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# Oldham Social Services' Involvement Strategy Update 2005

## Foreword

Oldham Social Services successfully launched an Involvement Strategy in 2003. The following document reaffirms the Department's commitment to service user, carer, staff and community involvement in the evaluation and development of care services within Oldham. The Involvement Strategy and the Department's overall approach to consultation and participation were recognised by the Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services (TOPPS) and "Care and Health" Magazine in 2003, when Oldham Social Services were given an award for involving service users and carers in training.

Consultation and participation with service user, carers, staff and the communities that the Department serves, continues to be integral to meeting the overall vision for Social Services in Oldham.

"Working together to fulfil the potential  
of all the people of Oldham through  
promoting independence and protecting  
the vulnerable"  
Social Services Department Performance  
Improvement Plan 2004

Staff and managers within the Department will meet the requirements of the Involvement Strategy and work within the guidance of best practice as outlined with the "Top Tips" Guide, in order to plan, commission and deliver local care services. **Services need to have a "customer focus" and this can only be achieved with user, carer and community involvement!**

I would like to express my appreciation to all staff, service users and carers who have been involved in the development and delivery of the strategy and would wish you continued success in ensuring that the views, ideas and comments of local people are collected and utilised by the Department. **Through doing so, we will continue to develop and improve services.**

**Best wishes to all involved.**



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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In January 2000 the Council approved the introduction of a Corporate Consultation Strategy. The Strategy was devised in direct response to the modernisation of local government and the introduction of Best Value legislation. Under Best Value, Consultation is one of the four 'Cs', standing alongside Challenge, Comparison, and Competitiveness and recognises that local people should not only have the opportunity to influence the shape of services, but also participate in the formation of public policy.
- 1.2 Oldham MBC adheres to the requirements of Best Value legislation and subsequent documents and strategies that address participation such as "Forward Together", "Community Engagement Strategy", the "Race Equality Scheme" and "Equality Standards for Local Government", in order to continually improve consultation techniques and procedures with the public.
- 1.3 The aim of Oldham Social Services' Involvement Strategy is to build upon the Council's overall approaches to community participation, equality and diversity and to develop more specific objectives that will enable us to meet the requirements of other Government initiatives that the Department has to directly address.

## **2. The Strategy Document**

- 2.1 The scope of the strategy will cover Oldham Social Services' approach to consultation and participation. Where service areas have been developed in partnership with other agencies, the Department will work together with partners to ensure that full coverage, economy of effort and maximum participation are achieved, in order to reach a diverse range of groups and individuals.

- 2.2 The document will detail the Department's overall strategy for consultation and participation, subsequent sections will present objectives for how each service area will approach involvement of service users, informal carers and staff in their service area. This additional material will be developed within Service areas with support from the Participation and Partnership Team.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the term 'service user(s)' is used throughout the document and this incorporates the following groups of people; adults, older people, children, young people, clients and patients. In addition, the term 'informal carer' includes those people under or over 18 who provide regular and substantial care for a relative or friend and do not receive payment from a statutory or independent / voluntary care agency to do so.

### **3. Why an Involvement Strategy is required.**

- 3.1 Oldham Council believes that

"Effective consultation with the people of the Borough improves the quality of the decisions that it makes and the services which it provides on their behalf"<sup>1</sup>

- 3.2 In addition, Oldham Social Services believes that to support the overall vision, the Department will:

"Commission, deliver and manage customer focused, integrated services which are provided at the right time, in the right place by the right people, to meet the needs of service users and carers."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Consultation Strategy; January 2000

