



Children's Services Consultation Strategy 05/06

Introduction

South Tyneside Children's Service's are committed to meeting the needs of the children and parents who are the recipients of our services.

We recognise the value of listening to the people who use our services and appreciate that this is an important means of achieving excellent standards and creating services, which are based on an understanding of their needs and experiences.

This strategy will establish principles and standards to ensure that the views of children and parents are heard and utilised effectively.

Overall Aim

To involve children, young people and parents in the improved planning, delivery and maintenance of all Children's Services.

Definition

Involvement means different things to different people and the term is often used interchangeably with consultation, engagement, participation and communication.

Within this strategy involvement means ensuring people have the opportunity to influence the decisions that are made about service planning, development, delivery and maintenance. In order to achieve as wide a representation as possible consultation is considered to be the preferred method to involve and include people in the decision-making process and to take positive action based on the results.

Consultation provides the possibility of obtaining and testing out ideas; it can be a means of gaining commitment and identifying opportunities. The results can help to set priorities, review our work and improve services, satisfaction and outcomes.

Consultation may take place at different levels depending on the opportunities for influencing policies and decisions. It will include providing information, consulting over options and determining priorities and actions.

Objectives

- To make sure that consultation is fundamental to our practice and informs the decisions we make.
- To ensure that the people we consult clearly understand from the outset how much influence their views will have and any limitations that exist to the decisions that can be made.
- To ensure that the consultation process is inclusive, accessible and values diversity.
- To ensure that results from consultations are used to inform planning and decision making processes.
- To feedback the results of consultation exercises and explain how the information will be used to those people involved in the process.
- To develop innovative and creative means of consulting and involving children and parents, which support and maximise the contributions they can make.
- To acknowledge that there are some people who may not want to be fully involved in the consultation process and that other methods will be available to obtain their views about the services we deliver.
- To develop a transparent approach which demonstrates how the findings from the consultation were considered and applied to the decision-making process.
- To ensure that consultation is carried out competently and to consistently high standards
- To develop an annual action plan with clear measurable targets
- To review progress on a regular basis

Children's Services Consultation Strategy

Key Actions and Milestones 06

ACTION	TIMESCALE
The Service Development Team (SDT) will co-ordinate all consultation activities. An annual action plan will be established by the (SDT) within the Participation Task Group and integrated into the MALAP/CIN action plan.	Ongoing
The SDT will set up a recording system to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A timetable of planned consultation activities · The objectives of each proposed consultation · The results of each consultation · The decisions made about service plans and delivery following the feedback 	Ongoing
The Participation Task Group will develop benchmarks to ensure that standards of consultation are maintained.	31.05.06
An information system and reporting protocol will be established and agreed with the Senior Management Team to ensure the results of consultation are integrated into management meetings and effectively incorporated into the work of Children's Services. This information will be available to all children's services staff and will be used to enhance social work practice.	30.06.06
The Participation Task Group will establish a shadow group of young people to ensure that the process provides a responsive link and clear information flow.	30.09.06
Parents and young people will be encouraged and assisted to participate in the consultation processes where appropriate by the provision of training and support.	Ongoing
Young people will be encouraged and supported to attend meetings within the Council to present the findings of consultation activities involving decisions about their lives.	Ongoing
A range of methods will be used for consultation – these will include: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, surveys and forums. A review of each consultation will take place to ensure the methods used are appropriate and that standards are maintained. Best practice procedures for consultation will be circulated to all appropriate staff and the learning from each activity will be used to constantly develop practice.	Ongoing
Children's Services will review its practices and procedures regularly to ensure that the results of consultations are appropriately included in decision-making processes.	31.03.06

Pre-Consultation Planning Sheet

Please send this form to the Service Development Team, Children's Services, Kelly House before beginning the consultation.

Title of Consultation Project _____

Service _____

Contact Name _____

Date _____

1. What is the purpose of the consultation?

2. Is the consultation directed at children or adults?

3. What method will be used?

4. How long will the consultation process take?

5. Have you checked to see if this type of consultation has already been done?

6. What arrangements have been made for feeding information back to participants?

7. Which decision making process will the consultation information be directed through?

8. How will the consultation be used to improve practice?

9. Is there any support you require to achieve your objectives?

Pre-Consultation Help Sheet

1. What is the purpose of the consultation?

Please give a brief indication of why you are doing the consultation and what you hope to achieve. If your consultation is linked to any specific outcomes or targets then please give details of these.

