

WARWICKSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMUNICATIONS CHARTER

“We will involve and consult with all sectors of the community (communities of interest as well as location) to make sure that all people have an equal chance of having their voice and views heard and of influencing their futures.”

Warwickshire County Council Social Inclusion Statement of Intent

As the Accountable Body for Warwickshire Supporting People, Warwickshire County Council makes the following commitments towards better communication:

Communications will be:

- accurate, timely, open and honest
- easy to understand and free from jargon
- consistent in quality and style
- respectful and considerate of the end reader’s interpretation of the message
- appropriate for the audience
- cost effective
- developmental in their approach
- accessible and inclusive
- consistent with national and local best practice on consultation

Communication will:

- value all contributions
- feedback on changes as a result of sharing and gathering information and views from stakeholders, providers and service users.

We will deliver these commitments through the actions set out in this Charter.

1 BACKGROUND

The ethos of the Warwickshire Supporting People Programme is inclusion and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making. This cannot happen unless a clear process is developed, detailing timescales that state how information will be communicated and the mechanisms in place to influence decision making.

As the Accountable Body for Supporting People, Warwickshire County Council aims to meet good practice and requirements stated in the other guidance including:

- Corporate vision,
- Audit Commissions Key Lines of Enquiry,
- Communities and Local Government Guidance
- Warwickshire Compact.

Supporting People is responsible for ensuring that information is disseminated through to providers and service users and back to decision-making bodies and therefore the commitments made in this Charter aim to ensure that communication is effective.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Charter is to establish, improve and maintain communication processes with Supporting People stakeholders, providers and service users, to enable feedback and support in the decision-making processes and to raise awareness of the Supporting People programme.

Who are our stakeholders?

- Service Users, Carers and their advocates, potential service users and ex service users
- Providers of Support Services
- The Commissioning Body (CB)
- Council Members (Portfolio Holder/Cabinet)
- Core Strategy Group (including Children and Families services) (CSG)
- Strategic Planning Groups

Outcomes anticipated from the development of this document:

- Increased awareness of the Supporting People programme and the services delivered by organisations that are funded via the Supporting People contracts.
- Increased awareness about how Supporting People services can be accessed. Involvement of stakeholders, providers and service users in the operation, development and improvement of services to achieve positive outcomes for service users
- That Warwickshire Supporting People Strategy is integrated with key strategies
- That sharing of information and good practice is encouraged to contribute to improved services
- Clear channels of communication between stakeholders, the Supporting People team and the governance arrangements.

3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

It is recognized and understood that:

- Information may be required in a variety of formats and languages, using different methods appropriate to the audience- for instance email, presentations, letters and workshops.
 - A real investment and involvement in developmental activities and support maybe required to achieve effective communication with some audiences.
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- Planning how and when consultation is undertaken is essential.
- Every piece of information is not as important to some people as to others and therefore it is essential not to create 'information or consultation overload'.
- Some forms of communication may be inappropriate therefore before providing information or requesting feedback the most appropriate form of communication should be considered.
- Communication can be misunderstood and it is necessary to consider the way in which something is said i.e. via email or letter.

Supporting People delivery of information to Providers

Wherever possible, information from the Supporting People team will be delivered electronically, generally by email or via the website. This will include information such as:

- Supporting People Provider newsletter
- Details of events and training
- Minutes and agendas for meetings
- Reports and briefing papers for meetings
- Responses to queries and requests for information where appropriate

Records will be kept on which organisations/individuals do not have access to email or access to the website, in these cases information will be sent to these by post or fax.

