

**TAMESIDE MBC  
CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY 2006/09**



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**March 2008**

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## 1. Introduction

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### **1.1 WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF TAMESIDE MBCS CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?**

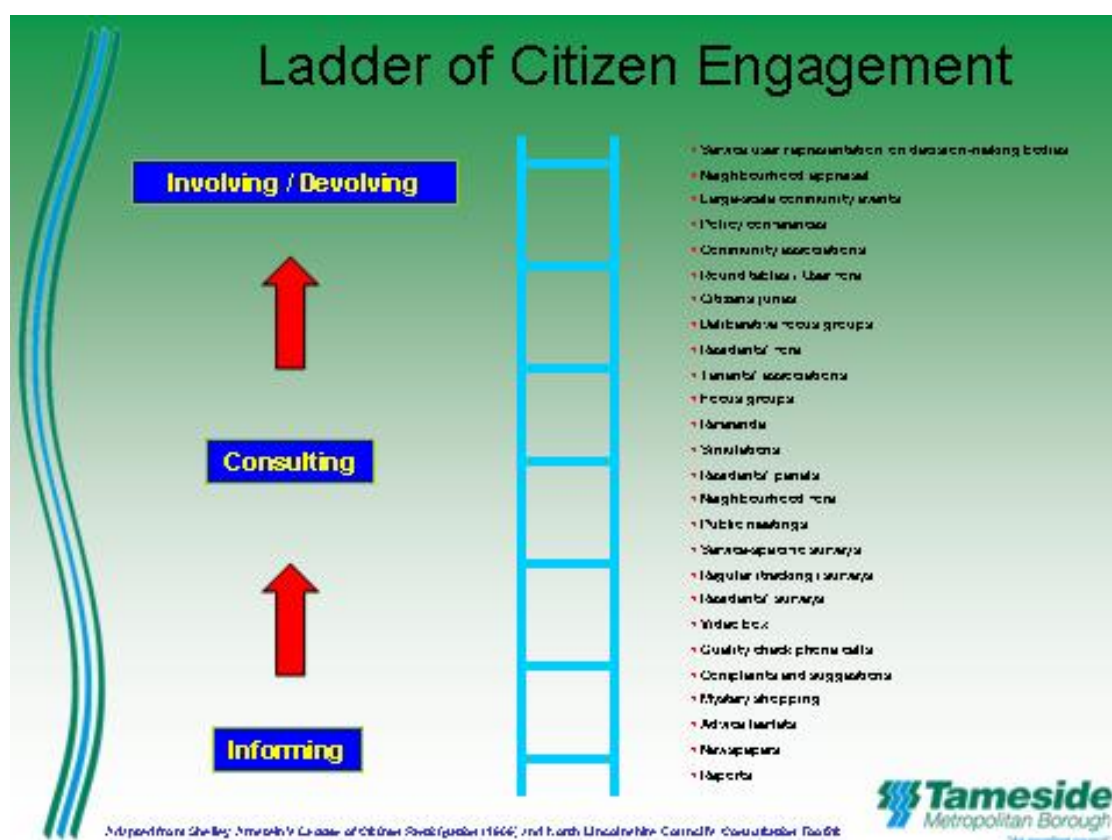
To deliver the best possible services in Tameside, the Council seeks to understand the needs and experiences of all our customers. The purpose of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy is to set out the Council’s standards and aims for involving local people in the design and delivery of Council services.

This strategy was originally published as a ‘Consultation Strategy’ in March 2006. It was revised in 2008 to a ‘Consultation and Engagement Strategy’ to reflect the wider breadth of the Council’s work and the increased importance given nationally to how Council’s inform, consult and involve their residents’ in improving public services.

## 1.2 WHAT IS MEANT BY 'CONSULTATION' AND 'ENGAGEMENT'?

**Consultation** is the process of finding out what those with an interest in the delivery of services think of those services, and how they think that they should develop. It is a mid-point on the scale of citizen engagement between information provision by a council and citizen involvement in decision-making (see the diagram below).

**Engagement** is about working with local people to come to joint decisions. This involves creating opportunities for people to be involved (e.g. user forums, residents committees and conferences). Local people also need to be supported to develop the skills, confidence and power to become involved and influence decisions. It is a step up the ladder of Citizen Engagement from consultation.



Depending on the topic concerned, consultation and engagement may be carried out with a full range of stakeholder groups (for example customers, non-customers, professionals, other sectors, and partner organisations) or with just a few. Consultation and engagement on service delivery issues will most often be carried out with customers, although non-customers may also be involved. Consultation and engagement both involve dialogues as to what and why decisions are made, and seek to involve stakeholder groups in helping to make that final decision.

Consultation and engagement can be carried out in a variety of ways. For a full understanding of your customers and stakeholders, it will probably be necessary to carry out consultation and engagement in more than one form:

- Measuring what people think (e.g. measuring the proportion of customers who are satisfied)

- Finding out why they think that way
- Asking for comments on a proposal or plan
- Asking for involvement in putting together a plan or proposal

### **1.3 WHY HAVE A CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?**

Tameside has a reputation for carrying out high quality consultation and engagement with residents and service users. We have been recognised as a Beacon Council for Getting Closer to Communities in 2005 and for Transforming Services through Citizen Engagement and Empowerment in 2008. Our successful track record of community empowerment through consultation and engagement formed a key part of our Beacon awards.

Consultation and engagement with residents has formed the backbone of our drive to improve local services and our performance as a Council; corporately we have carried out regular Residents' Opinion Surveys since 1995 and were one of the first authorities to set up a Citizens' Panel, in 1998. In 2003 our Youth Online Survey with young people in Year 10 at school was nominated for a Market Research Society Research Effectiveness Award. We've also received national recognition for our Really Important Questions Conference and Forum for older people in Tameside and more recently have set up a Disability Network to engage local disabled people in service improvement.

