

## Lancashire County Council's Duty to Involve Fact Sheet

### What is the 'duty to involve'?

The 'duty to involve' came into force for local authorities on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009. It seeks to ensure that people have greater opportunities to have their say on local matters. The 'duty' is best summed up as the government seeking to 'embed a culture of engagement and empowerment' in local authorities.

Citizen, stakeholder and service user involvement is no longer a luxury; it is now a requirement.

### What does the 'duty to involve' mean for my team / department / directorate?

The 'duty to involve' means that your team / department / directorate need to consider, as a matter of course the possibilities for:

- provision of information to:
- consultation with; and
- involvement of

'representatives of local people' on 'routine functions' as well as 'significant one-off decisions'.

Where possible, this involvement activity should be co-ordinated with other council departments and partner organisations.

### What is meant by 'representatives of local persons'?

The term covers: local citizens and those who work or study in the area (including those who work for the authority); visitors; service users; third sector organisations; businesses; bodies such as parish councils; and anyone else likely to be affected by, or interested in, the function. The term covers children and young people, as well as adults.

### What will my team / department / directorate need to demonstrate?

As part of Comprehensive Area Assessment your team / department / directorate will need to be able to demonstrate that:

- You understand the interests and requirements of the community;
- You inform, consult and involve on the right issues and with the right people in the right way;
- You have taken a corporate, co-ordinated approach;
- You have worked with partners where appropriate;
- Local people feel that they have opportunities to get involved; and
- Local people know how to get involved.

### How can I ensure that my team / department / directorate are meeting the 'duty to involve'?

The checklist over the page will help you to:

- Check whether your team / department / directorate's activities are in line with the 'duty to involve'; and
- Draw up a plan for how you will apply the 'duty to involve' in your team / department / directorate.

## Duty to Involve Checklist

### You should use this checklist to:

- Check whether your team / department / directorate's activities are in line with the 'duty to involve'; and
- Draw up a plan for how you will apply the 'duty to involve' in your team / department / directorate.

### Providing information

- Does your team / department / directorate provide 'representatives of local persons' with appropriate information which supports them to have their say and get involved?
- Is the information you provide accessible, easy to understand and tailored to different audiences?

*Every council function should consider providing information which supports 'representatives of local persons' to have their say and get involved where appropriate - this therefore goes beyond the simple provision of information on how to access services (including locations, opening hours, eligibility criteria etc).*

### Consulting

- Does your team / department / directorate provide 'representatives of local persons' with appropriate and genuine opportunities to have their say, through formal consultations and surveys as well as direct dialogue with representatives?
- Are you clear on the purpose, scope and parameters of consultation activity?
- Do you feed back the outcomes of consultation, making it clear how the input of representatives of local persons has contributed to the decision?

*Every council function should offer 'representatives of local persons' appropriate opportunities to have their say about the decisions and services that affect them through consultation. Some examples of consultation include formal (including mandatory) consultations, satisfaction surveys, as well as direct dialogue with representatives of local persons, for example through deliberative panels and focus groups. Consultation needs to provide genuine opportunities for people to be involved.*

### Involving in another way

- Does your team / department / directorate provide 'representatives of local persons' with opportunities to get involved over and above being informed and consulted?
- Do you provide opportunities for representatives to:
  - Influence or directly participate in decision making (e.g. citizens panels; service advisory panels; neighbourhood management; participatory budgeting; citizen juries)
  - Provide feedback on decisions, services and policies (e.g. a 'have your say' section; service user forums; providing feedback forms)
  - Co-design / help design services and policies (e.g. involvement in service commissioning)

## Appendix A

- Co-produce / carry out some aspects of the services for themselves (e.g. maintenance of a community centre; the transfer or management of assets; communities taking part in street clean up or environmental conservation work)
- Assess services (e.g. citizens acting as mystery shoppers and user evaluators)

### **Co-ordinating engagement activity with partners and other parts of the council**

- Do you share information and intelligence on local community issues with partners and other parts of the council?
- Do you work with partners and other parts of the council to co-ordinate information provision, consultation and involvement across the area?
- Are you working through the relevant local strategic partnership (either district or countywide) to achieve a co-ordinated approach?

### **Other considerations**

- Have you considered accessibility and equality issues? How do you engage representatives in a way that considers their needs and takes into account their circumstances?
- Have you considered previous engagement on similar issues – can it inform the next round of consultation? Can you avoid duplication?
- Are your activities appropriate and proportional to the issue, taking into account the resources that will be needed?
- Is the timing appropriate? Ideally, consultation should take place as early as possible to ensure functions are shaped around community needs and aspirations.
- How will feedback be given on the changes made as a result of the engagement?
- How are you involving councillors or keeping them informed of engagement activity?
- How are you involving the third sector as part of the new duty? They might be affected by, or interested in, a particular authority function. They might have a role as advocates for local people (particularly marginal and/or otherwise vulnerable groups). They could provide relevant expertise and specialist knowledge that might help you to reach out to marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- Do you have steps in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of engagement methods?
- Are there ways to identify engagement priorities and projects for your team / department / directorate as part of your business and service planning processes?

### **You may find the following useful when planning your engagement activity:**

Communications strategy  
Statement of community involvement  
Customer access strategy  
Research and consultation strategy  
Neighbourhood engagement toolkit  
Locality focus framework  
Parish charter  
Think Councillor First