



Compact

for Havering

Draft Code of Good Practice

*Consultation, information sharing
and participation*

July 2005

supported by



havco



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1. INTRODUCTION

Guidelines for Consultation, Information Sharing and Participation

This section should be read in conjunction with other sections of the Code of Good Practice, in particular the code relating to Black Minority Ethnic and Socially excluded groups. It is designed to be used by all partners (Havering Council, Havering Primary Care Trust and voluntary and community sector groups and organisations) when conducting communication, consultation, information sharing and participative exercises. It should enable the voluntary and community sector in Havering make an effective contribution to the development and implementation of policy.

In developing this code it has been essential to recognise the responsibilities and independence of all the partners in the Compact and to suggest positive ways that by working more effectively together better outcomes are achieved for the whole community.

Government increasingly requires local statutory agencies to consult with their local voluntary sector in developing policies and programmes for the local community. For voluntary and community organisations this presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on local policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

They should be willing to offer their advice to local government and health authorities based on objective experience and appropriate consultation with those they work with. This enables the voluntary and community sector to establish and maintain their credibility as a valuable source of informed opinion.

This Code outlines practical ways in which this aim can be achieved.

2. GOOD PRACTICE ON COMMUNICATION

All parties recognise the importance of good communication in order to work more effectively together and the time and cost implications when communication is not effective. The following guidelines are intended to ensure a more effective communication process and mutual respect between partners.

1. **Decide what message you want to communicate**
Be clear about what you want to achieve and assess the options on how this might best come about.
Present your message in a way that your intended audience will understand
2. **Be clear about who needs to receive the information**
Ensure that everyone who needs to know receives the material but avoid a blanket approach which can be costly and ineffective.
Take account of the needs of specific groups such as disabled people, the elderly, children, people from different ethnic groups and faith communities.
3. **Decide how best to communicate**
Many methods of communication exist but some are more effective in reaching different audiences. Some mechanisms that exist in Havering are available for use by other partners and can offer cost effective and efficient means of communication.
 - Havering Council's website
 - Havering Council's newsletter "Living in Havering"
 - HAVCO's website
 - HAVCO's newsletter
 - HAVCO's bi monthly mailing to groups and organisations in Havering
 - noticeboards at community centres, places of worship, and other premises
 - libraries and schools, hospitals & GP surgeries etc.
 - local newspapers
4. **Mutual trust and respect**
In order to ensure people's interest and involvement aim to:
 - find out about the audience for your message, particularly their beliefs and values and possible fear of institutions
 - be non judgemental and show respect for diversity
 - avoid making assumptions about people
 - respect confidentiality and privacy
 - show respect, be polite but avoid being patronising
 - be sensitive about how much time people can offer you
 - be aware of and sensitive to cultural issues
 - be aware of and plan for the needs of people with disabilities
 - be aware of and plan for the involvement by people who may need an interpreter or sign language

5. Be prepared for feedback to your communication so you can ensure that:

- your audience has understood your message
- you can improve your methodology for next time
- you can learn from people who's views may be very different to yours

3. **GOOD PRACTICE ON CONSULTATION**

All parties recognise the importance of good consultation in order to work more effectively together and the time and cost implications when consultation is not effective. The following guidelines are intended to ensure a more effective consultation process and mutual respect between partners.

1. **Decide why you are consulting**

Identify **what** you want to find out

- be sure that what you are consulting about can be influenced by the responses you will receive
- be sure that this consultation has not already been done or that the information has already been collected, or is being collected
- identify what resources are needed by yourself and the people you are consulting and identify if you are prepared to meet partners costs
- be sure that you have the time and resources to deal with the feedback

2. **Have clear goals that are specific, achievable, realistic and give due thought to timescale**

- involve umbrella agencies in planning consultation with the voluntary and community sector, who can advise about the most appropriate methods of consultation, suitable formats and other consultations taking place at the same time
- be aware that within organisations and groups there may be a cycle of committee meetings where a response would be sought in order that the opinion returned is appropriate to the whole group
- be sensitive on a case by case basis to any additional resource implications on those consulted with

3. **Be clear and realistic about what could happen as a result of the consultation, have measures of success to assess the process later.**

4. **Identify your target group**

- understand the level of response that you want from the different groups
- be specific about why you want to involve that group or community
- seek initial views from those most likely to be affected, most likely to contribute and outline the risks and consequences from doing nothing
- be sensitive to the needs of those being consulted, be prepared to be flexible
- consider using existing networks, forums and events