We have developed a comprehensive and publicly accessible [Consultation and Engagement Database](#) to act as a focal point for information on consultation and engagement throughout the Borough. We encourage our services and key partners to enter their details and results on the database, and work with them to share information and co-ordinate surveys and engagement projects/events. We have a history of successful joint consultation, engagement and collaboration with our partners, and have been quoted by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) as an example of best practice. It is tempting to believe that in comparison to other priorities consultation and engagement practice at Tameside is sufficient as it stands.

The world in which we work is constantly changing and practices need to be kept constantly under review if we are to maintain our position of excellence in comparison to other public and private organisations. The 2006/09 Consultation and Engagement Strategy sets out how the Council intends to raise its level of performance to match current and future expectations. It is accompanied by the [Consultation and Engagement Toolkit](#), which provides detailed guidance on best practice in carrying out research and engaging with customer groups, from choosing the best methodology to analysing and feeding back the results.

In addition to this Consultation and Engagement Strategy, the Council will in 2008 develop a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy. This will set out how all of the public and voluntary organisations working to improve quality of life locally will ensure that local citizens' are kept actively involved in decision-making and having a say about life in the borough.

*For Further information and advice on consultation and engagement best practice please contact the [Policy Unit on 0161 342 3529](#) or visit <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/consultation>.*

## 1.4 INFLUENCES AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

### 1.4.1 Long-term vision for local government

The Government's Modernisation agenda for local government established that councils should consult and engage with service users and residents and use this information to help plan and improve service delivery. The Government's [vision for the next ten years](#) is for councils to involve local residents in the decision-making itself, and where appropriate to devolve power to local communities and organisations<sup>1</sup>. In addition, councils are expected to take on a local leadership role within the community, working with their partners to ensure that the wishes and needs of local people are met. High quality consultation and engagement with local people and organisations, including minority groups, is essential to the modern local authority.

### 1.4.2 Local Government White Paper

The Local Government White Paper: 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in October 2006. The White Paper was concerned with:

- Re-balancing the relationship between central and local government
- Enabling local delivery partners to work together through local strategic partnerships and local area agreements
- Creating stronger and more visible local leadership
- Giving local people more of a say in the services that affect them.

The White Paper states that '*Public services are better, local people more satisfied and communities stronger if involvement, participation and empowerment are at the heart of public service delivery*'. The White Paper proposed to build on the current Best Value Duty to consult with local people, to placing a legal duty on local authorities to

- **Inform** citizens of how to access services and on service performance (through newsletters, websites, text messages, local media, staff working in neighbourhoods)
- **Consult** citizens and communities through surveys, focus groups or neighbourhood and parish plans
- **Involve** citizens in directly designing, delivering or assessing a service; and
- **Devolve** responsibility for service delivery (e.g. community management of local assets).

### 1.4.3 An action-plan for Community Empowerment

Following on from the Local Government White Paper, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a three-year action-plan for Community Empowerment in October 2007. The action-plan had three key aims:

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<sup>1</sup> [Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter \(ODPM, 2005\)](#)

- Greater participation, collective action and engagement in democracy
- Changing attitudes towards community empowerment
- Improved performance of public services and quality of life

The government will be introducing a new legal duty in April 2009 for all local authorities to secure the participation of local people in decision-making. The action-plan proposes to extend the use of community kitties. These involve devolved budget given to residents within a neighbourhood for them to decide what money should be spent on. Tameside has already begun devolving budgets to local people, for example through the District Assemblies process and to young people who use youth services. This is something the Council will be expected to develop further over the next five years.

Clearly then, there is a clear obligation for all local authorities to secure the participation of local communities and citizens in service improvement. While Tameside is already in a good position to respond to this drive to improve local democracy, it is vital that we continue to carry out high quality, robust and inclusive consultation and engagement with all of our customers.

#### **1.4.4 User focus and diversity – Corporate Assessment**

[Audit Commission guidance](#) indicates that a Key Question in the Corporate Assessment contributing to a council's overall CPA score will be whether a council's ambitions are based on a shared understanding amongst the council and partner organisations of the needs and priorities of local residents. The expectation is that councils will consult and engage with the local community in order to plan services in such a way that local needs are met. According to the guidance, evidence will be required to show (amongst other things) that:

##### **Ambition**

- Ambitions for the community address the underlying needs of the area and its communities
- Ambitions are shared amongst partner organisations and understood by staff and the local community
- Data collection and analysis needs are agreed between councils and partner organisations and information is shared openly between them
- Councils and partner organisations work together to assess changes in statutory responsibilities, to analyse demographic characteristics and trends, to consider the findings of performance monitoring, to identify gaps and shortfalls in provision, and councils and partner organisations work together to assess the likely availability of resources
- Service users, staff and other stakeholders, including voluntary and community and private sector organisations, are encouraged to give their views and supported where necessary in doing so; measures are taken within this to involve black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage
- Consultation and engagement recognises the range and complexity of service user needs and makes provision for choice

### **Prioritisation**

- Priorities address the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage, and promote good race relations
- Service users, councillors, staff and other stakeholders understand key strategic objectives
- Service users, staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to action planning
- Action plans address the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage
- Action plans include sufficient detail of the action proposed to enable stakeholders to assess its fitness for purpose

### **Capacity**

- Users and other stakeholders are able to access services which meet their diverse needs
- Full account is taken of diversity, user focus and human rights issues in decision making and achieving outcomes

### **Performance Management**

- There is a well publicised, user-friendly and supportive system for service users and staff to submit complaints or grievances, or representations about service performance
- Data collection and analysis includes reference to the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage, and geographic areas
- Service users, staff and other stakeholders, including voluntary and community organisations, contribute to performance review and are informed about its outcomes
- Targets for improvement are set in line with priorities, performance and satisfaction levels are monitored and analysed, and under-performance is identified and addressed
- The council uses performance management to coordinate service delivery to communities and users
- User complaints and staff complaints and grievances are used to inform service development

