

Section Two - Corporate Support

2.1 - Consultation Database

How will I access the databases?

The databases will be on the Intranet. All staff who have access to the Intranet will be able to access both databases on a 'read only' basis. Staff will be able to perform a number of searches on the database.

How will I add information to the database?

There will be a data entry form for entering new information. This will go into a separate database, which will be checked by Corporate Research Officers on a regular basis. The information will then be transferred across to the original database. The same process will take place for amendments to the existing data.

The tables overleaf detail the information that will be contained within both the past consultation and future consultation databases.

A Corporate Consultation Database is currently being developed to hold information from all services on the various consultation exercises that have been undertaken or that are planned to take place. Hopefully this will help in identifying possible joint consultations, thereby reducing consultation fatigue (and cost!).

The database will be compiled with two specific purposes in mind:

Past Consultation

The purpose of collecting this information is so that anyone who is about to undertake a consultation exercise can search the database in a variety of different ways to determine whether anyone in the authority has previously consulted:

- On the same topic area
- With the same groups of people
- Using the same methods of consultation

It will also hold details of how the consultation exercise was publicised, how the results were analysed and how they were then fed back to the participants.

Future Consultation

This will hold details of all ongoing and future consultation exercises. Its purpose will be to aid in the co-ordination of future consultation exercises by detailing:

- When the future consultation exercises are scheduled to take place
- What topics are being consulted about
- Which groups of people are being consulted
- What methods of consultation are being used.

CONSULTATION DATABASE

INFORMATION COLLECTED	PURPOSE
Contact Name & Number	Who should be contacted about the consultation exercise? This is also useful to help identify everyone in the authority who undertakes consultation so that we can make contact with these people.
Job Title	Who in the authority undertakes consultation? Are they all in Research Roles?
Project Title	Will help users find a consultation exercise they are already aware of
Topic	This will allow the database to be searched for consultation that has already been done on a particular subject.
Brief Description	This will allow users to decide whether this consultation exercise is something they would like further information on.
Purpose of Consultation	Why did the consultation take place? For example: To determine customer satisfaction To make a particular policy decision To decide how to spend available funds
Start Date	What date did the fieldwork start?
Finish Date	When did the consultation fieldwork finish? (Not when was the report completed).
Frequency	Was this a one off consultation exercise or is it part of a rolling programme? How often is this consultation undertaken?
Type of Consultation	This will allow users to see what consultation methods were used and also search for specific types of consultation. e.g. if you were intending to carry out some focus groups, you could search the database to see who had already done some.
Target Group	This will allow users to search the database for consultation specific to, for example, certain ethnic groups, the over 50's, children and young people, residents in a particular geographic location etc.
Corporate or Service Based?	Was the consultation specific to a particular service area?

Who undertook the consultation?	Was it done internally or externally? This will give a picture of how much research is being carried out by the authority and how much is being commissioned from external consultants. It will also help users identify possible external consultants to undertake their consultation.
Best Value	Was this consultation part of a Best Value Review?
Joint Consultation	Were there any other departments/organisations involved in the consultation?
Advanced Publicity	What methods (if any) were used to publicise the consultation before it took place?
Analysis	Who carried out the analysis (i.e. were these internal or external)
Computer Package	What packages were used to analyse the data (if applicable). This is useful to know then we can work out if everyone is using packages that are compatible with each other.
Feedback	Who were the results of the consultation disseminated to?
Feedback Method	How were the results fed back? This is an area where we (local authorities in general) receive a lot of criticism. It would be useful to look at what methods have been used and how successful these appear to have been so that we can learn from these.
Cost	What was the total cost of the consultation exercise?
Funding	Who paid for it? Any funding from outside the authority?
Any Other Comments	Any observations about the consultation? Anything you would have done differently?
Future Consultation	Are you planning any future consultation? Fill in the other form if yes

2.2 - Residents Survey

The Corporate Research and Consultation Team, has for a number of years carried out a sample survey of local residents to test satisfaction levels across the range of council services. The first of these was done in 1995.

Some changes have been introduced over the years, such as an increasing sample size, but the survey gives continuity of data that can be tracked over time. In 2000, the Government set out requirements for a similar, but not identical survey to be undertaken every three years which it required every local authority in the country to comply with. This was undertaken across Greater Manchester which adopted a consortium approach.