<sup>2</sup> Oldham Social Services Performance Improvement Plan 2004

- 3.3 The Department will therefore generate opportunities to collate and analyse what service users and carers think in order to determine how the service is performing and judge whether it is meeting the expectations of the local community.
- 3.4 The role of staff within the Department will be to meet the requirements and standards for involvement as presented in this Strategy and the "Top Tips" Guide. Staff and managers will inform, consult and involve service users, carers and other staff members in the evaluation, planning and commissioning of services provided by the Department itself. In addition, managers and staff will also be required to ensure that those providers, both voluntary and independent, that the organisation commissions services from adhere to the standards and principles of involvement that are presented in this document.
- 3.5 As a result of the above, the Department will:
- wherever possible listen to and consider the views of service users, informal carers and staff is an integral component of the decision making process;
  - ensure that service users, informal carers and staff can, through a range of methods and if they are appropriately supported, participate in consultation exercises and within their own care planning sessions/meetings;
  - ensure that the views, comments and ideas of service users, informal carers and staff should be utilised and fed into the overall service planning process, in order to ensure better outcomes for service users, carers and the local community.
- 3.6 General principles of good practice that all staff will work towards:

- Ensuring that there is equity of access to any consultation event – cultural & religious needs met, as too any special needs
- Developing and being open to new methods and techniques of acquiring views
- Ensuring that any written material is made available in a range of languages and formats, such as Braille, audio and community languages, on request if appropriate
- Endeavouring not to raise expectation of the consultees by clearly stating the boundaries of the work and what their involvement will really achieve
- Offering 'out of pocket expenses' to service users and informal carers
- Ensuring that those consulted agree with the final information that is passed onto the 'decision-makers'
- Evaluating any consultation and participation event that the Department undertakes
- Creating different opportunities for feeding back any changes or decisions that have taken place as a result of the consultation work.
- Ensuring that service users, informal carers and staff are supported throughout the involvement process

## **4. What is Involvement?**

- 4.1 Both consultation and participation are types of 'involvement' with the decision making process.

- 4.1.1 Information Giving; this lets people know what is happening once a decision has been made, in situations where, realistically, no choices are available
- 4.1.2 Consultation is a discussion, either spoken or written, that takes place in order to find out people's views. Essentially, it can be an information gathering exercise and a process of listening and responding to people. On most occasions the information collected through the consultation process is acted upon and is a catalyst for change.
- 4.1.3 Participation is a term often interchangeable with "consultation". Participation can be seen as a more intense and interactive form of consultation. It is an approach, which encourages a greater involvement in the exploration of issues, and therefore an increased sense that people are sharing in the process of decision-making.
- 4.2 Further definitions and terms associated to 'involvement' are included in the Glossary. Please see *appendix 1* for information on the Models of Involvement.

## **5. How to involve and gather views.**

- 5.1 Within the 'Best Value - Handbook'<sup>3</sup>, is a 'Guide to Better Consultation'<sup>4</sup>, that supports the Corporate Consultation Strategy. The 'Guide' outlines different consultation and participation techniques and gives practical tips and advice on achieving an effective consultation exercise or project. The techniques described in the 'Guide' will enable all Officers, not just those within Social Services, to understand and maybe conduct their own projects. It is therefore recommended that if information on the various

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<sup>3</sup> Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council: Best Value Handbook (1999)

<sup>4</sup> Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council: Guide to Better Consultation (2000)

involvement techniques and methods is required then the 'Guide to Better Consultation' be used.

5.2 Both the Corporate Consultation Framework and the Consultation Strategy give us the overall Council objectives and techniques for consulting with the public and these are relevant to Social Services. The next step is to build upon this strategic vision and devise our own Departmental approach to consultation within each service area, so that we meet the requirements of various Government initiatives, as well as the Council's overall objectives. Each service area will develop their own methodology for the most effective mechanisms for engaging and involving people.

## **6. Involving service users and carers in the decision making process or shaping service development.**

6.1 Opportunities for service users and informal carers to be involved in the decision making process, improve the methods by which decisions are made or can give their views on services they have received can be split into six main areas; 1) individual care planning, 2) service planning, 3) training sessions - co-trainers helping the Department to train staff, 4) Recruitment and Selection, 5) Contract Allocation and Commissioning and 6) Complaints.

