

Implementation STakeholder Engagement Model (I-STEM) Toolkit

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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to designing and carrying out effective stakeholder engagement activities for implementing health and social care innovations. The toolkit is theory-based [Potthoff et al, 2023]¹ and was co-developed with implementers working within an integrated care system. Implementation science evidence and tools are integrated into an easy-to-use process. The toolkit is intended to be used in conjunction with the I-STEM worksheet.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

Anyone who is involved in implementing or improving health and social care innovations. The I-STEM toolkit is designed to support academic (e.g. researchers and educators) and non-academic users (e.g. practitioners, service managers and users). It supports users with varying levels of expertise in stakeholder engagement and implementation.

THIS TOOLKIT AIMS TO:

Support users with the planning, delivery and evaluation of effective stakeholder engagement activities to implement, spread and scale innovations. It is designed to support engagement activities across all stages of an implementation process, including initial exploration, preparation, full implementation, and sustainment of an innovation. We recommend you work with your stakeholders to co-create your engagement plan. Start here, start now!

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<https://doi.org/10.25398/rd.northumbria.27248193>.

¹ Potthoff S, Finch T, Bührmann L, et al. Towards an Implementation-STakeholder Engagement Model (I-STEM) for improving health and social care services. Health Expect. 2023; 26: 1997-2012. [doi:10.1111/hex.13808](https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13808)

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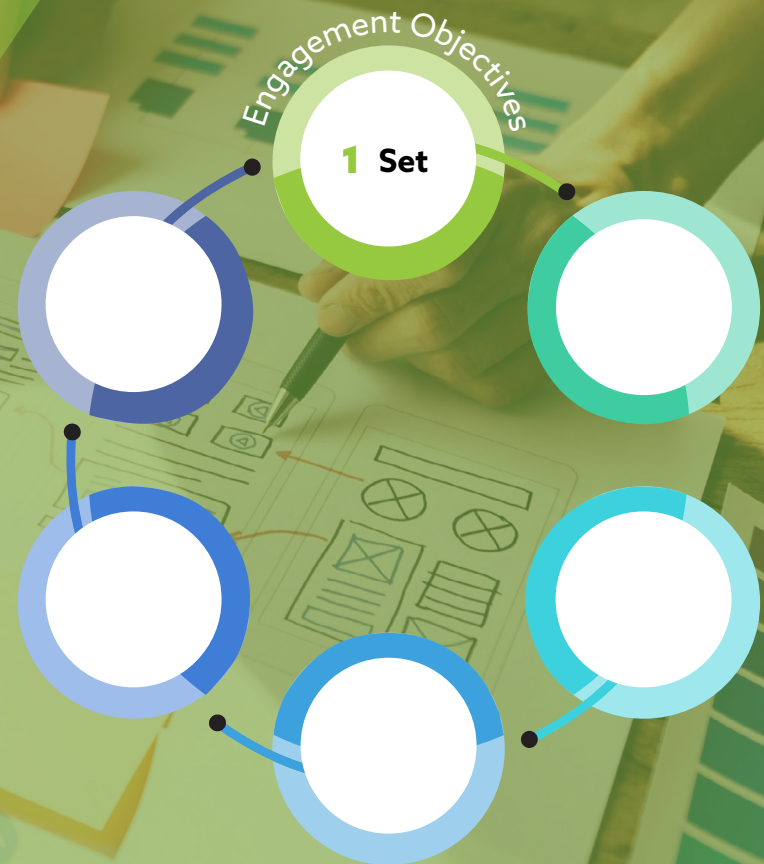
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STEP 1

Engagement Objectives



Step 1

Engagement Objectives

Focus: Set engagement objectives.

Outcome: 1-3 stakeholders.

Engagement objectives are the goals that implementers are hoping to achieve by working with stakeholders in the implementation process. Clear objective setting, whether set before initiating any engagement activity or co-developed with stakeholders, is key as it asks people to actively reflect on and be explicit about the scope and the type of activity to be carried out.

