



Engagement and
Involvement Strategy
2026–2028

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1. Introduction: Our Ambition

At Capability Scotland we truly believe in an inclusive Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to have their voice heard, contribute to society and fulfil their potential.

Our **Five-Year Plan (2023–2028)** sets a clear direction:

This Engagement & Involvement Strategy describes **how we will deliver that ambition in practice**. It sets out how the voices of those we support influence services and drive organisational improvement.

This strategy directly supports delivery of our strategic priorities – **Voice, Excellence, Flexibility and Thriving** – by ensuring people with lived experience are at the heart of decision-making at every level. We recognise that the people we support have the skills, knowledge, and life experience to tell us how our charity should evolve.

We want to empower people to direct their own support. This commitment is reflected in our values: Kind, Inclusive, Open & Honest, Aspirational; and Creative.

We are determined to move beyond traditional consultation and embed *true co-production* at the heart of everything we do. This means working in genuine partnership with the people we support— not just listening to their views but valuing their lived experience as equal to professional expertise.

The people we support should lead decisions about what matters to them, what a good life looks like, and how support should be designed and delivered. Our role is to ensure

their voices are heard, respected, and acted upon, both in their individual care and in how services are developed and improved.

Capability Scotland is committed to supporting people to tell us their hopes, ambitions, and life goals, and to providing the encouragement, tools, and flexibility they need to achieve them. This includes adapting our systems, language, and ways of working so that participation is meaningful, accessible, and inclusive.

The initiatives set out in this strategy will be actively monitored, and progress and outcomes will be reported on a regular basis to the Executive Team and the Board of Trustees.

These outcomes can only be achieved when people:

- **Are understood as individuals**
- **Are supported to communicate in the way that suits them**
- **Are actively involved in shaping the support they receive**

Our Vision

Where We Want to Be

By the end of this strategy, Capability Scotland will be recognised as a leader in meaningful engagement, inclusive communication and co-production in social care. We will have created an organisation where the voices of those we support not only shape their own care, but drive change, influence decisions, and guide the future direction of our charity.

We will know we have achieved this when:

For the people we support

- Every person can express themselves confidently using the tools and methods that work for them
- People experience genuine choice and control and can clearly see how their views and feedback influence their support
- Participation is accessible, inclusive and embedded into daily practice — not an add-on or a formal exercise
- People routinely influence service development, policy decisions and organisational priorities

For staff

- Staff are confident in inclusive communication and understands their role in engagement
- Tools such as Talking Mats, AAC and Makaton are used routinely and consistently
- Each service has strong Engagement & Communication Champions who support and model best practice

For the organisation

- Every person can express themselves confidently using the tools and methods that work for them
- People experience genuine choice and control and can clearly see how their views and feedback influence their support
- Participation is accessible, inclusive and embedded into daily practice — not an add-on or a formal exercise
- People routinely influence service development, policy decisions and organisational priorities

This is the standard we are working towards — a future where every voice is heard, valued and central to our organisation's direction and identity

2. What Successful Engagement Means to Us

The engagement of those we support is at the heart of our organisation, shaping the way we design, deliver, and improve our services. We believe that the people we support bring invaluable insight through their skills, knowledge, and life experiences, and that these perspectives should guide how our organisation grows and adapts. Successful engagement means creating opportunities for people to influence decisions, share their ideas, and have genuine choice and control in their support. It also means removing barriers, listening with respect, and acting on what we hear. By empowering people to direct their own support, we honour our commitment to partnership working and ensure that our values are not just words, but principles that shape everyday practice.



Kind

We show dignity and compassion in our actions and words



Aspirational

We enable one another to achieve our ambitions.



Inclusive

We treat people with respect and celebrate diversity.



Creative

We push boundaries to find innovative solutions.



Open & Honest

We build trust by being transparent and doing the right thing.



3. Co-Production

Co-production is fundamental to delivering *One Capability, Our Capability*.

