

The Consultation Process

1. The consultation ran between 10th August 2009 and 30th October 2009 – 12 weeks and 4 days, which is within the requirements of the Compact Code of Good Practice on Consultation. It should be noted that some concern was expressed in meetings with the Trade Unions that the period was not long enough, given the complexity of the issues.
2. Comprehensive details of the Consultation Process are attached as Appendix 2.
3. Posters were distributed to all DASS units, and sites to inform people who use services and Carers of the report, and encourage contribution to the Consultation. Libraries, Voluntary Sector Organisations e.g. WIRED, VCAW and Age Concern, and 13 One Stop Shops all received posters for display by 21st August, 2009. Stakeholders were also sent posters for display within their organisations and Wirral University Teaching Hospital and NHS Wirral were asked to display the posters at their sites.
4. A set of posters were produced in the six main non English languages used in Wirral i.e. Punjabi, Gujarati, Cantonese (traditional Chinese language), Hindi, Bengali and Polish. The posters contained information about the consultation, accessing documentation and how to respond, together with a note of the contact details of community representatives.
5. A briefing was held for Advocates and representatives of Black and Racial Minority communities on 28th August 2009 and approximately 50 Stakeholders and all 66 Councillors were invited to a Stakeholder Briefing held on 10th September 2009. 34 people attended.
6. Additional briefings were provided to key partners and stakeholders including NHS Wirral, Corporate Directors Group and Provider Heads of Service, Older People's Parliament, Carers Strategy Group, Mental Health Local Implementation Team, and the Enabling Fulfilling Lives Group.
7. Requests for further briefings were received from people who use Prenton Centre (MH) and from Family Tree, the Mental Health Carers Group to inform their contribution to the consultation; these briefings took place in October.
8. All Briefing sessions followed the same format and content to ensure consistency and accuracy of information flow. The Director or Deputy Director introduced the session wherever possible, and a senior officer presented the report's conclusions and answered questions to clarify issues raised.

9. In order to ensure that the consultation with people who use services and their carers was robust and transparent, Advocates were asked to facilitate Focus Groups with these groups of people.
10. Following discussions among the Advocates, they submitted a plan to DASS proposing to facilitate groups in DASS centres between 13th and 23rd October 2009. They worked with Managers of the centres and residential units to ensure that the people who used services and their carers and families were aware of the dates times and venues of the groups.
11. People, family and carers who use services at Poulton House, Meadowcroft and Pensall House were included in this process. There is one permanent resident living at Poulton House at present, and a representative from Age Concern met with this resident and enabled her to submit a response to the consultation. All Carers of people who use Respite and Intermediate Care for Older People were informed of the consultation process together with the dates, times and venues of the Focus Groups.
12. Pensall House invited all the people who used this service to an event on 20th October 2009, when the Manager used the opportunity to hand out further information and discuss the consultation.
13. The main group of people who use services at Poulton House and/or their carers were written to and informed of the arrangements for the Focus Groups.
14. The Branch Manager from the Alzheimer's Society, who has experience of engaging and consulting with people and their carers, undertook the consultation at Meadowcroft, which is the respite and day service for people who have dementia related illnesses.
15. A group of 150 Carers from the 600+ Carers register held by WIRED were written to informing them of the consultation and the Focus Group arrangements. These Carers were in addition to the Carers known to DASS through people who use services.
16. Early on in the planning of this exercise, people who use Mental Health Services expressed views, through their Advocate and Managers of Units, that they did not feel comfortable about joining in the Focus Groups with other service user groups.
17. Arrangements were made between the Advocate for people with Mental Health needs and Unit/Centre Managers for the Advocate to meet with people who use service and work with them to provide a response to the consultation, particularly in relation to Mental Health Services.
18. The consultation process and documentation was a main feature on the Home Page of the DASS Website, displaying standard and easy read versions of the documentation.

19. A media release was published in the local press on 29th July 2009 and again during the last week of the consultation period on 26th October 2009.
20. A slot on Wirral 7 Waves Community Radio Programme on 14th October 2009 gave details of the content of the Design & Viability Study and the consultation process. Buzz FM radio (Heart FM) and Radio Merseyside also did pieces in July/August 2009.
21. The consultation was publicised on Wirral Talking Newspaper and contact was made with Merseyside Society for the Deaf to ensure that people were aware of the consultation and how to access documentation and contribute.
22. Articles about the consultation were included in 'Focus', the DASS staff magazine on 4th September 2009 and in 1 Council on 18th September
23. During the consultation process, some people wrote to us with their views and observations, some having read the consultation document and some not. All contributions were acknowledged in writing.
24. Some people contacted the department to ask for hard copies of the consultation documents and a record has been maintained of all requests responded to. There were 99 requests for the Standard version of the consultation documentation and 152 requests for the Easy Read version.
25. There were some enquiries made either in writing or by telephone, wishing to express views about the 'closure' of certain establishments e.g. Poulton House and Prenton Centre (MH). Enquiries were responded to in writing and a visit was made to Prenton Centre to meet with people who use services.
26. Letters were sent on 16th July, 2009 to all 1148 staff in the Department of Adult Social Services informing them of the report to Cabinet.
27. Staff within the Care Services Branch were written to on 21st July 2009 reminding them of the report and giving dates for 6 staff briefings arranged to communicate the content of the report and the conclusions reached. The briefing sessions were held between 27th July 2009 and 13th August 2009. Five sessions took place; one was cancelled due to low attendance. 119 Staff attended these briefings, representing most establishments and units.
28. Folders containing Question/Comment forms, envelopes, instructions for return and a Briefing Paper for Managers were delivered to all Care Services Units and establishments to encourage active participation by staff.