

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)



Planning a Formal Consultation

Consultations are only part of a process of Involvement and a variety of methods will be required to engage with stakeholders. Consultations provide organisations and people with an opportunity to give their views on a proposal. The following provides an overview on the key points to be considered when planning and undertaking a consultation.

Why involve:

It is a Statutory Duty for HSC organisations to consult and involve Service Users, Carers and the public in relation to:

- The planning of the provision of care.
- The development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way that care is provided.
- Decisions that affect the provision of care.

Other guidance and legislation will also impact on your consultation process including Section 75 Equality Legislation and the Department of Health (DoH) Change or Withdrawal of Services circular, If your proposal is likely to result in the procurement of goods, works or services, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The Gunning principles outline a set of rules which have been developed to guide lawful consultation:

- Consult when proposals are still at a formative stage.
- Sufficient information to give intelligent consideration.
- Adequate time for consideration and response.
- Response must be conscientiously taken into account.

These are helpful to consider when developing a consultation and the risk of not following these principles could result in a Judicial Review for your organisation.

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Use the following guide to support you to undertake a consultation:

Planning a consultation

- Be clear on the purpose of the consultation and define the decision to be taken, e.g. change in service provision, closure of a residential home or relocation of service/staff, etc.
- Has an Option Appraisal been carried out with the Involvement of stakeholders? Is a business case required?
- Has an Equality Screening exercise been carried out and relevant data information and views gathered? (Refer to your organisation's Equality Scheme). This will also indicate if a full formal consultation is required.
- Identify your stakeholders which may include Service Users, Carers, Advocacy Groups, Patient Groups, Community and Voluntary organisations, the public and HSC staff.
- If pre-consultation is undertaken, document all discussions and inform participants that their views will be taken into account.
- Consider the most appropriate methodology to meaningfully engage with stakeholders.
- Agree the timeframe for the consultation process.
- If the proposal is likely to be major and/or contentious, inform the DoH in advance of public consultation.
- Inform the PPI Team in your organisation.

Undertaking a consultation

The consultation should be targeted at those who will be affected by the proposal and a range of activity should be undertaken to consult with stakeholders. Consider how to tailor consultation to the needs and preferences of particular groups, e.g. face-to-face meetings or online methods.

The consultation document should:

- Be clear and concise. Use plain English i.e. make the consultation easy to understand.
- Be available in a range of formats, for example easy read or an executive summary which can help to make the information more reader friendly. Alternate languages should be made available on request, and this should be clearly referenced.
- Be informative to provide enough information on the issues to allow for informed responses - include a summary of the proposals.
- Set out the data, the information gathered and the reasoning behind the proposals.
- Have a list of key questions to support respondents to submit a response.
- Include contact details for requesting further information or alternative formats.

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Allow eight weeks for the consultation period, however there are exceptions to this which include when a full Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken which will require a 12-week consultation period. Alternatively a shorter period may be implemented if the change in service is in relation to patient safety. Also, consider the time of year ie holiday periods such as Christmas or summer when extra time may be required.

A communication plan should accompany the consultation. This will include how all key stakeholders and the media and will be kept informed, the publication of the consultation (electronic and hard copy) and the dates and locations of public meetings or other methods you identify to engage with people, such as focus groups.

Completing a consultation

Ensure that all responses are carefully analysed.

Prepare a feedback report to include summary information on the proposal consulted on, a summary of the comments received and a summary of the organisations consideration of, and response to the consultation process. This should be shared with everyone who submitted a response and also available for the public to view.

The proposal and feedback report will then be presented for approval. Following approval, a consultation report may be developed to inform the consultees of the consultation outcome. The organisation should also notify the DoH of the consultation and seek endorsement for the consultation decision if controversial.

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Consultation checklist

This list is not exhaustive, but it will help you to undertake a consultation exercise.

Consultation name: _____

Directorate: _____ Date: _____

Project: _____

Lead officer: _____ Email: _____

Action	Timescale/date completed	Who is involved	✓
Define decision to be taken			
Gather evidence			
Identify stakeholders			
Notify organisation management			
Pre-consultation (optional)			
Equality screening – EQIA as applicable			
Develop consultation proposal to outline options			
Draft communication plan			
Inform DoH in advance if proposal is major or controversial			
Seek organisation approval to undertake consultation			
Undertake formal consultation	8 weeks minimum		
Inform the public that consultation is available, for example host information on website or social media			
Roll out agreed consultation engagement plan i.e. host public meeting/focus group etc - refer to good practice for hosting meetings i.e. venue booking, refreshments and supporting information			
Analysis of consultation submissions	6 weeks minimum		
Re-draft consultation proposals as appropriate			
Present feedback to organisation management and seek Board (or equivalent) approval			
Issue press release with outcome of decision			
Feedback to stakeholders			
Record PPI consultation as part of Impact sheet (if applicable)			

Suggested consultation document structure

Section	Suggested content
Foreword	Opening commentary about the topic, usually by the organisations Chief Executive, Chair or Director.
Introduction	<p>Background, context and legislation relating to the consultation.</p> <p>An overview of the consultation process, how to submit a response, details of focus groups, public meetings, etc. The timeframe and contact person for queries.</p> <p>Outline the scope and impact of the consultation - be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.</p>
Strategic context, vision and aims	Outline the vision for the proposal and what it is seeking to change.
Details of the proposals	Outline the different elements to the proposal, including various options and the rationale for their selection/or rejection.
Implementing, monitoring, review and communications	Outline how the proposal will be implemented, monitored and reviewed.
Responding to the consultation and equality issues	<p>Develop a set of questions on key areas to support participants to submit a response.</p> <p>Detail the timeframe to respond and include contact details.</p> <p>Outline equality considerations including details of formats that the consultation material can be made available in.</p> <p>Set out how you will consider the input/feedback received and how you intend to communicate the outcome of your decision.</p>
Appendix	<p>Information to support the consultation such as a glossary, supporting documents etc should be included.</p> <p>Include your Equality Screening or Equality Impact Assessment.</p>

For more information on Involvement, Co-Production and Partnership Working
please visit the Engage website <http://engage.hscni.net>

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