Consultation mechanisms

- An annual provider satisfaction survey will be carried out with guaranteed anonymity for providers returning survey forms
 - The Providers Together Forum, Service User Reference Group, Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group will include discussion on communication and planning communication.
 - Mechanisms will be in place to allow stakeholders to feed into strategic decision-making processes.
 - Formal consultations will be required to be planned through the Core Strategy Group workplan.
 - The Supporting People Commissioning Body will ensure that continuing needs mapping and planning work includes provider representatives. There may also be occasions when providers, external and internal stakeholders, service users and SP team members will establish working parties or have discussions about particular elements of the programme.
 - Service user consultations are to be developed in partnership with providers to ensure service users can be supported to feedback to the providers who will represent or feedback their views.
 - Providers are encouraged to support service users to take part in consultation processes and mechanisms within the SP programme.
 - Providers are expected to have and maintain mechanisms to monitor performance from the viewpoint of service users as part of the accreditation process.
 - Any decisions that have financial, eligibility, service quality implications for service users are to be posted on the Warwickshire Supporting People website.
 - Consultations will be timetabled and made available on the website and confirmed prior to consultation starting point.
 - Consultation feedback will be summarized and posted on the website and providers and service users informed.
 - The Five Year Strategy and associated plans are to be subject to formal consultation. Consultation on this and other major issues will be consistent with Warwickshire County Council's corporate policy and best practice on consultation.
 - Providers will be encouraged to advocate on behalf of service users during Supporting People consultations, and therefore to remain objective when speaking on behalf of service users.
 - Consultations will be of an appropriate length to take account of the need for providers to work with service users to gain realistic feedback.
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4. PROVIDER COMMUNICATION AND THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

- Providers will continue to have access to Providers Together Forum
- Providers will have access to agendas and minutes to the Supporting People Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group via the website.
- Provider representatives sitting on the Core Strategy Group will undertake to attend Providers Together Forum to ensure relevant information is effectively communicated in both directions.
- Providers will be responsible in ensuring that the correct contact details (including email) are available to the SP team and Providers Together Forum.
- Providers will receive a Supporting People newsletter annually (as a minimum)
- Supporting People will hold a Provider Event annually (as a minimum)
- The Warwickshire Supporting People website will be reviewed and updated at least monthly.
- Providers will have access to up to date staff structure and contact information for the Supporting People team via the website.
- Training/Briefing sessions will be offered when appropriate and jointly carried out wherever possible between stakeholders and Supporting People.
- The content/topic of Providers Together Forum is to be agreed by the Provider's Together Forum in conjunction with the Supporting People team.
- Providers will hold the responsibility to ensure that each individual service user within their service receives a copy of the service user newsletter 'Outlook'.
- A specific Providers and Service Users area will be available on the website.

5. SERVICE USER VIEWS AND THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

- Information and consultations will be made available in appropriate languages, in an easily read format, Braille and Large print where required.
 - The specific needs of service users and client groups who are under-represented in the Programme, or who have specific cultural or language requirements, will be considered. Where appropriate equality impact assessments will be undertaken on information produced for service users.
 - Service users will be involved in the development of information and promotional material.
 - SP will attend and consult using the corporate networks available.
 - SP will support and resource a Supporting People Service User Reference Group (SURGe). The group will meet a minimum of 6 times a year.
 - Communication methods will be sought to ensure service users views are represented within governance arrangements and within decision-making processes.
 - Relevant extracts for consultation from the Core Strategy Group minutes will be provided to the service user group in easy read format as a minimum.
 - The Core Strategy Group, Commissioning Body (through use of Service User Champions) and Supporting People team will feedback to the service users (via the Providers Together Forum, the service user newsletter, the website and the service user reference group)
 - Service users will be informed of how to gain access to information in different formats.
 - Hard copy information will be available in designated places across Warwickshire for instance one-stop-shops, libraries and Warwickshire County Council reception areas
 - A local electronic directory and additional paper-based directory of services which can be accessed from a variety of other websites will be made available via the Warwickshire website and nationally the SPKweb will have information uploaded.
 - Service users will be given the opportunity and encouraged to use an advocate, support worker, family member or carer where needed or requested during reviews, consultation and during meetings.
 - A service user survey/ questionnaire will be undertaken annually to targeted, or to all, service user groups.
 - A service user newsletter will be available twice a year.
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- A service users area will be available on the Supporting People section of the Warwickshire County Council website.
- Information provided by service users will remain confidential or anonymous unless the service user gives consent to share or there is a statutory requirement to inform other agencies for instance in the cases of Health and Safety of service users or others requirements.

6. COMMUNICATION WITH AND ADMINISTRATION FOR THE COMMISSIONING BODY

Purpose of Group: See Terms of Reference

The following standards will be followed:

- Meetings to be scheduled bi-monthly and timed appropriately with the Core Strategy Group.
- Agenda and reports to the Commissioning Body to be issued 10 working days before the meeting is to take place.
- Minutes to be completed and circulated within 10 working days from the date the meeting was held
- Standardized proformas will be used when reporting to the Commissioning Body.