In this step, we want you to identify up to three key objectives for engaging with stakeholders. You could start by brainstorming objectives yourself and then work with stakeholders to explore these in more detail. We suggest that you have a look at the [list of engagement objectives](#) to help your thinking.

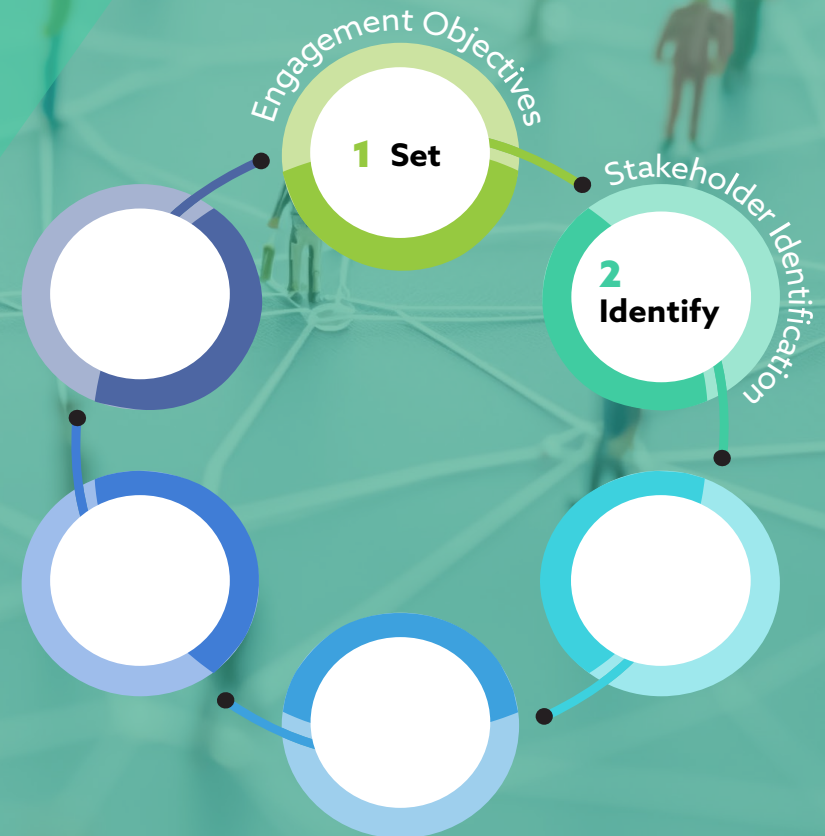


List of engagement objectives

Engagement objectives	Description	Illustrative example	Notes
Inform	The objective of engagement activities may focus on serving to inform and raise stakeholders' awareness of the innovation.	Informing stakeholders of a new treatment guideline, including supporting evidence and priorities for implementation.	
Understand	The objective of engagement activities may focus on impacting on implementers' understanding of implementation-related issues.	Understanding stakeholders' perceived barriers and facilitators to the implementation of an innovation.	
Verify	The objective of engagement activities may focus on verifying implementers' initial ideas about the implementation activities.	Verifying stakeholders views around the feasibility and acceptability of an innovation or practice.	
Enrol	The objective of engagement activities may focus on serving to enrol stakeholders in the implementation process.	Enrolling stakeholders in the implementation by using champions and early adopters.	
Access	The objective of engagement activities may focus on impacting on financial or material resources available for the implementation work.	Gaining high-level endorsement from the appropriate people to access resources for the implementation.	
Do	The objective of engagement activities may focus on practically doing elements of the implementation work.	Creating a local implementation team which is responsible for delivering the implementation work.	

STEP 2

Stakeholder Identification



Step 2

Stakeholders Identifiacion

Focus: Identify and map stakeholders using pre-defined criteria.

Outcome: 1-3 stakeholders.

Once implementation objectives have been formulated it is crucial to identify and map a range of stakeholders who may help to achieve them. Stakeholders can be defined as any individual or group who is responsible for or affected by your implementation project. This includes, but is not limited to, patients and the public, providers, policy makers, product makers, payers, and purchasers.