### **6.2 Individual Care Planning**

Staff completing an assessment or review of need will have to demonstrate how the service user, young person or carer has been involved in the process. Evidence of participation therefore needs to be reflected within the case files. All service users and carers are also informed of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure, which will inform service planning and development.

### **6.3 Service Planning**

Service users and informal carers should be offered a variety of opportunities to reflect upon the services they have received from Social and Health Services and give ideas as to how they think services should develop. Opportunities can be categorised into 3 areas and are as follows:

*6.3.1 Corporate strategies and initiatives for participation.*

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council as an organisation offers local people opportunities to be involved in decision-making through Area Committees and a number of other groups.

*6.3.2 Long term groups within Social Services.*

- There are a number of service user and informal carer groups attached to different service areas, which give people the opportunity for people to have a dialogue with staff and managers from both within the Department and also other agencies whom the Department work in partnership with. These change in focus and develop over time in response to the changing Health and Social Care agenda
- The Youth Forum is an arena where young people who are looked after by or receive direct support from Oldham Social Services, can come together to discuss service issues, respond to Government, regional and local developments in relation to services for children and young people, and also discuss issues and projects with senior managers and elected members.
- The Learning Disabilities Partnership Board is a group that has been set up in direct response to the Government's White Paper 'Valuing People'.
- The Carers Forum is a group of carers of service users from all service areas. This Forum provides

an opportunity for these carers to raise issues with professionals from agencies providing support to carers. The Carers Forum is linked in to the Carers Steering Group.

### 6.3.3 *Short-term projects*

The final category relates to those projects that are set up for a specific purpose and have a clear completion date. The consultation that takes place is usually a distinct part or section of another piece of work. Examples of where service users and informal carers have been invited to complete questionnaires, attend discussion meetings or focus groups include;

- User and carer satisfaction survey
- Best Value Review consultation meetings
- Service Reviews
- Carers Conference
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Service Needs Requirements

### 6.4 Training Sessions – Co-trainers

Other areas where involvement takes place is within staff training, as co-trainers. The aim of such an approach enhances staff's awareness of the issues directly related to service users and informal carers and assist in improving people's decision-making skills. Examples where service users and carers have been involved in training include:

- Children's Rights Officers Association (CROA) Total Respect Training
- Mental Health User Led Training Events.
- Training Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) and Personal Development Plans: MAP, within the Learning Disabilities Service
- Children Leaving Care Act Training

### 6.5 Recruitment and Selection

Across the Department there are examples of where service users and carers have been involved in the recruitment and selection process of staff. Work is currently underway to formalise this method of involvement, through the formation of policies and advice. Managers and staff who would like to involve service users and carers in the recruitment process should seek advice from the Department's Human Resource Advisors within Social Services' Human Resource Service.

#### 6.6 Contract Allocation / Commissioning

Service users and carers have been involved in the tendering process for contracts such as the Children's Rights Service and have advised staff on the allocation of funding for the Carers Grant. Further opportunities for this type of involvement will assist various service areas in the planning and development of new services and the monitoring of existing or established services. Further advice and support in this area can be sought from the Contracts Team.

#### 6.7 Comments, Complaints and Compliments

The Department's "Your Right to be Heard" documentation states to service users and carers how they can formally give feedback, comments and compliments, as well as complain about our services under clear procedures. This information should be used to assist in the evaluation and development of services.

### **7. Involving staff in the decision making process or shaping service development.**

7.1 There are both formal and informal mechanisms whereby staff are consulted about departmental decisions. These are outlined below.

## 7.2 Departmental Consultative Group

This formal mechanism for consultation is a Council requirement of all Council Departments. The group meets every 2 months and is the forum where senior managers meet with Union representatives. The Executive Director for Social Services chairs the group. Items on the agenda include items from the Departmental Management Team and issues raised by Union members through the various Union representatives. The group is an information sharing and consultation group, negotiations on items such as terms and conditions for employees and pay are not discussed in this forum.

