that they understand what you're doing and as well as the potential benefits and challenges of your project. This means they can make better informed contributions and even advocate for the project via their own networks – working on our behalf as a trusted voice where we may not have reach.



- **Surfaces issues early**

Mapping your stakeholders effectively means that you can understand issues from their perspective and take steps to mitigate any risks and explore solutions before projects become too developed.

3. When should you undertake stakeholder mapping?

You should be aware of who you are trying to engage; who are your potential key allies; and who might cause obstacles before you begin any project or programme. However, this is particularly important where this is a **proposed service change**. Stakeholders, their levels of interest and influence and their views can change over time so it is also important to revisit your stakeholder map before you reach any key milestones.

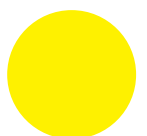
4. How to map your stakeholders

A. Identify your stakeholders

Start by thinking broadly about who your stakeholders are and making a list. As part of this, think of all the people who are potentially affected by your work, who have influence or power over it, or have an interest in it. Looking at existing insights and your equalities impact assessment will also help you.

Stakeholders in your project or programme will probably include some or more of the following (depending on the scale of the project):

- Internal stakeholders:
 - Senior executives
 - Colleagues
 - Wider staff groups
 - Clinicians
- Local people and communities including people with lived experience, their families and carers
- People from communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities
- People who might use the service in future and those who may not be using services but should be
- The wider public including residents
- Healthwatch
- Voluntary and community sector organisations, including small community led organisations and local and national charities



- Other ICB partners such as: trusts, provider collaboratives, primary care networks, local authorities and regulators
- Clinical bodies: Royal Colleges, professional bodies, research organisations and partners
- Political: local and national government, local councillors, local MPs, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Health and Wellbeing Boards, local campaign groups (e.g. 'Keep Our NHS Public')
- Trade Unions
- Media
- Universities and medical schools

You will need to involve people and communities with relevant lived experience relating to your project. There may also be voluntary and community organisations and political interest groups; local populations; and other services potentially impacted by a change that also need to be part of the stakeholder mapping. Some stakeholders will be easy to identify, for example, if you are making internal changes, then staff, management and trade unions will be key stakeholders.

Some of these may be more difficult to identify and it will be useful to get key people who are involved in the project to help list potential stakeholders. You may want to involve clinical staff and people with lived experience in this process. Remember to include people who will **potentially** be impacted and communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities; those where the impact could be felt disproportionately (think about the [9 protected characteristics](#), as well as issues such as deprivation); and about the perception of impact – for instance, local residents worried about a clinic opening in their area.

B. Prioritise your stakeholders

You will now have a list of people and organisations that are potentially or directly affected by your work. Some of these may have the power to advance it or create obstacles to that work. Some may be interested in what you are doing, while others may not be interested or understand how the project may impact them. However, given the importance of addressing health inequalities you need to work out who you need to prioritise.

This prioritisation is usually done by classifying stakeholders according to their **influence** over your work and their **interest** in it, on a power/interest grid (see figure 1). The **influence/interest** grid is used to identify key stakeholders that have a high level of power and interest in a project, and therefore need to be managed closely.

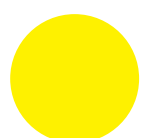
Figure 1: Influence/interest grid for stakeholder prioritisation

Influence	High	Make these stakeholders aware of general opportunities to be engaged and be alert to any requests to be more engaged.	Prioritise engaging with these stakeholders. Arrange engagement activities directly with them.
	Low	Monitor these stakeholders and be alert to any requests to be more engaged.	Keep these stakeholders updated about what is happening and any opportunities to be engaged.
		Low	High
		Interest	

The position that you allocate to a stakeholder on the grid indicates what kind of actions you need to take with them:

- **High influence, highly interested people (work closely with):** you must fully engage these people and make the greatest efforts to satisfy them. Communication should be designed to engage.
- **High influence, less interested people (keep satisfied):** these are sometimes people that you want to involve more closely, but who may not initially be interested. You will want to ensure that you keep them well informed and give them opportunities to be involved.
- **Low influence, highly interested people (keep informed):** adequately inform these people and talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising.
- **Low influence, less interested people (monitor):** these are people who are unlikely to be involved. Communication should be open and transparent so they can find out as much as they want to.

It is possible that, over time, stakeholders in one section of the grid may move to another section. Therefore, it is important to continuously review your stakeholder map throughout your project. It is important to consider how you will track and evaluate your relationship with your stakeholders, the influence certain stakeholders have on one another and stakeholder activity.



Another important point to note is that groups with minimal power or interest are sometimes overlooked. However, people in these groups can influence others, and their interest levels may change.

3. Understand and manage your key stakeholders

It is important to understand how best to engage and communicate with your stakeholders and, using that knowledge, find out their views. Questions that can help you understand your stakeholders include:

- What interest do they have in the outcome of your work? Is it positive or negative?
- What motivates them most of all?
- What information do they want from you, and what is the best way of communicating with them?
- What is their current opinion of your work? Is it based on good information?
- Who influences their opinions generally, and who influences their opinion of you?
- If they aren't likely to be positive, is there a handling plan for dealing with negative comments or groups who may cause delays or pose risk.
- Who else might be influenced by their opinions? Do these people become stakeholders in their own right?
- Who already holds relationships with these audiences/stakeholders? For instance, if this is current patients, then the staff they meet in clinic will be very important. Your engagement lead may also have strong relationships with local groups. You might also want to use a neutral intermediary, such as Healthwatch, to help communicate and engage. It's important you know who is communicating with these stakeholders to avoid duplication and make sure they have one or two points of contact within your organisation.

You can ask your stakeholders these questions directly. Asking for their opinions is often the first step in building a relationship with them.

This information will help you decide how to communicate or engage with them; what routes to use; who is likely to champion or to oppose. It will form the basis of any communications or engagement plan.

4. Engagement planning

Now your stakeholder mapping is complete, this information will feed into your overall engagement plan.