### **Achievement**

- The council has mechanisms in place that allow it to take account of business, citizen and user groups' satisfaction, opinions and aspirations
- The council and its partners engage with individuals, communities and those most likely to be socially excluded
- The council, with its partners, ensures that the services it commissions and delivers take into account the aspirations and needs of older people, now and in the future, as part of a strategic approach, addressing areas relating to the following dimensions of independence: housing and the home; neighbourhood; social activities, social networks and keeping busy; getting out and about; income; information; and health and healthy living



- The council and its partners use a menu of approaches to engage with older people on a range of issues
- Particular attention is paid to engagement with excluded groups and older people whose voices are seldom heard, such as black and minority ethnic elders, older people with mental health problems and older people in institutional settings
- ‘Inter-generational’ approaches are employed to increase understanding and respect between older people and younger people
- Methods of engagement are sustainable, supported and valued by older people
- Information is easily available on what there is locally, how to access it, and how to get involved in planning and decision making, in the community and in community activities more widely.

#### **1.4.5 Comprehensive Area Assessment**

From 2008 onwards, a new performance framework for local government will be introduced. As part of this, Council’s will be inspected using the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) model. Compared to the previous CPA, this new model will be about how a range of agencies in an area works together to deliver better outcomes for local people. Rather than being about how individual agencies work, CAA is concerned with the prospects of a local area and what improvements local partners are making to quality of life.

Citizen engagement and empowerment will form a key part of the new inspection model. This is partly reflected in the inclusion of ‘Citizen Perspective Indicators’ in the suite of national performance indicators. There is also an expectation that local authorities will include public perception measures in their Local Area Agreements. Responding to feedback from local people should be at the very heart of the work of a modern Council, and Tameside will need to continually ensure that all of its customers are able to get their voice heard and shape local services.

#### **1.4.6 Equality**

Under the [Equality Standard for Local Government](#) councils must ensure that no minority group suffers discrimination or disadvantage as a result of the way that services are delivered. If some degree of disadvantage is unavoidable (for example if budgetary restrictions mean that a service must be reduced, and this will affect a particular minority group more than other people), measures must be taken to lessen the extent of the disadvantage.

For all corporate consultation, Tameside takes care to make sure that the voices of people from minority groups can be heard. For example, the number of people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups who were interviewed in the Residents’ Opinion Survey 2008 was boosted to ensure that data for BME people was robust.

The Local Government Association has also recently published a Customer Insight Protocol that suggests some rules of consistency that local authorities could adopt for collecting data about its customers. As part of this, authorities are advised to conduct ‘segmentation’ analyses to understand differences in the views of different communities. All consultation and engagement data collected in Tameside should break down responses by customer groups (e.g. by ethnicity, age, gender and disability) to better understand the needs of these communities. The Council has a



set of standard equality monitoring questions to use in all surveys and customer monitoring projects to ensure that minority groups are heard in all general consultation and engagement exercises.

In addition, in order to ensure that minority groups experience no disadvantage, consultation and engagement specifically with these groups (defined by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and faith or religious belief) must also be carried out. In judging whether disadvantage exists, a local authority must be able to provide evidence to justify its decision, for which consultation and engagement data may be useful. Recent examples in Tameside include the setting up of a Disability Network and annual conference to connect local disabled people to managers of local services and improve outcomes for disabled people in Tameside.

The council has recently introduced a local performance indicator requiring services to monitor the ethnicity (at a minimum) of their customers.

#### **1.4.7 Efficiency**

The Government's [Efficiency Review](#) requires councils to make efficiency savings whilst continuing to improve frontline services. In total 2.5 percent savings must be made for each of the three years starting in 2004/05. The extent to which efficiency gains are made by council services will contribute to their final Service Assessment score for CPA.

The National Audit Office and HM Treasury recommended in 2003<sup>2</sup> that key stakeholders are consulted to find out what they want or need. The Government's ten-year vision states that in order to avoid wasting resources in service delivery, citizens should be involved in decision-making, should be able to identify their needs and should be able to help find solutions to problems.

#### **1.4.8 Service Transformation**

The Varney Review published in December 2006 sets out a vision to transform public services in the UK. The review identified the need for public bodies to pay closer attention to the totality of their relationships with local citizens and to join up services locally. Service transformation is about making services more responsive by designing them around the needs and experiences of local people.

Tameside is recognised nationally as having an innovative approach towards service transformation. We were awarded Beacon status for 'Transforming Services: Citizen Engagement and Empowerment' in 2008, as well as a special accolade award for the quality of our Beacon application. Understanding local people's use and experiences of our services is vital in enabling us to deliver the best possible outcomes for everyone in Tameside. Consultation and engagement clearly has a key role to play in the further transformation of services in Tameside.

## **1.5 INFLUENCES AT LOCAL LEVEL**

### **1.5.1 Local Democracy at work**

Councillors are the elected representatives of the local population, and as part of that role they exist to voice the views of the electorate. Tameside Councillors appreciate that robust consultation and effective engagement complements their local knowledge and has a place within a modern local authority.

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<sup>2</sup> [Improving Service Delivery – how auditors can help](#) (NAO / HM Treasury 2003)

Public services are accountable to their customers and potential customers, since they provide the funding that enables the service to exist. It is therefore best practice to keep in touch with customers' and non-customers' views, and to reflect these views in action planning. This is something that we are accustomed to doing at Tameside.

