



### Leeds Involving People

#### Good Consultation, a Paper for Scrutiny Board (Health and Well-Being and Adult Social Care)

21<sup>st</sup> December 2011

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## 1. Introduction

Leeds Involving People is a service user led involvement agency that supports citizens to help shape health, social care and community services. Our elected Board of Directors comprises service users representing a range of interests, including physical and sensory impairment, mental health, black and minority ethnic groups and older people. We hold contracts with NHS Leeds and Adult Social Care to coordinate an independent involvement service and have run several Big Lottery and Comic Relief funded specialist projects.

## 2. The benefits of consultation

It is clear that, at a senior level across the city's health and social care sectors, there is a genuine commitment to put people at the heart of decision making. The benefits of this are well documented:

- It is a partnership, combining the strengths and expertise of commissioners/providers and service users, to create successful outcomes for all
- It grows social capital
- It aids patient satisfaction public perception
- It is cost-effective
- It is a legislative requirement

## 3. What constitutes good consultation?

Good consultation is *people driven*, not process driven. While the underpinning principles of clarity, accessibility, inclusiveness, transparency, timeliness and responsiveness are universal, the design should be flexible according to the subject and communities involved. Directorates and services employ different approaches, with varying success. The best consultation involves service users in its design.

Good consultation does not necessarily achieve consensus on the eventual policy. It ensures that all parties have a genuine opportunity to influence decisions.

## 4. Examples of good practice

### 4.1 *The Future for Adult Social Care Services in Leeds, 2011*

A consultation programme was undertaken to add the Adult Social Care perspective to Leeds City Council's earlier *Spending Challenge* consultation. It also covered self directed support, older people's residential and day care services and charging for non-residential services. In addition a briefing and questionnaire being made available online and sent to 1511 people identified as potentially being affected, Adult Social Care commissioned Leeds Involving People to broker and facilitate nine targeted consultation workshops with vulnerable and hard to hear groups, plus six market roadshows. The issues raised during these face-to-face discussions with the Adult Social Care Consultation Manager are documented comprehensively and will inform future commissioning decisions.

### 4.2 Sikh Elders Service

Leeds City Council was aware of public criticism about the provision of this service. In response, Leeds Involving People was asked to broker and facilitate seven drop-in sessions for council officers to engage with the public. The recommendations from the public were embedded in the new service contract.

### 5. An example of dissatisfaction – Crisis Centre closure

Sections of the community reacted negatively to this policy change, but wider criticism was drawn by the consultation process itself, particularly its timing and duration.

### 6. From consultation to involvement and codesign

Consultation is a process of presenting information to communities and responding to comments. Done properly, stakeholders are integral to the process, but for a limited time only. An *involvement* approach encourages continuous integration in the process.

For example, the Dual Diagnosis Network is a multiagency network of services across Leeds, both mental health and substance misuse, voluntary and statutory. Each service operates its own internal involvement model and Leeds Involving People is working across this network of involvement groups, to connect their combined expertise with the Dual Diagnosis Strategy Group. 2012 will see the formation of an expert reference group, comprising elected service user representatives from each service, attended regularly by commissioners. Thus, service users will influence an ongoing codesign response to a complex multiagency challenge.

### 7. Consultation and involvement are difficult

Commissioners and providers are evidently capable of implementing good consultation and involvement, but only by recognising and planning for the challenges involved:

- Mistrust of statutory bodies
- Cynicism and fatigue around isolated consultation processes
- Misconception of commissioning context and activity
- Cultural sensitivities
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Separating (dis)satisfaction around the consultation process from the reaction around policy change
- Skills required by participants

While these challenges are not insurmountable, several of them, particularly those linked to trust and credibility, can be solved more quickly by placing the function within an independent, service user led agency.

### 8. A centre of expertise

An agency dedicated solely to involvement naturally becomes a centre of expertise around issues of accessibility and practicality, as is the case with Leeds Involving People. Our members are also given expertise in effective representation and in separating informed perspectives from personal complaints.

Working without restriction across sectors and across varying themes, Leeds Involving People is able to match service user expertise and interests with a range of developments. This makes the most of every contribution, regardless of where it comes from, and reduces fragmentation.

### 9. Concerns

In the drive towards modernisation and savings, there is a danger that involvement may appear extravagant. On the contrary, involvement creates better services and savings. This area requires investment more than ever, to design the solutions urgently required during challenging times. A partnership approach from the outset avoids costly emergency consultation.

### 10. Towards an involvement compact for Leeds

Currently, Leeds Involving People is conducting research around involvement standards on behalf of Adult Social Care. The findings of this work will form the basis of an agreement between the citizens of Leeds and Leeds City Council, regarding what people can expect from consultation across all departments in the Council. The agreement will detail the benchmarks for involvement outcomes and set out key universal principles, rather than prescribing a process. Again, good consultation is *people driven*, not process driven.

A set of principles that works for the most vulnerable people in Leeds could quickly be extended to wider partnership groups. LIP, in partnership with LMU is developing training modules in anticipation of this.

### 11. Conclusion

The commitment to involvement, at a senior level, is both evident and welcome. With an agreed set of benchmarks and a continuation of investment, Leeds can excel in it.

Further information on Leeds Involving People is attached.