



## Working with stakeholders

### *What is a stakeholder?*

A **stakeholder** is someone who has an interest in, or who could be affected by (either positively or negatively), or who could have an affect on (either positively or negatively) something that you are doing or trying to achieve. They could be individuals, groups or organisations.

### *Why are they important?*

Stakeholders are important because many of them will be able to help you but there may be some that could hinder you. It is therefore useful to know how they are likely to react to what you are doing/trying to achieve, and the best approaches to use to involve and communicating with them.

In most cases, considering the views and perspectives of all stakeholders will lead to them becoming more interested and involved, helping to achieve greater support and buy-in, resulting in the generation of more ideas, and a better understanding of the context within which you are working; all of which will help you to be more effective in achieving culture change.

It is beneficial to try to work with all your stakeholders, even those who may not be supporters of what you are trying to achieve. Alternative viewpoints can be helpful, providing new insights.

### *How do I get started?*

The first step is to identify who the stakeholders are, thinking about:

- Who are the people that will be affected by what you are doing/trying to achieve?
- Who has influence or power over it?
- Who has an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion?
- Who are the supporters and non-supporters?

And then to consider/prioritise which of them need to be involved, thinking about:

- How you will involve them, thinking about how you might gain the interest of people who are not immediately supportive, or manage their opposition
- The consequences of their involvement/non-involvement

The following may help you to decide how you prioritise and work with your stakeholders, largely based on the potential they have to either support or block what you are doing/trying to achieve.

People with:

- High power/influence and high interest should be fully engaged as their collaboration is important
- High power/influence and less interest should be kept fully informed but not overwhelmed. Their level of engagement may increase if an issue of particular interest arises
- Low power/influence and high interest should be shown consideration and kept informed. Their contribution may be very valuable as they may be able to influence more powerful stakeholders e.g. the patient voice may influence the involvement of senior managers
- Low power/influence and less interest require minimal effort but should their involvement should be reviewed periodically

A good way of understanding the perspective of the stakeholders is to talk to them – people are often quite open about their views, and asking people's opinions is often the first step in building a successful relationship with them. It is helpful to know:

- What is important to them
- What success would look like for them
- How they would like to be involved
- How they would like you to communicate with them

The template below will help you to capture your ideas and to plan your actions.

Name of stakeholder/stakeholder group and role (if relevant)	Level of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power/Influence</li> <li>• Interest</li> </ul>	Ideas on how stakeholders can best be involved/engaged	What are the consequences of their level of involvement/engagement?
e.g. CEO	High/ Low power/influence/interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information</li> <li>• Consider open invitation to meetings</li> <li>• One to one meetings at key points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for strategic support</li> <li>• May be able to influence other stakeholders</li> <li>• Support with dissemination</li> <li>• Potential for resource provision</li> </ul>