### **1.5.2 Compact 2**

Tameside Council is committed to working in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector, and has signed the Tameside Compact with the Third Sector Coalition (T3SC). This is an agreement for the way in which the voluntary and statutory sector will work together. In relation to consultation and engagement, as part of the Compact the council has agreed that:

- Consultation processes will be clear, open and accessible to all groups, particularly those with special needs
- The aims and final decision-making process following consultation should be clear from the outset
- Consultation should be as timely as possible to allow proper debate and input into decision-making processes
- Feedback on final decisions and why these were made should be given to the Sector (VCS) after consultation has occurred
- All parties have a responsibility to ensure that consultation processes are as inclusive as possible

### **1.5.3 Tameside Strategic Partnership**

At its annual review in 2007 Tameside Strategic Partnership maintained its highest possible rating from Government Office North West. The Council has a responsibility to provide high quality community leadership in its partnership work with other sectors, and is expected to work with partners to form a vision for the borough based on a shared understanding of local need. Therefore information arising from consultation and engagement carried out by the council needs to be disseminated across other organisations. The most effective way of achieving this is through the online [Consultation and Engagement Database](#) and through the networks that exist within the council and TSP, for example the Consultation and Engagement Group.

### **1.5.4 Tameside's Local Area Agreement**

Tameside's Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement with central government that sets out the priorities a range of partners in Tameside will work towards through the borough's Community Strategy 2003-13. The LAA has an overarching theme of reducing inequalities across the borough. The LAA is grouped around four blocks – Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities, Healthier Communities and Older People and Economic Development.

Local people's experiences of services and life in the borough were used to inform the LAA priorities: a number of LAA performance indicators are measured through the Council's Citizens' Panel. The performance of the LAA will therefore be shaped by the perceptions and experiences of local people.

## **2. What are we trying to achieve?**

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In Tameside we want to maintain our position amongst the leading local authorities, despite the increased challenge of the new CAA methodology. This ambition means that:

- We need to recognise the importance of carrying out consultation (market research) and engagement amongst service users and non-users wherever it is appropriate. This will make sure that services meet local people's needs and are delivered in the way that local people consider to be appropriate.
- We need to identify consultation and engagement requirements as part of the business planning process.
- When taking decisions about service goals, and the way that we deliver them, we need to take into account the views of our customers and other stakeholders, whether internal or external to the council.
- Any consultation and engagement exercises must be robust, follow best practice and be of the highest possible quality within available resources.
- We need to feed back the findings of all consultation and engagement to those who participated, as well as any action to be undertaken as a result.
- We need to keep local people informed of progress towards actions agreed as a result of consultation and engagement.
- Where appropriate, we may wish to involve service users in decision-making related to service priorities and delivery.
- Where appropriate, we should devolve decision-making to local people (e.g. through devolving a small proportion of our budget for local people to decide what to spend money on). A recent example in Tameside is allowing young people who use Youth Services to decide how money should be spent to improve youth clubs in the borough.

### **2.1 PROGRESS IN TAMESIDE**

Tameside is well placed to ensure that it meets the expectations of central Government and the local community. We have a well-established corporate consultation and engagement programme and consultation/engagement is embedded in the improvement process for individual services. There are several mechanisms in existence within the Council for sharing knowledge and best practice relating to consultation and engagement.

#### **2.1.1 Corporate Consultation and Engagement Programme**

The Corporate Consultation and Engagement Programme consists of:

- **Residents' Opinion Survey**

This is an in-home face-to-face survey with 1,100 residents to find out views on the Council and living in Tameside. The sample is representative of the local population at Borough level and District Assembly level for gender, age, ethnicity and work status. In 2004 and 2007 the proportion of people from black and minority ethnic groups was 'boosted' to provide robust results for that group. The survey took place in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2004 and 2007. The next survey will be in 2010.

- **Citizens' Panel**

The Citizens' Panel was established by Tameside in 1998 and is run on behalf of the Council by an independent research agency. It consists of approximately 2,000 members, who are recruited by the market research agency to ensure that the panel is broadly representative of the Borough population. Every year one-third of panel members are replaced, to make sure that the panel maintains its independence of the Council. Panel members agree to receive three postal surveys per year and response rates of around 65% are regularly achieved.

- **Young People's Online Survey (Year 10 pupils)**

This two-yearly online survey was introduced in 2003. It is carried out via Tameside schools and the first survey investigated views of Tameside, the Council and its partners, drugs and alcohol use, and young people's educational aspirations. In total 54% of young people in Year 10 took part in the 2005/06 survey. The next survey will take place in 2008.

- **Business Opinion Survey**

The two-yearly Business Opinion Survey consists of 400 telephone interviews with a representative sample of local small and medium-sized enterprises. The survey investigates the possibility of relocation, recruitment and skills, crime, the environment, and views of the Council and its services. The last survey took place in March 2008 and the next survey is due to take place in 2010.

- **Community Strategy Consultation**

The original consultation to form the Community Strategy within Tameside took place in 1999. The consultation process consisted of a mixture of surveys and events across Tameside: 3,000 people in Tameside were consulted to help develop the key themes of the Borough's Community Strategy on behalf of the [Tameside Strategic Partnership](#) (TSP). The Council and its partners work to deliver the aims of the Community Strategy, as defined by local people.

The first Community Strategy was a three-year document, but in 2005 the TSP Board took the decision to change to a ten-year timescale, since the priorities of the borough are addressing long-term issues. At the same time, a further consultation exercise was carried out through the Citizens' Panel to check whether the Community Strategy priorities remained important to local people. Over 90% of panel members agreed that the six priorities remain important to improving quality of life in Tameside.

- **'Ask the Audience'**

Tameside has a history of arranging consultation events, and takes pains to ensure that they are successful. One way in which this is achieved is through our investment in 'Ask the Audience' electronic voting equipment. This involves handsets similar to those used for questions posed to the audience in the television programme '*Who wants to be a Millionaire?*' A question is read out to the audience, and also appears on a screen. Time is then allowed for people to enter the number of their chosen response on their handset. When the time for voting is over, the data is immediately captured by the software programme and the results appear on-screen in

the form of a chart. This form of immediate survey and feedback is very popular with participants.

'Ask the Audience' handsets are available for Council use from the Policy Unit. You will also need to have someone within your service trained in setting up and operating the software.

