

Consultation in
Warwickshire County Council

Consultation Checklist for Staff

April 2003

- Who should design/ undertake/ analyse the research? Using someone else to help may be perceived as being more independent, and therefore objective.
- Can it be part of a wider consultation exercise in the department or corporately? Or is it appropriate for one of the Warwickshire Panel questionnaires?
- How are you going to involve County Councillors in developing the consultation process?

How will you use the results?

- What influence will the results have on the eventual decision? How will they impact your service planning?
- When will decisions be made?
- When and how will you publicise the results? How will participants get some feedback from the consultation?
- Are you prepared to say why you won't be taking some views on board?
- Do you want to track opinions and views over time or compare them with views in other areas? If so make sure you use similar questions.
- How are you going to evaluate the success of the consultation exercise?

What are the costs and benefits?

- How much will the exercise cost? Make sure that adequate resources are set aside for effective consultation.
- Is the consultation going to be worthwhile in terms of value for money? Bear in mind the importance of the issue, how you will use the results, and the possible need to repeat the consultation in the future in order to monitor trends
- Cost is not an excuse for opting out of consultation. If the costs seem too high, what alternative approaches could you adopt?

This leaflet is part of a series of Consultation Leaflets produced by Warwickshire County Council
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Consultation Checklist

The checklist will help you ask the right questions and decide the best approach to involving others. As a result, your consultation should be better targeted, provide better value for money and give more meaningful results

Be clear what consultation means

- Are you consulting (implying two way information flow) or just communicating (one way)?
- By undertaking consultation you are committed to
 - Listening to others
 - changing what you do or how you do it
 - telling people what happened as a result
 - If you don't intend to do this, then you're probably communicating rather than consulting.

What's the purpose of the consultation?

- For example, are you interested in
 - understanding community concerns?
 - developing policies or services?
 - improving service delivery?
 - reviewing service levels/quality/outcomes?

- evaluating the success of a scheme or event to learn lessons for next time?
- Be clear about the freedom you have to act on the results of the consultation – don't consult on anything you can't then change or influence.
- What are the limitations of the exercise in terms of policy, budget or statutory responsibilities?
- Make sure that those you are consulting are clear about any such limitations

Who are you consulting?

- Who are your customers?
- Which of these do you want to consult? For example, is it Warwickshire residents in general, those in a particular locality, a particular age group, service users, businesses? If you exclude some groups, why?
- Should you consult both users and non-users, or those both directly and indirectly affected?
- How representative are any 'representative groups'?

When should you consult?

- When in your management / political process should you undertake the consultation? The earlier you involve

others in formulating or designing services and policies, the greater the degree of consensus and ownership you are likely to gain.

- Is it appropriate to consult at different stages of the process?

Who 'owns' the consultation?

- Is this being done on your own behalf, on behalf of your chief officer, a committee, or the authority as a whole?
- Who is fronting the consultation and is this appropriate to its importance?

How are you going to consult?

- This will depend not only on the purpose and the people you want to consult, but also on the type of information/feedback you need to gather
- What are the benefits/shortcomings of the possible approaches? Which is most appropriate?
- Who has the experience and expertise to advise you on the method and help you do it successfully?
- If you want to consult a sample, what is an appropriate sample size? – seek advice it may be smaller than you think