2. Is the consultation directed at children or adults?

Are you anticipating that you will be consulting directly with children and young people or is your consultation directed at adults – please be brief and clear. For example, it may be directed at adults but be about services for children.

Also consider whether it is appropriate to include the views of children and young people as part of the consultation.

3. What method will be used?

The method here relates directly to the 'how' of the consultation. For example, will you be working with individuals or are you going to run groups, will you be using questionnaires or interviews or telephone interviews?

It is also appropriate here to state whether your consultation is to be a quantitative study or a qualitative or a mixture of both. If your consultation is linked to any specific outcomes or targets then please give details of these.

4. How long will the consultation process take?

Here you should have a start and finish date for the whole of the consultation process, including any report that will be produced and taking in to account any feedback process for those you are consulting with.

5. Have you checked to see if this type of consultation has already been done?

Please check with your colleagues and on the **Children's Services Consultation Data Base**, whether the consultation you are planning has been done before.

This could save you masses of work and time and could result in one or more of the following benefits:

- **Modifying your plan to accommodate a different aspect to your consultation**
- **Deciding to consult with a different group**
- **Or even deciding that you do not need to do the consultation at all**

It is really important to consider this as many people, adults and children can become very disempowered and disillusioned when they are 'over consulted'.

6. What arrangements have been made for feeding the information back to participants?

Remember that the people you are consulting with are giving up their time to help you so it is essential at the beginning of your plan for the consultation that you build in your opportunities to 'feed back' to people. As a good rule of thumb, ask the people you are involving how they would like to have the feedback.

This is especially important with children and young people.

Give details here of your plans to feed back and briefly state who has decided this and why.

7. Which decision making process will the consultation information will be directed through?

This needs to be considered at the beginning. Essentially you need to consider how the information you have gathered will be processed within the department – will it, for example be forwarded to a particular group or team of managers who have decision making powers.

Is there some sort of hierarchical process that your consultation information needs to go through before the results or outcomes can be used effectively?

This is an important point to consider when you are working out how you will be feeding back to services users – people need to be aware of the process by which their views on something influence policy, internal process etc. Be honest and ensure your consultation has been agreed and ratified by all the necessary professionals before you start.

8. How will the consultation be used to improve practice?

To answer this effectively you need to consider how the outcomes of your consultation will be integrated into professional practice. This will be much easier both to do in practice and to illustrate here, if your consultation is linked to particular targets or benchmarks within policy/strategy documents.

To answer this point please be as specific as you can.

9. Is there any support you require to achieve your objectives?

The service development team has a range of resources and practice experience, which may assist you both to design your consultation and support any individual work you do. Please contact us if you require any support.

Service Development Team

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All based in Children's Services at Kelly House, Campbell Park Road, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 2SW.

Post Consultation Review Sheet

Please send this form to the Service Development Team,
Children's Services, Kelly House following each consultation.

Title of Consultation _____

Service _____

Contact Name _____

Date _____

1. What went well with the consultation process?

2. Where there any aspects that could have been improved?

3. Is there anything you would do differently in any future consultations?

4. How was the report and the outcomes fed back to participants?

5. What recommendations have you taken forward to improve the practice of your service?

Post Consultation Help Sheet

How to Complete the Forms-

1. What went well with the consultation process?

This needs to be considered within the context of what you were trying to achieve as part of the consultation. Once you have identified this, were there other things identified that went well but were not intentional – for example building relationships, improved joint working with other providers. Finally, have you obtained any feedback from those who were consulted in terms of what they considered went well for them?

2. Were there any aspects that could have been improved?

You can be as creative as you like in answering this question, as hindsight is a great thing! Ultimately, was there any part of the consultation process that could have been better – for example the venue chosen for running groups may not have been very comfortable and may have influenced the amount of work produced.

3. Is there anything that you would differently in any future consultations?

Hopefully, the process of undertaking and completing the consultation will have broadened the experience of the professionals involved and this is a reflective process to ascertain whether any of those experiences will influence how you organise and develop consultation for your particular area of service and practice.

4. How was the report and outcomes feedback to the participants?

Consider this in terms of how you have fed back and how it links to your original plan on feedback for participants more generally. If you have had to modify you feedback process, state your reasons why. Have these been communicated to the participants?

5. What recommendations have you taken forward to improve the practice of your service?

It is good practice to note all the recommendations made as a consequence of the consultation and give details as to which ones will be taken forward and why. Once again this information should form part of your feedback to service users.

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