For Capability Scotland, co-production means:

- **Sharing power and responsibility**
- **Valuing lived experience as equal to professional expertise**
- **Involving people early, not retrospectively**
- **Demonstrating impact, not just engagement**

Co-production is not a one-off activity or a tick-box exercise, it is an ongoing relationship built on trust, shared power, and mutual accountability. By working together in this way, we can ensure that support is not only person-centred, but genuinely person-led, enabling people to live lives that are meaningful, fulfilling, and defined by their own aspirations.

An Example of Co-Production in Action: Upper Springland

Since announcing the relocation of Upper Springland in July 2021, we have embarked on an ambitious journey to build a new future. We are determined that this process is defined by those who know the service best.

In January 2022, we appointed a Co-Production Leader to ensure that people with lived experience collaborate directly with professionals to influence the design and delivery of the new service in Perth. By placing those who use, work, and visit our services at the heart of decision-making, we are creating an exemplary home and an effective working environment.

The Community Council

To support this, the Co-Production Leader hosts regular Community Council meetings.

- **A platform for voice:** These meetings allow those we support to share ideas, raise concerns, and receive updates, directly informing the design team's work.
- **Staff insight:** Staff are welcomed at meetings to contribute insights based on their frontline experience.
- **Fundraising and events:** The Council also acts as a Fundraising Committee, identifying challenges and planning events with support from the Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator.

Making Involvement Accessible

We use a multi-modal communication approach to ensure everyone can participate fully.

- We use signs, symbols, photos, and site visits to aid understanding.
- Talking Mats are used to gather clear feedback on specific design areas, which is then shared with the Design Team.
- VOCA vocabulary is regularly updated to ensure individuals can participate in conversations. Recordable switches are used to support engagement at fundraising events.
- Weekly Makaton sessions introduce signs related to the project (and other topics like animals or food) using games and songs to build vocabulary.
- Co-production was used to create the new Menu Feedback Form. Developed with the Head Chef and catering staff, it was refined by those we support to ensure it was clear, accessible, and relevant.

Keeping Everyone Informed

We ensure balanced feedback through ongoing workshops with families, staff, and supported people. Important announcements are shared via letters, Easy Read documents, and bulletins that are read aloud in small groups.

4. How Those We Support Are Engaging Now (and How We Will Strengthen This)



We currently use several methods to listen to members of our services, though we are ambitious to improve them.

Reviews

Every person we support has a care and support review at least every six months. We are moving beyond standard feedback forms to make these interactive.

- **Talking Mats:** We are training staff to use Talking Mats during reviews, ensuring those with communication difficulties can express what matters to them meaningfully.
- **Technology:** We are addressing the lack of technology in some services to ensure reviews are truly accessible.



CAMI

Following the introduction of the Case and Management Information system (CAMI), reviews are now recorded and held in a digital system. If a review doesn't happen on time, the Service Manager will receive a notification that the review must be undertaken. This will improve the number of reviews held at each service. The option to have a function available in relation to reviews has created an efficient monitoring system for management and the Improvement and Quality department.

Have Your Say

“Have Your Say” (HYS) is our feedback process for raising positive or negative experiences.

- **Local meetings:** To reduce travel barriers, we now hold HYS focus groups at each service, with one central annual meeting in Edinburgh.
- **Digital connection:** We use a HYS Channel on Viva Engage to keep the people we support, and staff connected on news and disability issues.

National Involvement Network (NIN)

We are proud partners of the National Involvement Network, facilitated by ARC Scotland. NIN comprises of people with additional support needs and aims to provide a network through which to promote involvement and share ideas about the issues that matter most to them as a group. We support any of the people we support at our services to attend meetings and adhere to the Charter for Involvement, ensuring they have a say in how the wider community is run.

5. Our Aims and Approach

We are ambitious about the future. We are determined to:

Enable staff to improve engagement amongst those we support.