In this step, we want you to identify up to three key people and/ or groups who you want to engage in the implementation process. You need to consider why you want to engage with specific stakeholder organisations, groups and individuals. We suggest that you have a look at the [list of engagement reasons](#) to help your thinking.

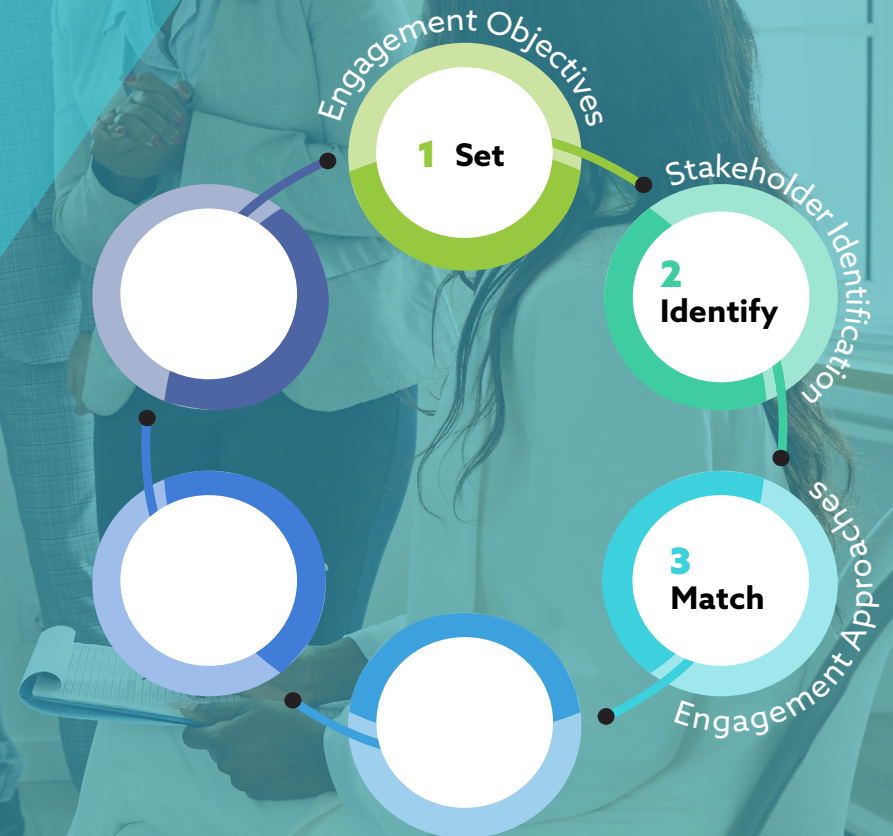


List of engagement reasons

Engagement Reasons	Description	Illustrative example	Notes
Influence	The degree to which stakeholders have influence on the implementation of an innovation, either directly or via other stakeholders.	Involving executive boards or directors because of their access to implementation resources and personnel.	
Expertise	The degree to which stakeholders have information, counsel or expertise relevant to the implementation of the innovation.	Involving information technology experts because of their skills and expertise in creating and maintaining the technological infrastructure for a digital innovation.	
Orientation	The degree to which stakeholders' views or attitudes towards the innovation are favourable or resistant.	Involving known supporters, as well as critiques of the innovation. Supporters are proponents or champions who can make a case for implementation and manage any resistance.	
Impact	The degree to which the implementation project impacts on the stakeholders.	Involving those who will be impacted by the implementation. For example, clinicians who deliver your innovation may experience changes to their current professional practice or routine.	
Capacity	The degree to which stakeholders have the capacity to take part in the engagement activity.	Stakeholders may differ in terms of their capacity to engage in implementation activities. A tailored approach, using different engagement strategies, can help engage stakeholders with different levels of capacity.	
Trust	The degree to which there is mutual familiarity and trust between the stakeholders.	Involving stakeholders who are known to adhere to commitments, respecting confidentiality and engaging in a productive dialogue.	