*For further information contact the [Policy Unit](#) on 0161 342 3529.*

- **Really Important Questions Conference and Forum**

The 'Really Important Questions' (RIQ) forum and conference were established in 2000 and provide an ongoing way of involving older people aged 55 and over in service improvement in Tameside. The group meets in an annual conference (which is chaired by older people) and is attended by Council managers and partner organisations. Every year, a Really Important Answers document is produced which records what improvements have been made over the previous year based on older people's feedback.

In between conferences, older people meet four times a year in forums to voice their views about local services. There is currently a waiting list for older people wanting to become members of the forum. The RIQ network has received national recognition for its success in engaging with older people.

- **Listen Here Disability Network**

The Listen Here Network for disabled people was set up and met in its first annual conference in September 2007. The network consists of disabled people and managers of local services who meet in an annual conference and discuss what improvements need to be made to local services.

In between conferences, a steering group of professionals from local organisations and a steering group of disabled people meet to plan the following year's event and monitor the action-plan that is published after the conference.

- **Various other pieces of consultation and engagement**

In addition to the above, other pieces of work include the new two-yearly Place Survey, a two-yearly Employee Survey an annual Priority Neighbourhoods Survey and the annual Big Chat conference for people with learning disabilities.

## 2.1.2 Information sharing mechanisms

- **Consultation and Engagement Group**

The Consultation and Engagement Group is chaired by Emma Thompson, Policy Manager responsible for consultation and engagement at Tameside. The group consists of representatives from every Directorate within the Council and various partner organisations, and meets quarterly to share information and discuss best practice and issues raised by consultation and engagement that has recently been carried out or is planned.

During 2006/09 the Consultation and Engagement Group has carried out a Consultation Audit across the council, to identify current skills levels and needs in relation to consultation best practice. An action plan will be agreed following the initial investigations, and support will be provided.

Following on from the publication of the Community Empowerment Action Plan, an engagement training plan is being developed during 2008 to improve engagement skills across the Council. The membership of the group has also been widened to include partner organisations such as T3SC (the local voluntary sector lead organisation) and Tameside and Glossop Primary Care Trust. This will allow for wider sharing of expertise around consultation and engagement and increase opportunities for joint working.

During 2008, an online corporate question bank will be developed to enable sharing of questions used in surveys and enable council service areas and other organisations to benchmark their data.

- **Consultation and Engagement Database**

The Council has a well-established [Consultation and Engagement Database](#) that is the main means of sharing information about consultation and research that has been carried out within the Borough, or is planned in future. The database is accessible to Council officers, other organisations and the public via the [Consultation and Engagement pages](#) of the Council's website and details of any consultation and engagement taking place within the Borough may be included.

It is also possible for contributors to upload reports, questionnaires or data files with the details of their project. Members of the TSP are encouraged to contribute to the database.

During 2008, development work will be carried out on the database to improve its functionality and appearance and ensure it continues to act as a resource for service areas and organisations in Tameside.

- **Tameside Information Group (TIG)**

- The TIG group was set up in 2008 and aims to facilitate better joint working around the collection, dissemination and analysis of socio-economic data about Tameside. The TIG group will play a key role in the development of the Quality of Life online resource. This will be a single online system for all data relating to services and quality of life in Tameside. The work of the TIG group will enable the Council and its partners to have a better understanding of local need and design local services based on this intelligence.

*For further information contact The [Policy Unit](#) on 0161 342 3529.*

### **3. How do I consult and engage with local people?**

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Many service units within Tameside have a well-established tradition of consultation, or market research, or engagement amongst service users and non-users. For them, the challenge is to question their methods and skills, and to ensure that they are following best practice, and using their research in the most appropriate way.

In some areas, the tradition of consultation and engagement is not so well established. For these areas, support in developing consultation and engagement skills and expertise will be required.

The following pages summarise Tameside's recommended approach to consultation and engagement. Further information is available from the [Consultation Toolkit](#) and from the Policy Unit.

*For further information contact The [Policy Unit](#) on 0161 342 3529.*

### **3.1 PRINCIPLES FOR CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

Tameside has adopted the following principles in relation to consultation and engagement:

- **Consultation and engagement should be necessary**

There's little point wasting resources, time or goodwill by consulting local people too much, on something that's already been covered elsewhere, or in an area where the decision has already been taken.

- **Consultation and engagement should be robust**

Consultation and engagement should be carried out to the highest possible standards, and according to best practice guidelines. See the [Consultation Toolkit](#) and talk to Emma Thompson or Jonathon Blackburn in the Policy Unit for more information.

- **Consultation and engagement should be inclusive**

Some minority groups are less likely to respond to traditional methods of consultation, so additional efforts are needed to help these people to participate. Sometimes minority groups required a completely different method of consultation and engagement that runs alongside the main methodology. This can include face-to-face engagement in small groups to enable people with particular needs to express their views.

- **Consultation and engagement should be influential and used**

It's not enough simply to do the consultation and engagement – the findings must also be put to use. Therefore every consultation or engagement exercise needs an action plan and those actions should be incorporated into service delivery plans or feed into Business Plans.

- **Consultation and engagement should be shared**

We need to share our understanding of local residents with our stakeholders – that includes service users, possibly non-users, other services and partners. Every consultation exercise needs to come with a communication plan, to publicise the consultation, as well as the results and changes made.

- **Consultation and engagement should (where possible) be joined-up and co-ordinated**

As there are many local organisations and Council service areas that may want to get local people involved in decision-making, there is a danger of 'consultation fatigue' developing. It makes sense for local organisations to pool resources and work on consultation and engagement jointly where possible. A recent example in



Tameside is the establishment of a multi-agency disability network and conference to connect local disabled people to managers of services.

- **Consultation and engagement should build better relationships with local people**

It is imperative for the Council that all contact with us is a positive experience for our customers. Building trust with local people is vital for the Council. We want our services to be easy to access and of the highest quality. Residents involved in consultation and engagement should feel it is a positive experience and that they are contributing towards improvements to services in Tameside. Consultation and Engagement should also be an enjoyable experience for local people.