7. COMMUNICATION WITH AND ADMINISTRATION FOR THE CORE STRATEGY GROUP

Purpose of Group: See Terms of Reference

The following standards will be followed:

- Meetings to be scheduled monthly and timed appropriately to enable any reports or recommendations to be reported to the Commissioning Body.
- Agenda and reports to the Core Strategy Group to be issued at least 5 working days before the meeting is to take place
- Minutes to be completed and circulated within 10 working days from the date the meeting was held
- Methods to include feedback and input into other areas of the Governance structure will be implemented.

8. COMMUNICATION WITH AND ADMINISTRATION FOR THE PROVIDERS TOGETHER FORUM

Purpose of Provider Inclusive Forum (Providers Together): See Terms of Reference

The following standards will be followed:

- Meetings to be scheduled bi-monthly and timed appropriately to enable reports and recommendations to be reported to the Core Strategy Group and Commissioning Body.
 - Providers will agree and coordinate the Agenda and inform the Supporting People Team.
 - The nominated provider will administer and circulate the agenda at least 5 working days before the meeting is to take place.
 - Providers will agree and complete the minutes and forward to the providers who will circulate appropriately at least 10 working days after the meeting has taken place.
 - A copy of the minutes will be provided to the Supporting People team to be posted on the website within 10 working days.
 - The Providers Together Forum will meet for one hour before the Supporting People Team attends to enable discussion to take place on any issues, of relevance to them or which the Group feels they wish to represent to the SP Team collectively.
 - Methods to include feedback and input into other areas of the Governance structure will be implemented.
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9. COMMUNICATING WITH PARTNERS' EXECUTIVE/GOVERNING BODIES AND WITH ELECTED/NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

The following standards will be followed:

- Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult Health and Community Services has a standing invitation to the Commissioning Body, and currently holds the Chair of the Commissioning Body;
- An elected member/non-executive director is invited to represent each of the partner organizations which is a member of the Commissioning Body;
- Reports on the progress and performance of the Supporting People Programme are taken to Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet and other partner organizations are encouraged to take reports to their executives as they see fit;
- Warwickshire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees perform the main scrutiny function for the Supporting People Programme and other partner organizations are encouraged to take items for scrutiny as they see fit;
- The Supporting People Programme will report into 3 of the 6 County Themed Partnerships delivering the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement (to which Partnerships elected members are appointed);
- Elected members will be invited to any appropriate seminars, awareness-raising sessions or training events held about the Supporting People Programme.
- Elected/non-executive members and other members of the Commissioning Body will be invited to visit providers and services commissioned by the Supporting People Programme.

10. COMMUNICATING WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUPS/LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

- Officers from the Supporting People Team will disseminate information and present briefing notes to relevant groups as necessary.
- Officers from the Supporting People Team will sit on relevant groups where appropriate to ensure the Supporting People agenda is considered and links into any resulting strategic plans/processes:

For example:

- Local Area Agreement
- Strategy and Commissioning groups

Subgroups include for example:

- Place to Live sub-group of Learning Disabilities Partnership Board (Supporting People Officer)
- The 5 District and Borough Housing/Accommodation forums (Supporting People Officer)
- Young Peoples Partnership Board (Supporting People Officer)
- Domestic Violence Strategy Board (SP Officer)
- District MAPPA meetings (SP Officer where appropriate)

And other relevant meetings as they arise.

11. OUTCOMES FROM COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

- Feeding back is essential following any consultation or involvement.
- Feedback will be available to those who have taken part and identify what has been utilized from consultation and involvement exercises.
- Feedback will be provided in an appropriate format and using an appropriate mechanism to inform those who have taken part what has changed as a result of their involvement.
- Annually the action plan for communication, consultation and involvement will be developed in conjunction with providers, stakeholders and service users.

An evaluative report will be developed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each consultation and involvement exercise. The report will determine whether there has been any positive change in outcomes and quality of life for service users as a result of the input from stakeholders, providers and service users.

Measures:

- Quality and extent of services received
- Has policy or practice improved as a result of the exercise
- Skills Development
- Engagement with wider community and networks

A summary of consultation exercises and the evaluation of their impact will be included in the Commissioning Body's performance monitoring reports.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Supporting People Governance Structure- shows main lines of communication