7.2.1 The Minutes from the meetings are distributed and fed into the corporate 'Joint Consultative Committee', where senior officers of the Council meet with Union representatives. Copies of the minutes should be displayed on the Department's communication points.

## 7.3 Health and Safety Committee

This group meets every two months and is a forum for management and Unions to discuss 'Health and Safety' issues. The agenda is shared and both parties can scope the formal business of the meetings. The Minutes from the meetings should be available from each service's communication point.

## 7.4 Executive Director's Newsletter and Performance Review Days

The Executive Director for Social Services distributes a monthly newsletter. The newsletter informs staff of current activity. Performance Review Days are held for each of the Operational Divisions of the Department. Additional Departmental Review Days are held for all Social Services Staff at a minimum of twice a year. The aim of such days is to update staff on developments within the Department and the wider Council and to give people the opportunity to

comment upon and shape plans and ideas for future services and policies.

#### 7.5 Workers' Forums

There are a number of corporate advisory groups that exist for staff that also aim to assist all Council Departments' senior managers and policy makers, in regards to the issues facing a diverse workforce and workforce delivery. The groups include; Black and Minority Ethnic Support Group, Gay and Lesbian and Bi-sexual Support Group, The Disability Forum and the Women's Forum.

#### 7.6 Team Meetings, Supervision and Appraisal

All staff should have the opportunity to participate in Team Meetings. The aim of Team Meetings is to share information and allocate work. A manager should use these sessions to gather the views and comments of staff members so that they can be passed onto senior managers.

The Supervision Policy of the Department states that supervision should take place regularly and be a formal discussion, which takes place between a staff member and their manager. The overall purpose of supervision is to ensure that quality services are provided and the priorities of the Department are met through monitoring and evaluating work and providing support and development opportunities as required. Managers and staff could use these sessions for consultation on policies and projects conducted within the department, information collated can be fed up to senior managers through the manager's own supervision and reflected within overall Service and Team Plans.

Appraisals will reflect how individual staff members have adhered to the Involvement Strategy and their own involvement in conducting consultation and participation events.

### 7.7 Consultation Meetings

There are many examples of ad-hoc consultation exercises that have taken place within the Department that have sought the views and comments of staff. For example there have been various 'Best Value' and 'Service Reviews' whereby staff have been asked for their views and comments on different services across the department. Consultation may have taken place via a questionnaire or by a discussion meeting. Views and comments collated have shaped and influenced the results and recommendations made in the final review report or Service / Team Plan etc.

### 7.8 Government Consultation Documents.

The Department of Health, The Department for Education and Skills and other Government Departments often submit documents for public and organisational consultation. On most occasions the documents are available on the Department of Health Website [dh.gov.co.uk](http://dh.gov.co.uk) or the Department of Education and Skills website [dfes.gov.uk](http://dfes.gov.uk)

The Department may collate comments on Government consultation programmes and exercises from various teams and managers.

## **8. How to record the Department's Involvement Activity.**

8.1 In order to assess how effective the Department is on involving / consulting with service users, informal carers, the community, partner agencies and staff, a number of mechanisms for recording and measuring performance in this area are in place and are stated below.

### 8.1.1 Individual Case Management.

As previously discussed under 6.2, information from assessments and care reviews will be used to record 'involvement' levels. The information from case files

and consultation booklets can be analysed to assess how service users and carers have been involved in shaping the packages of care they receive.

It should be made clear, that this information will also demonstrate whether or not a service user or carer has been informed of their right to be involved or make a complaint about a service. Therefore it is vitally important that staff record that they have informed service users and carers of how they can participate and not just the comments they make, as this information is measured by the Department's inspectors and is used to measure the overall performance of Oldham Social Services.