In 2001, the requirements of Best Value were taken into account and a special residents' survey was conducted to test opinions in relation to four specific Best Value Reviews.

In general the Resident's Survey has taken a random sample of residents selected from the electoral register and has achieved a response rate of around 20%.

The results of the surveys are fed back through local press releases and in the council newspaper to those who took part. The results are also fed into the 'Strategic Management Process', the process by which local councillors determine their financial priorities for the coming year.

The Residents' Survey is useful for:

- Gaining an overview of the satisfaction levels among the general public of the Borough, with council services generally.
- Showing the trends in this information over time.
- Determining what the public see as the most important services, which are the issues of most importance to them.
- Measuring the impact of new initiatives, such as the recently introduced Area Boards.

The Residents' Survey is not useful for:

- Getting detailed information about specific services.
- Targetting specific groups in the population.

Topics covered in the Residents' Survey

- What you like about Bury
- What you don't like
- Satisfaction with services

The BVPI Residents Survey, which is a legal requirement to be undertaken every three years is due to take place during 2003. This year the survey is inquiring into more quality of life issues in addition to the standard topics previously covered. The questions are mostly prescriptive from the Government, however, there is the opportunity to add a small number of other questions

Contact: www.survey.bvpi.gov.uk

2.3 - Best Value

Resources

Spotlight on Best Value
6 - Community
Consultation
Available from the Local
Government
Information Unit, 1-5
Bath Street, London
EC1V 9QQ,
Tel: 0171 608 1051
Email: info@lgiu.org.uk,
www.lgiu.gov.uk

Also see: DeTR,
Modernising Local
Government: Improving
Local Services Through
Best Value.
Held in Policy &
Research Library.
Bury MBC Intranet
contains links to the
following documents;

- New BVPIs for Bury
MBC
- Current Performance
Plan
- Achieved
Performance Plan

Best Value is a Government performance management initiative to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public services within a framework more encouraging of quality and organisational change than the previous Government's compulsory competitive tendering regulations.

Four processes - known as the 4 C's - are central to the reviews by which Best Value services are achieved. They are:

- Challenge - why and how the service is provided
- Compare - performance across a range of indicators
- Consult - with local taxpayers, service users and the business community
- Compete - to secure efficient and effective services.

It is the first time that consultation has been a requirement right across all services at every stage of delivery. It means that the principles and guidance offered in this toolkit are relevant to all service managers and their staff.

The Government's guidance on Best Value has also recommended that local authorities co-ordinate their consultation activities and provide a strategic lead. The Consultation Liaison Officers' Group is an initiative to improve the quality of consultation right across the Council, it aims to ensure that the Best Value service reviews, Area Boards, Local Agenda 21 and other corporate and service departmental initiatives are well informed, co-ordinated and mutually beneficial.

Best Value Performance and Efficiency Targets

Best Value requires sustained improvement, one way of building in sustained improvements is for authorities to set targets for the short (i.e., 1 year), the long (i.e., 5 year) terms in respect of each of their selected performance indicators. Targets are set both centrally and locally.

Consultation in a Best Value Review

Consultation should be carried out (or the results of previous consultation used) at the following stages in a Best Value Review,

1 Identifying the Scope or Key Issues that the Best Value Review will focus on;

It is important that the main stakeholder groups are taken into consideration. The following information should be sought;

- What are their key concerns?
- What do they think are the important aspects of the services being reviewed?
- What level of service do they expect?
- What do their ideal or excellent services look like?

2 Finding out more information about the Key Issues.

In order to make sure that the most appropriate changes are made in relation to each of the key issues that you have identified, it will usually be necessary to find out more information about the key issues. Consultation is one way to find out this information.

3 The Draft Improvement Plan

It is important to consult with representatives of each stakeholder group about the contents of the draft improvement plan. This will ensure that stakeholders have a chance to comment on the changes you are proposing to make and give their views on whether these changes are likely to lead to significant improvements.

Another Government requirement is the Best Value Performance Plan, which has to be produced annually as an accessible public document setting out:

- past performance against targets
- future targets and standards of service that the local authority is committed to meeting and how it will achieve these
- how these standards connect to local area plans
- corporate priorities
- service specific plans
- the budget process.

The aim of the Plan is to summarise a range of information so that local people can have a picture of the local authority's responsibilities and can then engage in any debate on priorities and decisions. The Best Value Performance Plan itself must be the subject of public consultation.