- **Consultation and engagement should empower local people to have a say about their lives**

Local people are in a better place to have a say about their lives if they have the skills and knowledge about how decisions are made and how to influence service delivery. The Council works closely with Tameside Third Sector Coalition to increase civic participation and connect people to local services. Particular consultation and engagement projects (e.g. the RIQ Network for older people and the Listen Here Network for disabled people) provide opportunities to train local people in event planning, meeting skills and how to be an effective representative. More generally, involvement in consultation and engagement gives local people a better understanding of how decisions are made and to get involved in making a difference to their local community.

### **3.2 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU START**

If you're thinking of carrying out any consultation and engagement, there are certain questions that you need to be able to answer before you begin:

- Do I need to consult or engage with local people?
- Who else needs to consult or engage with these people now?
- What is the best way of consulting or engaging with this group of people?
- How will I get robust results for minority groups?
- How will I use the results?
- How will I feed back and share the results?
- How will I show that the results have been considered?

(NB If you are based within Social Care & Health and are carrying out consultation or research, you must comply with the Research Governance Framework established by the Department of Health. This means that you must get formal approval for your project before it starts. For more information see under 'Research Governance Framework' on the Social Care & Health site on the Staff portal.)

### **3.3 DO I NEED TO CONSULT OR ENGAGE?**

If the answer's already out there, and is up-to-date, don't do it!

Consultation and engagement can be resource-intensive, so it makes sense to find out if anyone else has already done something similar before you start on any project

You can search for consultation and engagement on the [Consultation and Engagement Database](#), ask your Link Officer, or get in touch with the Policy Unit on 0161 342 3529..

### **3.4 WHO ELSE NEEDS TO CONSULT OR ENGAGE WITH THESE PEOPLE NOW?**

Can you jump on someone else's bandwagon?

In the interests of efficiency, it makes sense to share the cost of carrying out robust consultation or effective engagement. See what other service units or areas in your Directorate (and outside it) are planning before you get started.

In 2008, it was recognised that young people in Tameside were involved in several surveys that had content that overlapped or was duplicated (these surveys included the Youth Online Survey, Health Related Attitudes and Behaviour Survey and the national TellUs Survey). A working group was set up to look closely at the content of each survey and combine them into one single online survey for students in Tameside. In 2004 the Council and the PCT were both planning to carry out large-scale surveys with local people at the same time of year. As it turned out the topics were too different for us to combine our surveys, but at least we managed to stagger them so people weren't overwhelmed. If we hadn't, the response rate wouldn't have been so good.

You can search for consultation and Engagement on the [Consultation and Engagement Database](#), ask your Consultation and Engagement Link Officer, or get in touch with the Policy Unit on 0161 342 3529. .

### 3.5 WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF CONSULTING AND ENGAGING WITH THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE?

#### 3.5.1 Measuring or explaining?

If you're going to consult or engage, the first thing you need to know is the kind of information you're mainly trying to find out. That will help you choose the best way of consulting or engaging with people to meet your needs.

Main aim	Main types of questions	Results wanted in	You need....
To monitor customers and get a robust snapshot of people's views: <b>TO MEASURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your ethnic background?</li> <li>• How satisfied are you?</li> <li>• How far do you agree that...?</li> <li>• Which services have you used?</li> </ul>	Figures and percentages	<b>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</b> (survey with questionnaire)
To find out why people think / act the way they do: <b>TO EXPLAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why? How? What?</li> <li>• What happened?</li> <li>• What do you think?</li> <li>• What would you do?</li> <li>• What's needed?</li> </ul>	Words and images	<b>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b> (focus group / interview with topic guide, not detailed questionnaire)
To engage people directly in making decisions <b>TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main priorities?</li> <li>• What needs to change and why?</li> <li>• What should money be spent on?</li> </ul>	Action-plans, minutes, changes to services	<b>QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES</b> (e.g. resident forums, public events)

In the jargon consultation that aims to measure people's views or perceptions is called **quantitative** research (it quantifies things).

Consultation that aims to explore the reasons behind perceptions is called **qualitative** research. It is more concerned with explaining the quality of an experience and looks at **why** people are satisfied or dissatisfied, rather than **how many** are satisfied or dissatisfied.

Direct **engagement** is a step further from traditional consultation as it involves devolving elements of decision-making to local people themselves as opposed to the final decision being made by the public body after receiving views through consultation. It is vital as part of this process to establish the most appropriate forums for people to influence decisions. An example in Tameside is the District Assembly structure, which allows for local people to have a say about concerns in their immediate local area. Just as important is to maintain a regular **dialogue** with local people about why decisions are made, the reasons why some things can't be taken forward and how feedback has been used to make improvements.

### 3.5.2 If you're measuring (quantitative research) ...

You need to decide how to go about it: do you use an interviewer or not?

#### Inclusiveness

- If you have an interviewer there, you can monitor who takes part – and make sure that you include a wide cross-section of your target population. That will make your results as robust as possible.
- If you don't have an interviewer there, you can't control who fills in the questionnaire – it might be a visitor to the house you mailed. You're likely to get respondents with more extreme views than the 'ordinary' resident. There's no guarantee that you'll end up with a cross-section of the population, which could make your results less robust.

#### Quality of data

- Surveys with interviewers tend to get better quality data (fewer mistakes) and people are more willing to take part (higher response rate). The results tend to be more positive.
- Surveys without interviewers tend to get more mistakes in the questionnaire and people are more likely to ignore the survey. The results may be less positive – or more honest, depending how you look at it.

#### Cost

- You get what you pay for. Trained interviewers and high quality data costs money. (The best interviewers are trained under the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme - IQCS.)
- Self-completion surveys (postal or online) are acceptable ways of consulting people; they just aren't as robust as telephone or face-to-face if there's no way of controlling who takes part. We do the Residents' Opinion Survey face-to-face to make it robust, but we only do it every three years. The panel happens three times per year – and that's self-completion.

