



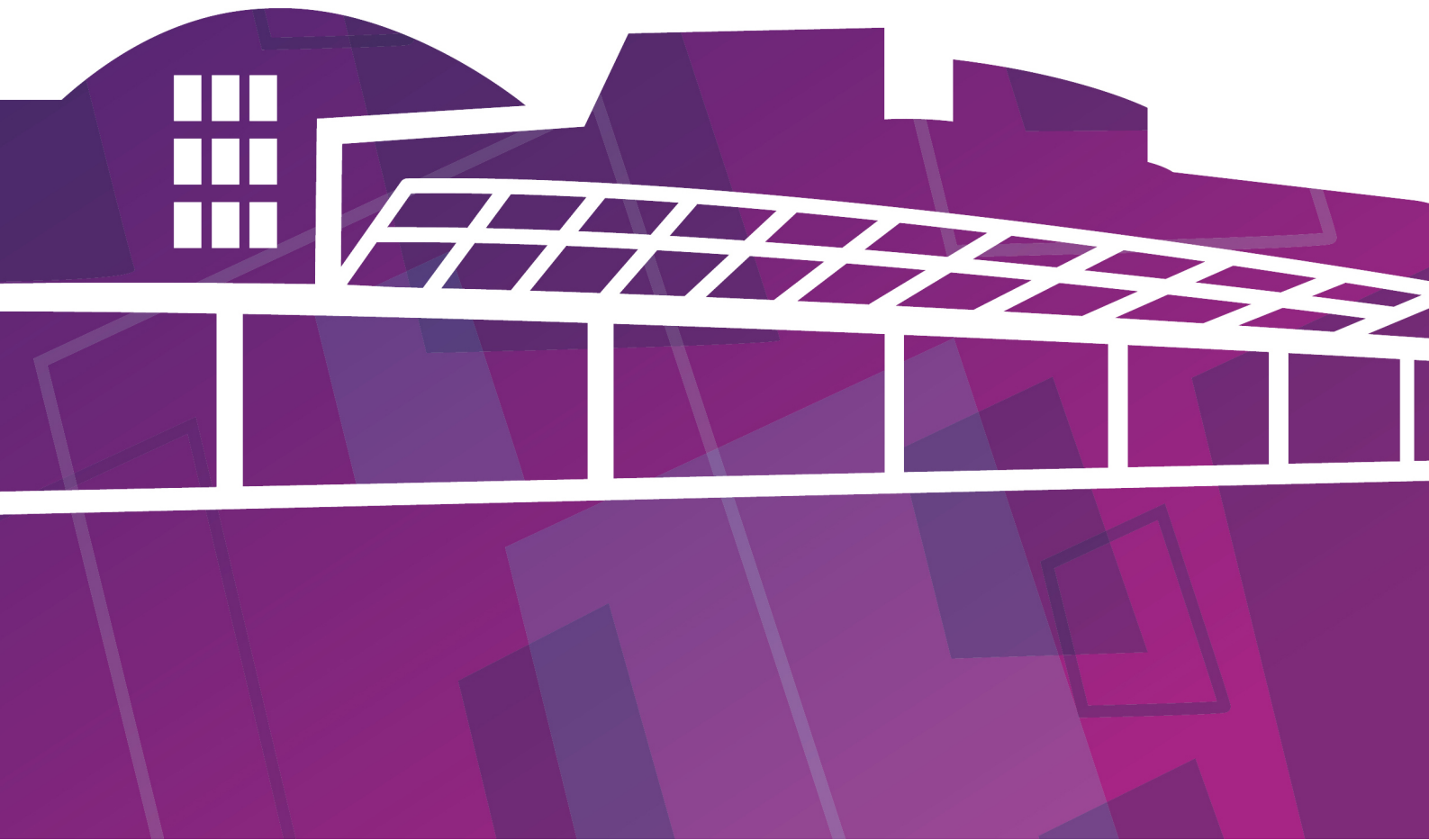
The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Public Engagement Strategy

## Ro-innleachd Com-pàirteachaidh Phoblach

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2021



# Aims of Public Engagement

- Increase the reach of the Parliament’s engagement and the diversity of those engaging with us
- Improve the knowledge and confidence of people to engage with us and with the democratic process
- Improve the Parliament’s reputation as a relevant and trusted institution

## We will meet the aims of this strategy by:

1. Events and exhibitions that inform and connect people to the Parliament
2. Communications that promote the work of the Parliament and encourage engagement
3. Supporting citizen participation in the work of the Parliament (particularly through parliamentary committees)
4. An accessible and inclusive 5 star visitor experience

## We will improve our engagement through:



Our values of **stewardship, excellence, respect, and inclusiveness** drive everything we do.

# What we want to do and what we want to achieve

To enhance the Parliament's scrutiny function and improve the Parliament's reputation as a relevant and trusted institution, effective engagement with the people of Scotland is key.

Significant progress has been made in widening engagement in Parliamentary business (particularly through engagement with committees). To continue to improve on this, it is important that we increase knowledge of and trust in the Parliament as an institution.

We need to ensure people are:

- connected to their Parliament and parliamentarians
- have the confidence and skills to engage with the Parliament, with the democratic process and on issues that matter to them
- see the Parliament and politics as something that is relevant to them and to their life.

Our aim is to increase the reach of our engagement and the diversity of the people who engage with us. This gives the opportunity for more diverse perspectives to be taken into account in parliamentary business and helps us to deliver services that are more inclusive and accessible.

It is important to recognise the barriers that people face (which may be different for different groups of people and to reduce or remove these barriers through the activities and services we provide and how we provide them.