When

Best Value Officers will need to refer to the results of all other consultation initiatives across the Council in order that the process of review, plan, deliver, monitor, evaluate and then review of their services are informed by cost effective, high quality consultation. The corporate consultation database (once it is established) will help support co-operation with other departments and service managers so that they can access existing data, consultation initiatives, best practice and share the outcomes.

All consultation activity should be carried out in liaison with departmental Best Value Team on extensions 6592 & 6549.

The Best Value Five-Year Review Programme will provide important opportunities for a co-ordinated approach to consultation, that can influence effective service improvements.

Completed reviews will be inspected. As part of this process, inspectors will assess whether consultations have been carried out using rigorous methodology. Best Value consultation will be regularly reviewed and evidence will have to be made available in an 'audit trail' of recorded information on the consultation process followed.

The progress of Best Value service reviews in departments is guided by and overseen by the Best Value Corporate Team. This arrangement may change as more reviews take place across the Authority.

Good Practice Model of How a Best Value Review can Utilise Consultation

The 'Improving the Quality of Life for Disabled People' Best Value Review identified the main services and activities that have an impact on the life of disabled people. These were;

- Leisure, personal and social activities
- Health services
- Lifelong learning, employment and the transition from education to employment
- Housing and accommodation
- Communication and information
- Practical help and support

The review team carried out a number of **focus groups** with disabled people, their carers / families and staff who work with disabled people in order to find out firstly, what they thought ideal or excellent services would look like and secondly, what their key concerns were about the services.

Three main points were raised in the focus groups, each of these issues were thoroughly investigated as follows;

1. Disabled people wanted more help and support so that small practical jobs in the home could be carried out - eg changing light bulbs and gardening.

The review team discussed this issue with staff and discovered that Anchor Housing and Age Concern both provided a Handy Person scheme. The review team decided that it needed to find out whether disabled people were aware of these schemes and the demand for the schemes. In order to find out this information a questionnaire was sent to a small representative sample of disabled people.

As a result of analysing the data collected through consultation the review team recommended that the information about these schemes should be publicised more.

2. Young disabled people wanted more access to a social worker

The review team decided that it needed to find out whether young disabled people were able to make contact with a social worker when they needed to and that they were satisfied with the amount of time they had with the social worker. In order to find out this information a **questionnaire** was sent out to a representative sample of young disabled people. The results showed that only a minority of people were satisfied with the amount and the quality of the contact they had with a social worker. The team felt that not enough information was collected from the questionnaires and went on to undertake a number of **interviews** with young disabled people to obtain more detailed information.

3. Some disabled people wanted to feel confident enough to use public transport independently.

It was decided that training should be offered to disabled people in Bury to enable them to use public transport independently. In order to ensure that the training and follow up support was successful the review team decided to undertake a series of **focus groups** with people to discover the reasons why disabled people did not feel confident to use public transport independently and what training and support they required.

At the end of the review process the review team drew up a draft improvement plan. The plan was sent to representatives of all stakeholder groups requesting feedback to be sent onto the review team

Best Value Stakeholder Consultation Plan

Stakeholders	Reason	Methods	What they said	Action to be taken	Comments
<p>List the stakeholders for the service in this column to ensure that you have covered all viewpoints.</p> <p>There may be multiple ways of consulting a particular group of stakeholders e.g. workshop and survey.</p> <p>Make certain you list all groups</p>	<p>The information you are trying to get from the stakeholder group.</p> <p>Remember there are 3 broad aspects to explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction based on current / past use • Importance of particular elements of the service to the stakeholders • Ways we can improve 	<p>Method. We need to be more rigorous and not just record how we consulted but also the accuracy.</p> <p>For focus groups or workshops record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How people were selected • How many events and • How may took part <p>For surveys record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms sent out • Forms returned 	<p>Summarise the key messages, including the bad news!</p> <p>For a survey, don't just say 'high' or 'low' but quote a figure. Put it in the context of other providers if possible.</p> <p>These should link into the 'issues emerging' summary under 'Consult' in the report.</p>	<p>Summarise action to be taken on issues arising.</p> <p>If an issue has come to light that is not going to be actioned, you need to say why not.</p> <p>Link into Improvement Plan references.</p> <p>Say how this will be fed back to consultees.</p>	