Remember, **any consultation is better than none** – it's all a compromise to do the best possible within the constraints. If in doubt, talk to your Consultation and Engagement Link Officer, or The [Policy Unit](#) on 0161 342 3529.

### 3.5.3 If you're explaining (qualitative research) ...

Moderating a focus group takes skill, and requires training so that you don't lead the group in any way, but can keep it on track and can also prevent it from being hi-jacked by strong personalities. The process of managing expectations starts with the recruitment of the people who will attend. If you're meeting in the evening, people will need to be fed and watered, or they won't concentrate properly. Councils often reimburse travel expenses, even if they don't offer incentives for people to participate.

Various training companies exist that provide training in moderating skills. If you're planning a group, talk to your Consultation and Engagement Link Officer, or The [Policy Unit](#).

### 3.6 HOW WILL I GET ROBUST RESULTS FOR MINORITY GROUPS?

Traditional survey methods don't tend to work so well for some minority groups. For example, experience shows that young people and people from ethnic minorities are less likely to respond to a questionnaire. Disabled people may be less likely to attend a consultation or engagement event. This means that you'll need to think of ways to help overcome these barriers when planning your research.

The aim is to make sure that the proportion of your respondents / participants who come from a particular minority group are **at least** the same as the equivalent proportion within the Tameside population or your customer population (which may not be the whole borough). However, if the group you have in mind forms a very small minority of the population, for example people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in Tameside, you'll probably need to 'boost' the proportion from this group within your consultation or engagement exercise to make sure that your results for this group are robust. This is what we do in the Residents' Opinion Survey.

To meet the requirements of the Equality Standard and current legislation, the equalities target groups that **must** be included in any consultation are:

- Black and minority ethnic groups (BME)
- Gender groups – men and women
- Disabled people
- **All** age groups, including young and old.

Where relevant to your service area, it may also be appropriate to target people of different religions or different sexual orientations (heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual). The revised Equality Standard published in 2007 requires councils to begin collecting information and understanding need with regard to religion/belief and sexual orientation.

- To enable comparison of data across different consultation and engagement exercises, a set of questions to determine this profile information has been developed by the Policy Unit. The question on ethnicity meets the requirements of the council's Equality Monitoring LPI for services. It's important that you explain clearly why we are collecting this data – it's to make sure that the council is providing a high quality service to all parts of the community, and isn't just concentrating on the majority. It is also important to explain that this equalities information will be anonymous and kept confidential in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

*For further information contact The [Policy Unit](#) on 0161 342 3529*

### 3.7 HOW WILL I ANALYSE THE RESULTS?

If you're going to the trouble of carrying out robust research, it's worth getting the most out of the data you collect. It is possible to count responses and keep tallies manually, but this will only give you the numbers or percent of respondents who answered in a particular way to your question. You really need to know the differences in responses by ethnicity, gender, disability, age, District Assembly area, service unit or any other grouping that might be useful to you. This is much easier to achieve if you enter your data into a data analysis software package or in Excel or Access. Where appropriate, it may also be useful to collect post code information so

that responses can be mapped using Geographical Information Systems Software (contact Lorraine Kitching in the Policy Unit on 0161 342 3503 for help with this).

Jonathon Blackburn in the Policy Unit will be able to direct you to free downloads for this kind of software on the Internet, help you to use them, or provide support about running cross-tabulations in Access or Excel. The Council's IT Training Calendar also contains training courses on using Excel and Access. If you have the money, you can employ agencies to carry out your data entry and create data tables for you. Again, contact Jonathon for advice.

### **3.8 HOW WILL I USE THE RESULTS?**

If you don't know how the results are going to be used, there's little point going to all the trouble of organising the consultation or engagement. We have to be able to demonstrate the impact of the consultation and engagement we've done – what difference it's made.

The way you use the results will often help you decide on the type of consultation or engagement you need to do. If you wanted to know overall what proportion of your customers think your service needs improving and where, you'd do quantitative research to measure how satisfied they are. If you wanted to explore why certain members of the community use or view your service the way they do, it would be helpful to carry out some qualitative research which can then be followed up with a survey if necessary. If you want to engage directly with residents about decision-making or how their services are received, you need to set up appropriate engagement structures for doing this.

Both types of research provide information that can be fed into service improvement. A mix of information types provides the most complete understanding of your customers – so you might follow up a survey with focus groups, or follow up focus groups with a survey.

The topic you wish to research should influence the scale at which consultation or engagement is carried out. For example, topics such as feelings of safety or street cleanliness are often best dealt with at a neighbourhood level. That's why Tameside has introduced Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings to engage residents in neighbourhood policing and have District Assemblies meetings where residents can raise concerns about the street scene where they live. Consultation and engagement about topics such as personal care, social services or supporting people back into work are more appropriate to carry out at an individual level or in small groups to get the best understanding of people's experiences and needs. Topics such as overall satisfaction with the local area as a place to live or overall satisfaction with the Council are more appropriate to measure across the borough through a large survey such as the Residents' Opinion Survey.

### **3.9 HOW WILL I FEED BACK AND SHARE THE RESULTS?**

It's in your best interests to feed back to the people who take part.

Today people are less likely to give up their time for consultation and engagement unless they know that it will make a difference. If you don't tell them the results of your consultation or engagement, and how you're going to act upon them, they won't take part next time, and you will have to spend more time, energy and cash on increasing your response rate or involvement.



When planning a project, communications need to be included. It helps to increase the response if the consultation or engagement is publicised before it starts, so that people are expecting it, or at least have heard of it. There needs to be feedback to the participants on what's been said, and what difference that will make to your service. We are also expected to keep people up to speed with progress towards the actions agreed.