STEP 3

Engagement Approaches



Step 3

Engagement Approaches

Focus: Match appropriate engagement approaches.

Outcome: 1-3 engagement approaches.

Now that you have developed an understanding of who your stakeholders are, you can choose a broad approach to engaging them. Which engagement approach is most suitable depends on the engagement objective, the stage in the implementation process and on the time and resources available. Ethical and political commitments can also shape the choice of approach. Furthermore, it is important to consider the stakeholders' time and capacity when deciding on a specific engagement approach.

In this step, we want you to identify up to three approaches for engaging stakeholders in the implementation process. We suggest that you have a look at the [list of engagement approaches](#) to help your thinking.

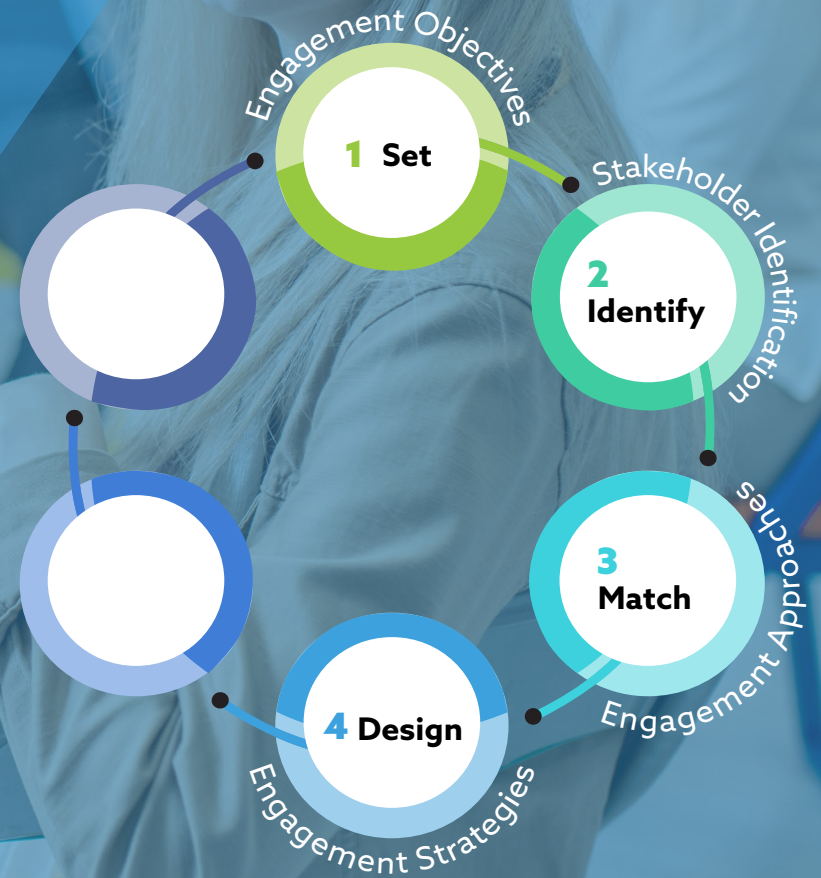


List of engagement approaches

Engagement Approaches	Description	Illustrative example	Notes
Assessing	Assessing involves gathering information from stakeholders that is relevant to the implementation activity.	Assessing stakeholders' views on the acceptability of an intervention using interviews or surveys.	
Disseminating	Disseminating involves giving out information about the innovation.	Disseminating information about an intervention using multimedia campaigns or conferences.	
Advocating	Advocating involves identifying and preparing champions who will support the implementation of the innovation.	Using champions who have clinical and systems knowledge and capacity to advocate and lay the groundwork for implementation.	
Supporting	Supporting involves providing stakeholders with the necessary training and resources to support the implementation of the innovation.	Delivering educational outreach visits and educational materials to develop implementation capacity.	
Consulting	Consulting involves offering implementation-related information to selected stakeholders to seek their feedback.	Consulting with stakeholders with lived experiences to understand the potential impact the implementation would have on their care.	
Collaborating	Collaborating involves working with stakeholders on a common objective relating to the implementation of the innovation.	Undertaking a series of workshops to co-design a processes and procedures for implementation.	