5. Decide how you will consult

- identify existing arrangements to consult with the target group
- if there are currently no satisfactory arrangements consider;
 - Written consultation with reply paid envelopes
 - surveys (by post, telephone, face to face)
 - meetings
 - focus groups
 - user panels
 - Internet/e-mail
 - newsletters
 - leaflets and posters
 - exhibitions
- allow 12 weeks for written responses to allow for internal consultation and frequency of group or committee meetings
- assess how best to involve your target group, give thought to the time of day meetings are arranged and whether people are employed outside of their voluntary activity and may be unable to attend meetings during normal office hours.
- provide a safe, suitable environment for the meeting – take the consultation out to the groups
- give adequate notice of the event and be sensitive on the time and length of the meeting
- consider the access requirements of people with a physical disability
- consider the communication needs of people with a sensory disability
- consider the communication needs of people with a learning disability
- facilitate translation or signing if requested
- offer incentives to attendees eg paying for their time, reimbursing expenses, suitable refreshments (be aware of special dietary requirements)
- when people attend an event or respond to consultation by other means ensure you understand who they are representing

6. A User Friendly consultation paper should be concise and informative and;

- have a summary (ideally no more than one page)
- identify the author
- state clearly the purpose and objectives of the process
- identify the issues in hand
- ask clear questions or offer options
- leave space for additional comments
- identify what has already been decided that cannot be affected by the consultation
- explain who will be affected and how
- reference external opinions or additional information
- ask for suggestions of other interested parties
- have simple language, avoiding jargon
- be in the relevant community language where appropriate
- consider people with particular disabilities and offer different formats
- give a deadline for responses
- outline what happens after the consultation period
- contact details of the person to whom the response should be sent
- explain who will use/see the responses and why. If necessary offering a tick box for the respondent to request confidentiality

7. **The results**

After the results of the consultation have been assessed it is essential to;

- produce feedback to the target group
- produce a statement of how the consultation has affected the final decision
- identify any additional issues identified through the process which the target audience may value
- offer means whereby further information may be obtained
- identify other partners to whom the results of the consultation may be useful
- evaluate the process and the methodology
- establish whether anything will change as a result of the consultation
- identify training needs which might have emerged for any of the partners

4. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Together we will ;

- Respect the partners in this Compact recognising the individual role and responsibilities they have in the borough
- prepare a list/ database of voluntary and community groups in Havering and aim to keep it up to date
- be inclusive and responsive to communications from partners to enable a growth of trust and respect
- distribute the Compact and its Codes of Practice to our own departments, officers, members and new partners

The London Borough of Havering and Havering PCT will ;

- aim to work within the codes of practice and guidance offered in this document
- respect the confidentiality of information given, when required

Voluntary and Community Organisations will ;

- aim to work within the codes of practice offered in this document
- identify who they are and who they represent
- participate in community consultations and information sharing
- include service users in the responses and ensure service users receive relevant information via the group/organisation
- respect the confidentiality of information given, when required
- pass on feedback to their membership
- promote good practice in representation by offering training

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Communication and Consultation

AUDIT COMMISSION, 1999 – Listen Up! Effective Community Consultation
www.audit-commission.gov.uk

CABINET OFFICE, 1994 – Code of Practice on Consultation
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/introduction.htm

CABINET OFFICE, 2004 – Code of Practice on Written Consultation
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/introduction.htm

PARTNERSHIPS, 1994 – The Guide to Effective Participation
www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/

Participation in Policy Development, Service Design and Delivery

HOME OFFICE, 2000 – Policy Development Checklist
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/checklist.html

HM TREASURY, 2002 – The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery – A Cross Cutting Review.
London: HMSO

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING, 2004 – Community Strategy
http://www.havering.gov.uk/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/HSP_NEW_DESIGN/HSPWEB/hsp_communitystrat.html

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING, 2004 – Customer Standards
http://www.havering.gov.uk/servlet/page?_pageid=536&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30&_type=site&_fsiteid=114&_fid=358454&_fnavbarid=13016&_fnavbarsiteid=0&_fedit=0&_fmode=2&_fdisplaymode=1&_fcalledfrom=1&_fdisplayurl=

NATIONAL COMPACT WORKING GROUP, 2000 – Consultation and Policy Appraisal: A Code of Good Practice
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

At present this Code is at the DRAFT stage.

It is now ready for Consultation.

If you would like to respond then please send your comments by October 7th to Kim Guest, the Consultation Sub- Group Chair.

At

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01708 – 742881

kim.guest@havco.org.uk

The deadline for comments is the 7th October

However the earlier comments are returned the easier it will be to include in the decision making process.

They will be discussed by the Consultation Sub-Group and the Code of Practice will be amended if necessary ready for the launch of the completed Codes at the Compact AGM in November 2005.

The Consultation Sub-Group is open to all sections of the Community to join. And the more people who are part of it, the more effective we can be.

However, in order to expedite the completion of the Codes, membership will **close** from the end of July until the Compact AGM.

Then new members will again be welcome in order to begin the next phase of making the Compact work.

Please contact the Sub-Group Chair for further details.