Improve communication and engagement across the charity.

Increase involvement between those we support with the organisation.

Inclusive Communications

Our Inclusive Communication Officer (ICO) works directly with those we support, providing **(AAC) Augmentative Alternative Communication systems; everything from visual tools (communication books/boards) to high-tech equipment that gives individuals a voice to speak.**

We consult with specialist agencies to assess and provide equipment, including SCTCI (Scottish Centre of Technology for the Communication Impaired), specifically their CHAT (Communication Help through Assisted Technology) service). AAC Lothian, Speech and Language Therapists from various health boards, EATS,(Electronic Assistive Technology Service) and UK-wide Assistive Technology companies. This collaboration has successfully resulted in several people being assessed and provided with vital communication equipment.

To create an inclusive environment, the ICO delivers extensive accredited training to our workforce:

- **Talking Mats Foundation:** A visual tool for expressing thoughts and feelings and views.
- **Boardmaker:** Software for creating picture communication symbols and visual supports.
- **AAC Awareness:** an interactive session designed to increase understanding of AAC. It explores what AAC is, who uses it, and how a range of communication methods and tools support people to express themselves and participate fully in everyday life.
- **System-Specifics:** High-tech devices, PODD books, and Objects of Reference.
- **Communication groups:** Software for creating picture communication symbols and visual supports.
- **Makaton:** Levels 1-4 training delivered by our qualified tutor.

The ICO, in conjunction with the Improvement and Quality Manager, continues to be involved in supporting people to participate in various projects. This has included projects such as:

- Disability and Youth Transitions.
- Cancer screening.
- Assessing language comprehension using eye movement with the University of Dundee.

- A Talking Mats resource allowing service users to recruit their own support staff.
- Accessible information for Social Security Scotland.
- All documentation is created in accessible formats, including text, Easy Read, and symbolised versions.

Improve Communication and Engagement

What this means:

Everyone can access information and express views in ways that work for them.

Systems and Standards

To ensure we meet individual needs, our Case File Management system will now explicitly record every person's preferred method of communication. We recognise that not everyone uses technology, so we will adapt our approach for every individual to ensure they receive information in a way they understand.

Furthermore, the Inclusive Communication Officer (ICO) has rolled out an audit tool based on the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' 5 *Good Communication Standards*. Service Managers use this to identify specific areas where the ICO can intervene to improve communication standards.

Peer Support and Mentoring

We are working with Communication Matters UK on a National Lottery-funded project to train AAC users as **Peer Mentors. It is a fully recognised qualification with NCFE (Northern Council, for further education).**

This ambition is already a reality:

- One individual at Upper Springland has qualified as a mentor and now offers support across the charity.
- A volunteer from the University of Dundee's 'Straight-Talking Group' has mentored groups at services.

- **Voices Without Limits is an AAC users' communication club facilitated by AAC Peer Mentors. Capability Scotland will partner with the AAC Peer Mentors Project to host quarterly groups that bring together AAC users from Capability Scotland and the wider community.**

This initiative has successfully inspired individuals to use their communication devices more effectively and provides a vital opportunity for AAC users to connect.



Direct Engagement

To build stronger relationships, the Improvement and Quality Manager and ICO are conducting face-to-face visits across all services in 2026. These informal “chats” provide a relaxed environment, ensuring that those who cannot attend formal ‘Have Your Say’ meetings can still give feedback directly.

Enable Staff to Improve Engagement of Those We Support

Local Leadership

Service Managers are appointing dedicated Involvement and Engagement/ Communication Co-ordinators. These staff members will ensure that those we support are actively involved and informed on matters important to them, both across the organisation and externally.