STEP 4

Engagement Strategies



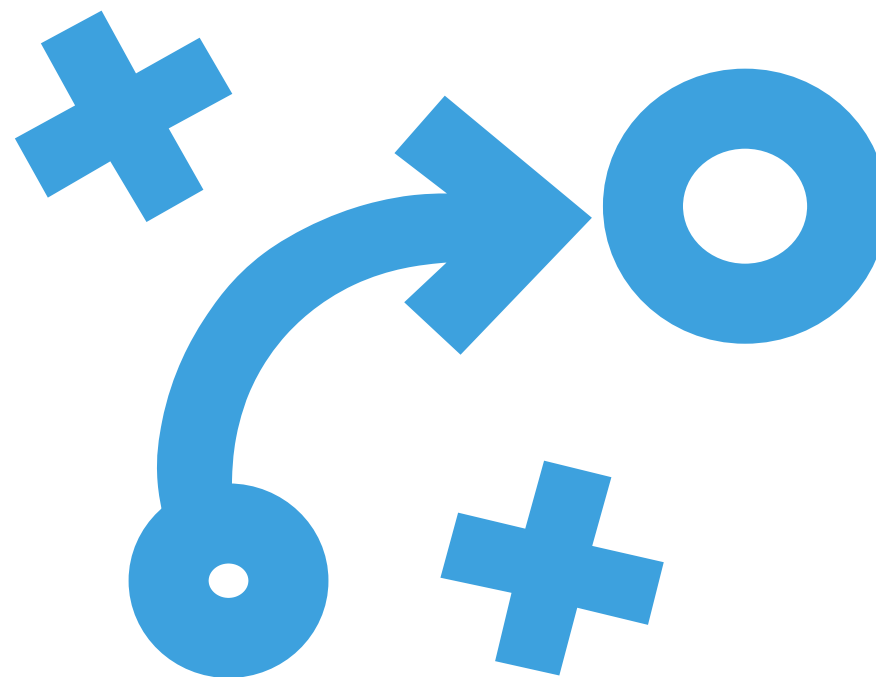
Step 4 Engagement Strategies

Focus: Design implementation strategies.

Outcome: 1-3 implementation strategies per engagement approach.

Now that you have chosen your broad engagement approaches, we want you to explore implementation strategies that serve to operationalise your approaches. Implementation strategies are methods or techniques used to improve the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of health and social care practices and innovations.

In this step, we want you to identify up to three discreet implementation strategies for each of your engagement approaches. We suggest that you have a look at the [implementation strategy mapping tool](#) to help your thinking. A full description of each implementation strategy can be found [here](#) [Powell et al, 2015]².



² Powell BJ, Waltz TJ, Chinman MJ, et al. A refined compilation of implementation strategies: results from the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) project. *Implement Sci.* 2015;10:21. doi:10.1186/s13012-015-0209-1.

