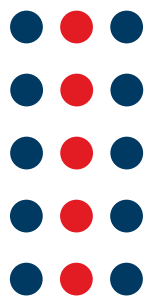


NATIONAL COMMUNITY PLANNING SELF-ASSESSMENT



Argyll and Bute National Community Planning Self-Assessment Progress

Case Study: Building Stronger Community Planning Through Engagement, Learning and Partnership Development



Overview

Argyll and Bute CPP have demonstrated how investment in both community engagement and partnership development can create a virtuous cycle of improvement. By strengthening feedback mechanisms, supporting participatory leadership, modernising communications and fostering a culture of continuous learning, the partnership is building stronger connections between communities, partners and decision-makers.

Background

Through the National Community Planning Self-Assessment, Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) identified two closely linked areas for improvement. The first focused on strengthening how the partnership understands community needs through better engagement, intelligence gathering and community involvement. The second focused on ensuring Board and partnership members have the knowledge, skills and support required to fulfil their roles effectively.

- **Action for Improvement 1:** Further develop the partnerships mechanisms for understanding the needs of individuals and communities to support the work of the CPP.
- **Action for Improvement 2:** Consider the partnership's approaches to Board member induction and ongoing development to ensure members are clear on their roles and responsibilities.

Specific improvement actions focused on mapping existing engagement mechanisms, improving collaboration across partners, strengthening links with Area Community Planning Groups, and encouraging greater participation from communities and community organisations.

Recognising that effective community planning depends on both meaningful engagement with communities and strong partnership leadership, the CPP has taken a coordinated approach to strengthening both areas simultaneously.



What Was Done?

Creating a Partnership-Wide Engagement Network

The CPP established a dedicated **CPP Engagement Group** to bring partners together to share intelligence, discuss engagement activity, and coordinate future engagement opportunities. The group's first meeting took place in December 2025 and meetings are now held every two months. Members share learning from engagement exercises, emerging findings and planned activities, helping to build a more coordinated understanding of community needs across the partnership. Creation of this group has avoided duplication and supports a more coordinated understanding of local needs.

Investing in Participatory Leadership

Alongside this, the CPP invested in developing engagement capability. In June 2026, a training session on participatory leadership techniques was delivered for CPP members, with funding secured for a wider development event later in 2026 focused on community engagement practice.

Investing in Partnership Development

In addition to strengthening community engagement, the CPP established a more structured approach to member development and learning. A comprehensive development programme was approved by the Management Committee in June 2026, covering eight development activities, including face-to-face learning sessions, hybrid events, information-sharing exercises and thematic workshops. Development priorities were identified through a partner survey to ensure the programme reflected members' needs.

The CPP has also actively engaged with regional and national networks, including the Scottish Community Planning Network and the Highlands and Islands CPP network, enabling members to learn from emerging practice, share local experience and bring new ideas back into the partnership. Active participation in national and regional networks allows the CPP to benchmark its approach, learn from peers and continually improve its own practice. This outward-looking approach ensures the partnership remains connected to emerging developments across Scotland.

Building Community Influence into Governance Arrangements

The partnership also strengthened communication and feedback arrangements with Area Community Planning Groups (ACPGs). Quarterly meetings between the Community Planning Team and ACPG Chairs and Vice Chairs now create opportunities to shape agendas, raise local issues and ensure a regular exchange of information between



locality partnerships and strategic community planning structures. A formal reporting cycle has been developed, with update papers flowing between the CPP Management Committee and ACPGs, creating a clear and consistent feedback loop. This route enables communities to directly influence strategic discussion whilst ensuring that information flows in both directions.

Co-production with Communities

To encourage wider participation in community planning, the CPP refreshed its [Welcome Pack](#), producing an accessible resource that explains community planning, the role of the CPP, how people can get involved and how communities can influence decision-making. The refresh was undertaken collaboratively with community involvement, helping ensure the resource was relevant and accessible to local people.

Using Innovative Communications

The partnership has also developed innovative communications approaches, including a [CPP podcast](#) that showcases positive examples of partnership activity, highlights progress against priority outcomes and raises awareness of opportunities for involvement.

The combination of a refreshed Welcome Pack and a dedicated podcast demonstrate a commitment to explaining community planning in accessible ways and highlighting positive examples of impact. This helps improve understanding of the CPP and encourages wider participation.

Impact and Challenges

While much of the work is still developing, the CPP has established stronger foundations for understanding community needs and improving participation. There is now greater coordination of engagement activity, clearer communication channels between local and strategic structures, and improved resources to support community involvement in community planning. Rather than treating community engagement and member development as separate activities, Argyll and Bute CPP has linked them through a culture of continuous learning. Development sessions, network participation, knowledge sharing and participatory leadership training are all helping partners improve their understanding of communities and strengthen their contribution to community planning.

The main challenge has been securing full representation across all CPP partners within the newly established Engagement Group. In addition, some planned engagement with Community Councils is dependent on the completion of Community Council elections and the establishment of new representatives. Funding has been secured to support participation in some face-to-face development sessions across a geographically large partnership area, and further work is required to develop sustainable handover arrangements for new CPP representatives.



The next steps

The CPP plans to:

- Broaden membership of the CPP Engagement Group, including engagement with the Third Sector Interface and Federation of Small Businesses.
- Develop and publish case studies demonstrating how communities have influenced community planning decisions.
- Build relationships with newly elected Community Councils and encourage their participation in CPP structures.
- Continue developing participatory leadership approaches to further strengthen community engagement.

“The self-assessment process and resulting improvement plan has been beneficial to Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, providing partners with a level of reassurance that the CPP is operating effectively, and allowing partners to identify and take ownership of areas where collective improvements are required.

“The focus on two key areas of action for the CPP, to strengthen partnership understanding of community needs and to support Management Committee members to fulfil their roles more effectively, will continue to drive improvements in the effectiveness of the partnership in meeting the needs of the communities we serve.”

Gary I’Anson, Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland and Chair of Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership



If you would like more information on this approach, please contact:

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