Skills from Day One

To help us get to where we want to be, we are developing a specialised engagement workshop to assist staff, particularly those new to the social care sector. These workshops will identify the communication needs of those we support. Staff will be taken through all aspects of alternative communication methods such as:

- Augmentative Alternative Awareness
- Talking Mats Training
- Makaton Training
- Boardmaker Training to enable staff to create visual supports

- Objects of reference
- High Technical Communication Aids and Programmes
- Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Books (PODD)
- Communication Passports

Delivered jointly by the Inclusive Communication and Quality & Improvement departments, this will be a core part of staff induction and ensure that they have the specialist training to understand and respond to the needs of the people that we support.

Advanced Training Modules

To enhance our services, the Inclusive Communication Officer and Learning & Development Manager have sourced suitable AAC training modules and added them to the staff LearnPro online system. These modules review current knowledge and develop best practice to ensure positive outcomes for AAC users.

- **Note:** These modules were commissioned by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) as part of the Scottish Right to Speak initiative.

Increase User Involvement with the Organisation

Champions Network

Service Managers are nominating Involvement and Engagement Communication Champions at their services.

- **Workshop:** Nominees will attend workshops facilitated by the Improvement and Quality Manager and the ICO to ensure they are experts in all methods of engagement across the charity.
- **AAC training:** The Inclusive Communication Officer will provide these Champions with full training on all AAC.

Co-Production of Materials

We are determined to involve those we support in co-producing organisational materials, generating genuine interest in our policies.

The first project was the Child & Adult Protection Framework. By collaborating with us, supported individuals created the new Safeguarding symbol. This approach highlights awareness of important topics that our customers need to know. **We have created Safeguarding Booklets in accessible formats included symbolised and Easy Read.**

Engagement Goals

We continue to actively encourage people we support to set personal “engagement goals” through our Care Planning process. Encouraging people we support to think about how they can participate can empower them to become involved to work towards a clear, tangible objective.



6. Measuring Success and Accountability

Progress will be measured through:

- Participation levels and diversity of involvement
- Evidence of co-produced change (“You said – We did”)
- Review quality and accessibility
- Staff capability and confidence

Delivery will be supported by:

- Strategic action plans with SMART objectives
- Quarterly Executive reporting
- Biannual Board reporting

This ensures engagement directly supports our operational and financial plans and risk management arrangements.



What Success Looks Like by 2028

By 2028, the impact of this strategy will be visible across our services and our organisation. We will see:

- A culture of co-production
- People we support play a central role in shaping organisational decisions and long-term planning
- Inclusive communication as standard
- Every service routinely uses accessible communication tools, AAC systems and formats tailored to individual needs
- More people take part in reviews, groups, decision-making, co-production forums and national involvement networks leading to improved outcomes
- People experience improved wellbeing, confidence and satisfaction because they are actively shaping their support
- Staff are trained, skilled, confident and supported and empowered to engage meaningfully from day one, with clear development pathways
- Feedback and lived-experience insight drive improvement, innovation and accountability across all services.

7. Conclusion: Our Future

Engagement and involvement are essential to delivering our Five-Year Plan.

By embedding inclusive communication, co-production and strong governance, we will:

- **Improve health and wellbeing**
- **Increase opportunity**
- **Strengthen social inclusion**

Together, through *One Capability, Our Capability*, every voice will be heard, valued and acted upon.

We are determined to move beyond simple consultation to true co-production, ensuring that the people we support are the architects of their own care.

By investing in specialist technology, empowering our staff with training, and fostering a culture of listening, we will ensure that communication barriers never stand in the way of a person's ambition. We are proud of our progress, from the Upper Springland redevelopment to our pioneering research partnerships, but we are ambitious to achieve much more.

By fully acting on and embracing the actions set out in this strategy, we will realise our aspirations of building a Capability Scotland where every voice is heard, valued, and acted upon.

Capability Scotland's

Capability Scotland delivers exemplary care, support, and education for disabled children and adults across Scotland.

We were founded in 1946 and have always strived to be a major ally in supporting disabled people to have full equality of opportunity and participation as citizens of Scotland.

Capability Scotland

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