In order to avoid wasting resources, it makes sense to share your findings with other services and with partners. The easiest way to do that is to enter your consultation and engagement details on the [Consultation and Engagement Database](#). If everyone shares information, we'll be able to make sure that money isn't wasted on reinventing the wheel.

If you let your Consultation and Engagement Officer know when any consultation or engagement is going on, they will be able to let the rest of the Link Officers know, and the Policy Unit will be able to tell other organisations on the TSP.

### **3.10 HOW WILL I SHOW THAT THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED?**

If respondents aren't going to be able to influence the decision and any action taken as a result, there's little point doing the research.

If some things are open to discussion, it's fine to go ahead, as long as you make the boundaries clear to those who take part. People are ready to accept that there are other considerations, which might not make it possible to do as they'd prefer – as long as you explain that in the beginning. Honest dialogue and managing expectations is important to successful consultation and engagement.

If you can't actually follow the recommendations of participants in your consultation or engagement, and you want people to continue to respond to future surveys or attend further meetings, you really need to explain why it was that you couldn't follow their suggestion. That'll be easier if you've managed their expectations from the beginning.

More detailed information on consultation and engagement techniques is included within the [Consultation and Engagement Toolkit](#), available online and in hard copy from the Policy Unit.

## **4. Consultation and Engagement Action Plan**

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The following activities will be undertaken by the council to improve awareness and understanding of consultation and engagement activities and techniques across the council and TSP.

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Promote user focus within Tameside Council and Tameside Strategic Partnership	1. Carry out Consultation and Engagement Audit across council and put in place support required	Policy Unit / Consultation Link Officers	March 2009
		2. Raise awareness of consultation and engagement requirements arising from Comprehensive Area Assessment, the Community Empowerment Action Plan and LSP Review processes	Policy Unit	March 2009
		3. Launch revised Consultation and Engagement Strategy	Policy Unit	June 2008
2.	Develop role of Consultation and Engagement Link Officer Groups	1. Review Consultation and Engagement Group membership	Policy Unit	Every six months
		2. Facilitate quarterly meetings of Consultation and Engagement Group to share best practice and develop skills, and review Consultation Audit action plan	Policy Unit	Quarterly
		3. Promote Consultation and Engagement Group as a central resource for consultation and engagement advice and best practice	Policy Unit	March 08

		4. Open up the membership of the Consultation and Engagement Group to TSP partners	Policy Unit	June 2008
		5. Carry out one-to-one meetings with Link Officers (TMBC and TSP) to discuss the role of consultation and engagement	Policy Unit	
		6. Develop a TSP Comprehensive Engagement Strategy	Policy Unit	March 2009
		7. Establish the Tameside Information Group and ensure this group is successful	Policy Unit	June 2008
	Promote consultation and engagement best practice within Tameside Council and Tameside Strategic Partnership	1. Re-launch Consultation and Engagement Toolkit (online and hard copies)	Policy Unit	September 08
		2. Provide and promote consultation and engagement advisory service for Council officers and (where possible) TSP partners	Policy Unit / Consultation and engagement Link Officers	As required
		3. Source training in consultation and engagement methods in response to Consultation Audit Action Plan	Policy Unit / Consultation Link Officers	March 2009
		4. Develop a work-shadowing scheme across the Consultation and Engagement Group to allow for sharing of best practice in consultation and engagement techniques.	Policy Unit/Consultation and Engagement Link Officer Group	September 2008

3.	Develop mechanisms for information sharing, leading to joint consultation and engagement exercises	1. Continue to promote and develop Consultation and Engagement Database and web pages as central information resource for consultation and engagement within Tameside	Policy Unit / Consultation and Engagement Link Officers /	Review every six months from March 2008
		2. Make improvements to the functionality and appearance of the Consultation and Engagement database	Policy Unit/IT	June 2008
		3. Make improvements to the TMBC consultation and engagement public web pages	Policy Unit/IT	June 2008
		4. Develop an online corporate question bank of questions used in surveys	Policy Unit/IT	September 2008
		5. Establish online data query tool (Quality of Life Online) within Tameside Strategic Partnership website, ultimately linked to Consultation and Engagement Database so that datasets may be uploaded	Policy Unit / IT	March 2009
4.	Develop robust mechanisms for consultation with equality target groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish links with community groups and individuals via T3SC</li> <li>2. Continue to develop the Listen Here Disability Network, RIQ Network for older people, BME network, Inter-faith network and Children and Young People's Participation Network. Also work closely with T3SC on the development of infrastructure for LGBT communities in Tameside.</li> </ol>	Policy Unit / T3SC	To be reviewed every six months
5.	Continue Corporate Consultation and Engagement Programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Disseminate the findings from the 2007-08 Residents' Opinion Survey to council managers, partner organisations and local residents.</li> <li>2. Tender and carry out Youth Online Survey 2008</li> <li>3. Tender and carry out the statutory Places Survey.</li> <li>4. Tender and carry out TMBC Employee Survey 2008</li> </ol>	Policy Unit / Services for Children & Young People	March 2009
6.	Continue to develop use of Citizens' Panel as a representative resource for consultation within Tameside	1. Review Panel contract and renew / re-tender	Policy Unit	March 2009
		2. Carry out three Citizens' Panel surveys and a refreshment of Panel members	Policy Unit	December 2008
		3. Promote benefits of using the Panel within TMBC and TSP	Policy Unit	Every survey
7.	Continue to develop use of	1. Promote the use of Ask the Audience equipment	Policy Unit	March 08

	'Ask the Audience' at consultation events	2. Provide training / advice in use of Ask the Audience equipment	Policy Unit	As required
		3. Establish clear process for use and booking of Ask the Audience equipment	Policy Unit	Review every six months

## 5. Consultation Toolkit

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The [Consultation and engagement Toolkit](#) provides detailed guidance on best practice in consultation and engagement techniques. It is available online, or in hard copy from the Policy Unit.