Implementation strategy mapping tool

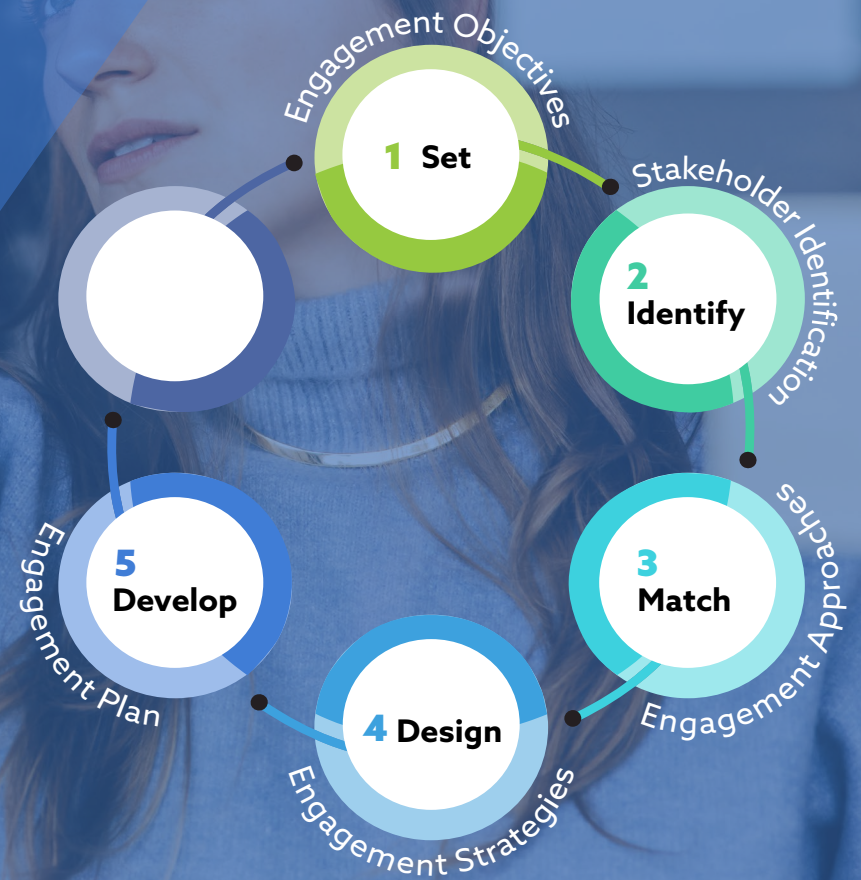
Engagement Approaches	Possible implementation strategies	Notes
Assessing	• Assess for readiness and identify barriers and facilitators • Audit and provide feedback • Conduct local needs assessment • Purposely reexamine the implementation • Use data warehousing techniques	
Disseminating	• Capture and share local knowledge • Facilitate relay of clinical data to providers • Distribute educational materials • Remind clinicians • Start a dissemination organisation • Use mass media	
Advocating	• Identify and prepare champions • Identify early adopters • Increase demand • Inform local opinion leaders • Intervene with patients/consumers to enhance uptake and adherence • Mandate the change • Prepare patients/consumers to be active participants • Recruit, designate, and train for leadership	

Implementation strategy mapping tool

Engagement Approaches	Possible implementation strategies	Notes
Supporting	• Conduct educational meetings • Conduct educational outreach visits • Conduct ongoing training • Develop an implementation glossary • Develop educational materials • Make training dynamic • Provide clinical supervision • Provide local technical assistance • Shadow other experts • Use train the trainers strategies. • Work with educational institutions.	
Consulting	• Conduct local consensus discussion • Involve executive boards • Involve patients/consumers and family members • Obtain and use patients/consumers and family feedback • Provide ongoing consultation • Use advisory boards and workgroups • Use and implementation advisor • Use data experts • Visit other sites	
Collaborating	• Build a coalition • Create a learning collaborative • Create a formal implementation blueprint • Develop academic partnerships • Develop resource sharing agreements • Facilitation • Obtain formal commitments • Organise clinician implementation team meetings • Promote network weaving • Create new clinical teams • Create or change credentialing and/or licensure standards • Revise professional roles	

STEP 5

Engagement Plan



Step 5

Engagement Plan

Focus: Develop a plan for delivering your engagement strategies.

Outcome: A detailed engagement plan.

Now that you have chosen your engagement strategies we want you to describe each element of your plan to implement your strategies. Providing as much information as possible will help you with the practical delivery of your plan.

In this step, we want you to think about who will deliver what, when, where, how, and how much. This also includes details on any adaptations required to deliver your strategies in a local context. We suggest that you have a look at the [engagement plan guidance](#) to help your thinking.



