

## **Sheffield Health Compact Protocol on Participation and Consultation**

### **1. What is the Health Compact?**

1.1 The Health Compact is a set of principles based on consultation and participation, partnership and funding within which the NHS trusts, Voluntary, Community and Faith sector (VC&F) agree to work.

### **2. Why have a protocol?**

2.1 The aim of the three protocols is to make a positive impact on the relationship that exists between the statutory agencies and the VC&F Sector in Sheffield. The protocol will help to develop and sustain effective procedures that result in a more effective relationship between NHS trusts and the VC&F sector.

2.2 The protocol's long-term aim is for the sector's full role to be adequately supported by acknowledging the role of the sector and the great contribution it makes to providing services to those who are of greatest need.

### **Aims of The Participation and Consultation protocol**

This Code of Good Practice aims to make a positive impact on the way in which we consult and appraise policy and decision-making. Independent, not-for-profit, charity, voluntary, community and faith organisations bring distinctive value to society and fulfil a crucial role that is distinct from both the state and the market. In particular, they enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of active communities by providing opportunities for voluntary action. They act as pathfinders for the involvement of users in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for those who otherwise would have no voice. In so doing they promote both equality and diversity. They help to alleviate poverty, improve the quality of life and involve the socially excluded. Effective participation and consultation is an essential part of ensuring that the relationship works and that the sector is able to fulfil its strategic role.

### **Main principles of the protocol**

This protocol aims to develop better understanding and practice between the sectors, encourage more collaborative working, and develop frameworks and procedures to address difficulties and disputes. The Compact has three key focus areas of which participation and consultation is one.

The approach to participation needs to follow the principles set out below.

- To ensure that the independent voice of patients, the public, voluntary/community and faith sector is heard at all levels where decisions are made;
- To aspire to involve the public in all its diversity, especially those not normally engaged;

- To work in partnership with other stakeholders to produce continuous improvements in service delivery and public health;
- To be cost effective and clearly add value to health improvement;
- To recognise that the experience is not defined by organisational boundaries;
- To operate effectively within the wider active citizenship agenda.
- This Code of Practice will concentrate mainly on guidelines for consultation as participation falls within the remit of each of the Health Trusts.
- Principles and guidelines specified in relation to consultation are as follows:

It is recognised that the issue of when and how to proceed with consultation is a complex one. However, the implementation of the Compact should address this and aim to ensure that consultation takes place on all issues which may affect the sector currently and in the future;

### **Consultation processes should be clear, open and accessible:**

- Consultations should include adequate information about the issue(s) in a form that is meaningful to groups;
- Accessibility of information should be considered with Plain English and appropriate language as a minimum requirement;
- Methods of consultation should take account of the diverse nature of the voluntary and community sector;
- Consultations should allow sufficient time for those being consulted with to respond and to influence a decision;
- Consultation can address the whole sector, a sample, or targeted groups, depending upon the issue(s);
- Consultations should include groups or organisations which have an interest in, or who will be most affected by the issue(s);
- Consultation needs resourcing within health and in the V&CS. The resource implications of consultations by voluntary and community umbrella and infrastructure bodies should be recognised;
- Responsibility for ultimate decision making on matters of Health policy and practice rests with the Health Trusts.

## **3. What is Consultation**

It is important that we make clear at the outset of any consultation process what it is we intend to do. There are a number of reasons why consultation is undertaken. For example, Sheffield Health Trusts may consult with the Voluntary and Community sector and other partners regarding future plans, policies, service delivery, and so on. Similarly the Voluntary and Community sector may consult regarding changes to the delivery of a service, or the effective use of new funding.

### **3.1 Effective consultation:**

- Will gather knowledge and information.
- Will seek a wide range of opinions on various service options.

- Enable the voluntary and community sector to contribute to policy-making and other processes.
- Help plan, prioritise and deliver better services.
- Can enhance collaborative and partnership working,
- Can help to enhance the understanding between the sectors.
- Can enable service providers to move towards greater openness and accountability.
- Should be part of a continuous service-planning loop where respondents can see their views translated into action.
- Should be honest from the outset about why the consultation is being undertaken and what it will achieve.

## **4. Making it work: The Key Principles of Consultation**

### **4.1 Why are you doing it?**

It is important to ensure that clear aims are established and communicated to all involved. Consultation needs to be undertaken in the knowledge that it will contribute to effective development and delivery of services. For voluntary/community and faith organisations consultation presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge to bear on NHS policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

### **4.2 What do you want to find out?**

Research whether the issues have previously been consulted on or whether there is ongoing consultation on similar issues by other organisations.

### **4.3 Who are you going to ask?**

- Attention should be given to:
  - Avoiding duplication that will contribute to consultation fatigue.
  - Establishing who the groups/organisations represent such as individuals or organisations; geographical community or interest group; disease specific group etc.
  - Whether they have the relevant knowledge and expertise to participate in the consultation.
  - Access needs of different groups and individuals.

### **4.4 How are you going to do it?**

Once you have identified the purpose of the consultation and clarified the issues around participation and power relationships, it is important that you think about the methods that you will use Consultation Code of Practice and Guidance to consult. There are a variety of methods for you to choose from, for example,

- questionnaires/surveys
- interviews
- focus groups
- public meetings, (formal and informal)
- promotional campaigns
- roadshows
- drama
- e-technology

The methods you choose can help to ensure inclusivity and enable you to achieve your aims and objectives. A variety of methods could be used to suit the purpose of the consultation and the target audience. The following must be considered:

- Different formats for printed information, e.g., large print, audiotape and computer files or email attachments.
- Community languages.
- Different venues and accessible venues.
- Timescales, including allowing adequate time for consultees to be involved.
- Times of meetings.

The resource implications regarding the consultation should be considered carefully to ensure that the scale, methods and so on that have been decided can be realistically met: do you have the resources and equipment to carry out your consultation; can you meet participant's expenses?

#### 4.5 What are you going to do with the results?

Just as it is important to establish clear timescales and processes when planning and undertaking the consultation, it is equally important to be clear regarding how consultees will receive feedback, timescales for follow on work and so on. Will you listen to the views of those you consult, but not necessarily act?

#### Checklist for Participation and Consultation

	<b>Key things to consider</b>	✓
1.	Your organisation is signed up to the COMPACT and this code of conduct	
2.	Consultation should be clear, open and accessible	
3.	Consultation needs resourcing	
4.	Timescales should be realistic	
5.	The purpose of the consultation should be clear	
6.	The results of the consultation need to be made available to those consulted	