We will do this by finding out which communities do not typically engage with us, working with those communities to find out why and working with them to adjust and target our services and resources accordingly. In this context, we take 'communities' to mean people brought together by issues such as protected characteristic, socio-economic circumstances, lived experience, or location.

We will encourage and support staff to work collaboratively and creatively with each other and with external groups to explore new ways of achieving our aims.

We will also work with Members to understand how they interact with the public and how our services and resources can maximise Parliamentary education and engagement alongside them.

Below are the main ways we will improve how we engage to achieve this:

- 1 Developing Partnerships
- 2 Connecting with Communities
- 3 Operational Excellence

This is a long-term strategy, building on our existing engagement work. To ensure sustained and meaningful change, there will be a programme of focussed activities delivered incrementally over the period of the strategy.

We will set out a programme of work through annual delivery plans. In doing so, we will be clear about which groups or communities we need to work with and will set out clear targets and indicators so we can evaluate our effectiveness. This is essential for us to prioritise the work that needs to be done and target our resources effectively.

# Connecting with Communities

**We will work with communities to increase knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in parliamentary business and in the democratic process. We will help them feel more connected to the Parliament and to their representatives.**

## Why connecting with communities is important:

Being connected to the communities the Parliament represents enables us to increase awareness of, and trust in, the democratic process; this in turn increases the breadth and depth of scrutiny leading to better and more effective legislation, and improved scrutiny of public policy.

During this session we want to expand the range of communities that engage with the Parliament and participate in its work. To achieve that we must better understand what is important to those communities and what would encourage and enable them to participate. We must investigate the barriers to engagement that exist and consider how our services might adapt to address these. This will involve taking a more user centred approach to our services, increased co-design of our resources and, at times, challenging our assumptions and ways of working.

This strategic change objective focusses on how we identify and prioritise the communities we need to target.

- By improving our understanding of their barriers and working with them on how we deliver services, we can improve our Operational Excellence.
- It is supported by Developing Partnerships and working with those who are already working with and trusted by our identified communities.

## Parliament Value - Inclusivity

## To meet this strategic objective, we will:

- Undertake a short and focused piece of research into which groups are not currently engaging with Parliament, why and what would encourage and enable them to participate.
- Use this research to inform our decisions on priority groups for year 1.
- Consider any “quick wins” that could be implemented across our services to better engage and involve these priority groups.

- Work with priority groups to learn more about what they need from us and how we can adapt and co-design services and resources to break down barriers and make it easier for them to participate.
- Undertake a series of small, targeted, pilot projects and approaches to collaborative services and activities work that can be evaluated and, if successful, scaled up and rolled out across communities.

# Developing Partnerships

**To build and sustain bridges between Parliament and communities, we will work in partnership with organisations who share our aims and values and can help us address barriers to participation. We will increase trust in Parliament, and demonstrate our relevance, by using partnerships to learn and improve, ensuring that our partners benefit from working with us.**

## Why working in partnership is important

To address the barriers people face around engagement effectively and meaningfully we need to understand people's experiences, rather than making assumptions.

Organisations who work with diverse groups and marginalised communities have (or can access) this information and insight, and already have the trust of those communities and effective existing connections.

We will work in partnership with identified organisations to achieve common aims, increase understanding and trust, improve skills, and deliver Parliamentary services in a more effective way.

This work will take many forms – from formal expressed agreements on a national level, to informal working on a joint project on a local level. In all our working together, with Communities and organisations, we aim to follow the principles of equality of respect, promoting mutual benefit and two-way learning.

The way we develop partnerships will be driven by the needs of the Parliament and the needs of the community represented by the partner. We will ensure that our partnership work benefits the community and not the partner organisation alone.

## Parliament Values – Respect, Stewardship

## To meet this strategic objective, we will:

- Map existing partnerships across the Parliament and identify any that might be grown to reach priority communities
- Draw on the different models currently in use to develop guidance and principles on working effectively in partnership and test these with some current or potential partners.
- Use the results of our audience research to inform the establishing of medium to long term partnerships that contribute to reaching our priority communities.
- Test our approach by using it to identify and develop a new partnership focused on one of our priority communities and any partnership networks our work suggests would help.

# Operational Excellence

**We will draw on the experience of working in innovative ways during the pandemic to further develop our engagement activities. We will seek to ensure our activities and services are delivered in the most efficient, inclusive and sustainable way to meet the aims of this strategy. We will support our staff to develop the knowledge they need to deliver excellence in our priority areas of public engagement work.**

## Why operational excellence is important

The pandemic drove different ways of working, showed how we can harness new technologies and delivery methods. It also highlighted to the people of Scotland how they can expect different service delivery from their public bodies. All this experience helps our thinking on how we deliver services going forward

By Connecting with Communities and Developing Partnerships, we can understand the people of Scotland's different needs and experiences, and as such the different extent and types of barriers they face. While removing barriers for one group can help to remove barriers for all, we need to make sure we target our resources where the barriers are highest and our work can have most impact.

This will ensure we are making the best use of the staffing and financial resources available to us, collaborating effectively to provide activities and services to meet the aims of this strategy.

## Parliament Values – Excellence

### To meet this strategic objective, we will:

- Design, deliver and resource an effective public engagement programme for the Session, starting with phasing priority activities after the pandemic
- Set clear targets and indicators to measure progress and develop robust evaluation and benchmarking to ensure continuous improvement, working with Committees to ensure we can capture data from committee engagement appropriately.
- Support and enable staff at all levels to share knowledge and to work more collaboratively, creatively and strategically with internal and external partners
- Using feedback, evaluation and collaborative thinking, support a culture of learning to encourage staff to innovate in order to develop and deliver excellent public engagement now and in the future