

Summary of the Requirements of the Duty to Involve

The duty requires authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local people in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so.

It specifies the three ways* of involving that need to be covered in this consideration:

**Providing information
Consulting
Involving in another way**

To involve representatives of local persons

Those likely to be affected by, or interested in, a particular authority function. (Not necessarily just local residents)

It refers to a mix of 'local persons', ie a balanced selection of the individuals, groups, businesses, organisations etc that may be affected by or have an interest in the function. (Includes children and young people).

* The Council will need to consider which approaches are appropriate (one, two, three or none) in the exercise of any particular function. Different approaches will be needed for different functions.

Providing information

- Provide appropriate information about services, policies and decisions
- Provision should support people in having their say and getting involved
- This goes beyond basic information such as how to access services
- Information should be easy to understand and tailored to different audiences to enable involvement

Consulting

- People should be offered opportunities to have their say about decisions and services
- Examples are statutory consultation, satisfaction surveys, direct dialogue through groups / panels
- Councils should ensure that consultation is carried out in line with good practice

Involving in another way

- Where it is appropriate people should have the chance to have their say and get involved over and above being informed and consulted
- Involvement is the most interactive form of engagement, giving people greater influence over decisions or delivery
- Opportunities should be provided for people to:

- Influence or directly participate in decision making (eg participatory budgeting, shaping priorities via panels)
- Provide feedback on decisions, services, policies and outcomes (eg feedback forms, website)
- Co-design / work with the authority in designing policies and services (eg being involved in the commissioning of services)
- Co-produce / carry out some aspects of services for themselves (eg responsibility for a community centre, transfer of the management of assets)
- Work with the authority in assessing services (eg mystery shoppers, co-option onto Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Applying the Duty

When is it appropriate to inform, consult and/or involve?

The Council will need to consider:

- How to meet the duty in relation to routine functions and one-off decisions
- Combining and linking up engagement activities across the authority and with partners where possible
- How much influence is being offered over a decision eg where people are involved in difficult issues
- Privacy (people cannot be involved in individual cases but could be engaged with on policy development in these areas)
- Previous engagement or involvement (should be used to inform the next stage of involvement)
- Possible benefits and costs (cost benefit analysis should be carried out)

Who should be informed, consulted and/or involved?

This will vary depending on the authority, spatial level, policy or service in question.

It is particularly important in discharging the duty that a diverse range of groups are engaged.

The Council will need to consider:

- Who might be affected by a particular function
- Who might be interested in a particular function
- Ways to ensure the relevant parts of the community are reached, including those who are hard to reach
- Ensuring that equality requirements are applied to the duty

The Role of the Third Sector

(Non-governmental organisations including voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals)

The Council may wish to engage third sector organisations in a variety of ways:

- They may be affected by or interested in a particular function
- The Council may decide it is appropriate to engage with them
- They may act as advocates for local people and become involved that way, in support of residents
- They may be able to provide expert knowledge and assist in reaching out to marginalised and vulnerable groups

What information, consultation and/or involvement is appropriate?

Authorities need to regularly need to make decisions about how best to engage their local community. In fulfilling the duty the Council must consider:

- Accessibility (need to consider the needs of individuals)
- Proportionality (to the significance of the issue – both to the authority and local people)
- Coordination (integrated across the area)
- Partnership working (work through the LSP)
- Timing (engagement should be at the earliest possible time)

What will success look like?

Appropriate engagement and empowerment should be embedded as standard practice throughout the Council, central to service delivery, policy and decision making.

The Council should be able to demonstrate that:

- It understands the interests and requirements of the local community
- It uses this understanding to ensure the right level of engagement is delivered on the right issues, target at the right time and accessible to those the authority is trying to reach
- There is an appropriate corporate approach to engagement that flows from strategic policies into service delivery, and that activities are co-ordinated
- Local people feel that they are provided with engagement opportunities and will know how they can become involved. Local people will recognise that the Council's priorities and policies reflect their involvement and services are tailored to local needs.