Engagement plan guidance

Item	Guidance	Notes
Who	Identify an owner to take responsibility for the delivery of the engagement strategies. Describe their expertise, background and any specific training given.	
What	Describe any physical or informational materials used in the engagement strategies.	
Where	Describe the types of locations where the engagement strategies will occur, including any necessary requirements of the location.	
How	Describe the different ways the engagement strategies will be delivered and whether they will be delivered individual or in a group.	
When/how much	Describe the number of times the engagement strategies will be delivered, the number of sessions, the order of the sessions and the duration and when you will stop delivering the strategies.	
Local adaption(s)	If you are planning to adapt the engagement strategies to different needs at specific local sites, then describe what, why, when, and how you will adapt it.	

STEP 6

Engagement Outcomes



Focus: Specify relevant engagement outcomes.

Outcome: 1-3 engagement outcomes.

Once you have designed your engagement plan you need to define key outcomes to help you assess the impact of your plan. The assessment can be summative (at the end of your project to see if it succeeded) or formative (at key points during the project to help refine your approach). To assess your engagement outcomes, you can choose from a range of methods, including observations, interviews, surveys, and/ or routinely collected data. You need to be clear why each method is relevant and how data are going to be collected and analysed. Be careful not to select data collections that are too burdensome for your stakeholders.

In this step, we want you to identify up to three engagement outcomes. For each outcome describe how often you will measure it and why. We suggest that you have a look at the [list of engagement outcomes](#) to help your thinking. Further guidance and examples on implementation outcome measures can be found [here](#) [Proctor et al, 2011]³.



3 Proctor E, Silmere H, Raghavan R, Hovmand P, Aarons G, Bunger A, Griffey R, Hensley M. Outcomes for implementation research: conceptual distinctions, measurement challenges, and research agenda. *Adm Policy Ment Health*. 2011 Mar;38(2):65-76.
doi: 10.1007/s10488-010-0319-7.

List of engagement outcomes

Engagement outcomes	Description	Illustrative example	Notes
Acceptability	The degree to which aspects of the innovation are perceived to be satisfactory. Aspects may include content, complexity, comfort, delivery, and credibility.	Using interviews or questionnaires to assess stakeholders' attitudes and acceptance of an innovation.	
Adoption	Intention to adopt an innovation. It may also relate to the actual uptake or utilisation of the innovation.	Using interviews or questionnaires to assess stakeholders' intention to adopt an innovation. Collecting uptake data to understand service utilisation.	
Appropriateness	Perceived fit, relevance, or compatibility of the innovation for a given setting, or stakeholder.	Using interviews or questionnaires to assess the perceived fit and relevance of the innovation.	
Feasibility	Fit and suitability of the intervention for everyday use.	Using interviews or questionnaires to assess the perceived suitability and practicability of the innovation.	

List of engagement outcomes

Engagement outcomes	Description	Illustrative example	Notes
Fidelity	The extent to which an intervention is implemented as intended.	Observing how people undertake specific tasks required to implement the innovation using a standardised checklist.	
Implementation costs	Costs associated with implementation, including cost of delivery of the intervention and cost associated with the engagement plan delivered.	Seeing if aspects of care cost less after the innovation has been implemented.	
Penetration	The integration of a practice within a service setting and its subsystems.	Using routinely collected data to understand if there has been an improvement in service access.	
Sustainment	The extend to which an innovation is maintained within a routine service setting.	Using routine data to explore service utilisation over time. Using interviews or surveys to understand if the innovation has become a routine part of care.	

Worked example: Implementation of personalised hospital discharge for informal carers.

1) ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	2) STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION	3) ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES	4) ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES	5) ENGAGEMENT PLAN	6) ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES
Describe up to three objectives for engaging stakeholder in the implementation process. Consider six possible objectives for engaging stakeholders, including: inform, understand, verify, enrol, access, do (see list of engagement objectives).	List up to three key people and/or groups who you want to engage in the implementation process. Describe why you want to engage each of the people and/or groups. Consider six possible reasons, including: influence, expertise, orientation, impact, capacity, trust (see list of engagement reasons).	Select up to three key approaches for engaging your stakeholders in the implementation process. Consider six possible ways of working with stakeholders, including: assessing, disseminating, advocating, supporting, consulting, collaborating (see list of engagement approaches).	For each of your selected engagement approaches match up to three discreet implementation strategies. Use the implementation strategy mapping tool to guide your choice.	Describe how you will practically deliver your implementation strategies. Specify who will deliver what, when, where, how, and how much. Detail any local adaptations required to deliver your strategies (see engagement plan guidance).	Describe how you will assess the impact of your stakeholder engagement plan. Select up to three engagement outcomes. For each outcome describe how often you will measure it and why. Use the list of engagement outcomes to help your thinking.
Objective 1: Understand barriers and facilitators to the implementation of personalised hospital discharge practices for carers. Objective 2: Access stakeholders' expertise and experiences with regards to the hospital discharge process. Objective 3: Co-design (do) and pilot a discharge from hospital toolkit based on the benefits of a personalised care model.	Stakeholder 1: Hospital staff: discharge leads because of their influence on improving practices; clinicians because of their expertise in delivering discharge practices. Limited capacity might be a barrier to improving discharge practices. Stakeholder 2: Carers because of their lived experiences (expertise) and real-life examples of good and poor discharge practices. There might be a lack of trust towards clinicians due to negative past experiences.	Approach 1: Assess stakeholder needs and perceived barriers/facilitators to the implementation of personalised discharge practices. Approach 2: Collaborate with stakeholders in the design of a discharge from hospital toolkit based on the benefits of a personalised care model. Approach 3: Pilot the toolkit in a small number of hospitals, including tailored implementation support.	Assess Strategy 1.1: Assess for readiness and identify barriers and facilitators. Strategy 1.2: Conduct local needs assessment. Collaborate Strategy 2.1: Create a formal implementation blueprint (toolkit). Support Strategy 3.1: Develop educational materials. Strategy 3.2: Conduct ongoing training. Strategy 3.3: Make training dynamic.	Who: A multidisciplinary team of health and social care researchers, including a health psychologist, sociologist and knowledge mobilisation expert. What: Digital whiteboards used to co-design the toolkit in online workshops. Educational materials for professionals including slides, workbooks, case examples and videos to support toolkit implementation at hospital pilot sites.	Outcomes 1: Acceptability Method: Questionnaire to assess stakeholders' satisfaction with the discharge toolkit. How often: Once after completion of the training. Why: To understand if professionals and carers find the toolkit acceptable.

	Stakeholder 3: Voluntary sector representatives because of their expertise in representing and supporting carers throughout the discharge process.			When/how much: Up to 15 stakeholder interviews and four toolkit co-design workshops. Three educational outreach visits to support toolkit implementation. Where: Online interviews and workshops. In-person implementation support delivered at the hospitals. How: Individual interviews and group-based workshops, including carers, professionals and voluntary sector representatives. Training will be delivered to multidisciplinary teams at the hospitals to create a community of practice. Local adaptation(s): We will make adaptations to address contextual differences (e.g. skill mix, existing discharge practices) between the different hospital pilot sites.	Outcome 2: Fidelity Method: Video observations of toolkit delivery. Content analysis of toolkit notes. How often: Once in a sample of 12 practitioners. Why: To understand how the toolkit is delivered in practice. Outcome 3: Adoption Method: Number of personalised discharge plans for carers created and shared. How often: Three-and six-months post implementation training. Why: To understand the update of the toolkit in practice.
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Beckie Gibson, Northumbria University.
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Stakeholders involved in the toolkit co-design

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Innovation and Implementation Research (IIR) group

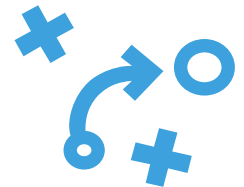
Dr Potthoff, Professor Rapley and Professor Finch are part of the [Innovation and Implementation Research \(IIR\) group](#) at Northumbria University. IIR is a multi-disciplinary research group focused on undertaking and developing approaches to implementation and improvement research, and knowledge mobilisation.

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