

Consulting with Partners about Developing Strategies and Action Plans Guidance

These guidelines aim to improve consultation about the development of strategies between partners in the children's trust arrangements. Consultation is not a one off event. On-going involvement of partners in the children's trust arrangements will enhance the development of services to improve outcomes. The guidelines should be read alongside other guides such as the Compact between the City Council and the voluntary sector.

The added value in working in partnership with others to develop strategies is it will:

- Build relationships
- Improve policy development
- Improve the design and delivery of services
- Reflect the needs and wishes of a wider group of stakeholders
- Demonstrates the commitment of partners to openness and accountability
- Identify and deal with barriers to implementation at an early stage

Guidelines

1. The purpose of consultation should be clear. This means any limitations on the opportunity to influence the development of a strategy should be clear e.g. statutory requirements.
2. Partners with responsibility for strategy development should check whether there has been a previous consultation about the issue and build on this earlier work to avoid duplication
3. As far as possible partners should be involved in the development of a strategy from the beginning.
4. Sometimes because of Government Directives the ability to consult will be constrained. When this occurs stakeholders should be informed as early as possible and ways found to involve them at a later stage.
5. Partners involved in strategy development should be clear as to whether they are representing others or their involvement is because they have a particular area of expertise
6. If a partner is representing others from their agency or sector it should be clear who they are representing and how they will feed back to and seek the views from their agency or sector.
7. Agencies or projects that are based in the community may be well placed to assist with consultation and use should be made of this infrastructure.
8. Support including financial should be provided to voluntary and community based projects which assist with consultation.

9. For a written consultation there should be at least 8 weeks allowed for replies. If there is a second consultation on a final draft 4 weeks should be allowed for replies.

- Documents sent by email should be no more than 400k
- Documents should follow clear print guidelines e.g. at least 12 point for the average reader (14 point for partially sighted)
- Documents should use Arial Font

10. If stakeholders are invited to a consultation event there should be 4 weeks notice of the event.

- Settings should be accessible by public transport
- Consider the appropriate timing dependant on target group e.g. within school hours
- Events should be widely publicized

11. For meetings that are part of an ongoing consultation process there should be at least one weeks notice.

12. Consultation documents should be:

- Written in plain English
- Ask clear questions
- Include contact details for more information
- Include date the consultation ends
- Include details of where to return comments to
- Available in alternative formats if it is reasonable to do so
- Include details of the adoption process for the strategy e.g. date to be considered by the Children's Trust Board
- Include the expected date of publication on the children's services website

13. A consultation process should include as a minimum:

- Dissemination to the voluntary sector via Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service.
- Publication on the Children's Services website
- Notification of the consultation to the Children's Trust Officer who will inform partners via the Children's Trust Board

14. It is the responsibility of the officer developing a strategy to ensure that a copy of the final document is placed on the Children's Services Website

Revised by Louise Appleby 16 November 2010