### 8.1.2 Performance Management Toolkit

Performance Management is about ensuring that the Department delivers high quality and appropriate services to communities and service users and carers. Planning and recording how Services within the Department will complete this is recorded within the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), Service Improvement Plans (SIP), individual Service and Team Plans and staff appraisals.

Integral to the overall performance management process is the delivery and recording of how we determine users and carers needs (PIP Objective) and how we will meet those needs (SIP Objective), by seeking and responding to the views, comments and ideas of service users and carers.

One example where support for developing and meeting objectives around consultation and involvement will be given, is from the Participation and Partnerships Team within the Partnerships and Performance Division.

### 8.1.3 Corporate ACE Database

Consultation activity across the Council is recorded on the Council's Consultation Database; ACE. The database is managed through the Policy, Performance and Regeneration Department and can be accessed through the Council's 'intranet' (see glossary).

The database will inform you of current consultation activity that you might be able to utilise or 'piggyback' your consultation project upon.

## **9. Training and Support to staff**

- 9.1 The Participation and Partnership Team and Staff Development have devised a User and Carer Involvement Training Course. Consultation Officers, Staff Development Officers and trained service users and carers deliver the course. The course outlines the principles within this Involvement Strategy and informs staff of the various methods for gathering, recording, analysing and utilising the views and ideas of service users and carers. Further details are found within the Department's Training Calendar, which is accessible via the intranet.
- 9.2 Within Children's Services a course on 'listening to the voice of the child' has been developed in partnership with CROA (Children's Rights Officers and Advocates), Tameside and Rochdale Social Services and Young People. Staff across children's services are required to take on board the importance of children's rights and participation. Also, Policy Officers, Foster Carers and Councillors have to attend the course. The course runs twice a year and further details can be found in the Department's Training Calendar.
- 9.3 Oldham Social Services have produced a "Top Tips" Guide on how to plan and run a successful consultation event. Copies are available from the Participation and Partnership Team.

9.4 The Participation and Partnership Team are based within the Partnerships and Performance Division and the role of the Officers in the team is to support the delivery of consultation and involvement events.

## **Summary**

The above outlines the principles of and mechanisms by which Oldham Social Services will be working towards, in regards to involvement of service users, informal carers and staff within the decision-making process.

A range of opportunities for accessing the views of people will be sought, from permanent groups / forums and time limited projects. Once views and comments are collated they will be responded to by the Department and incorporated into the decision-making processes that determine service allocation, evaluation, development and commissioning.

## Appendix 1. Models of Involvement

	How people are involved	Method of Collection
<b>Information Giving Model 1</b>	<i>Information on decisions that have already been made are given to service users, carers, the public etc.</i>	<i>Officers and Managers giving presentations, promotions, leaflets, press releases or displays</i>
<b>Consulting Model 2</b>	<i>Builds upon Model 1, but gives people the opportunity to give the 'decision makers' instant feed back on their ideas / proposals. Decision makers do not necessarily have to take on board the comments and views expressed</i>	<i>Surveys, Questionnaires. Market Research, Consultative meetings, Focus Groups, Groupwork</i>
<b>Deciding Together Model 3</b>	<i>Builds upon Models 1&amp; 2, except those consulted also come up with ideas for action and take a more active part in the decision making process</i>	<i>Stakeholders Analysis, Action Planning, Certain Types of Steering Groups, Brainstorming in groups</i>
<b>Acting Together Model 4</b>	<i>Models 1,2,3 are taken further in Model 4. Once the decisions have been made together, both Officers and Managers work with service users, carers etc. to carry out or complete the agreed action together in the form of a partnership</i>	<i>Team Building, Business Planning, Working Parties, Steering Groups, Partnership Boards</i>
<b>Supporting Local Initiatives Models 5</b>	<i>Model 5 combines all the principals of the previous models but offers people the opportunity to have training and support. Sometimes funding is given for the partnership to manage for themselves, longer term community structures are put in place and supported within agreed guidelines.</i>	<i>Capacity Building, Management Boards</i>

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