



working with



Findings from 3 events held in
Yorkshire and Humber

Rotherham, 13.7.09
Wakefield 23.7.09
Scunthorpe 24.7.09

Duty to Involve: A reality check

What does it mean to us
and how do we make it work?

Providing information
Consulting
Involving in another way

Standard practice for a local authority and partners to empower and engage local people through their delivery of local services, and local decision-making.

Involving local people is now the expected approach .. will become business as usual, mainstreamed across their partnerships.

Purpose:

'embed a culture of engagement and empowerment. This means that authorities consider, as a matter of course, the possibilities for provision of information to, consultation with and involvement of representatives of local persons across all authority functions'

Authorities will need to demonstrate:

- understanding of community interests
- that information, consultation and involvement opportunities are accessible and well targeted
- that engagement activities are coordinated
- that local people know how to get involved and feel there are good engagement opportunities

Implications for all

- Officers of best value authorities - all levels
- Members - championing community needs, concerns and rights
- Third sector and private sector - those commissioned to deliver services
- VCS - making it count

How local authorities and their partners can develop their involvement practice?

1. **Duty to Involve needs to be seen as an opportunity – benefits for people and services across all partners.**
2. **Needs to be fundamental change – driven from the top – across the whole organisation**
3. **Develop a multi-agency approach**
 - a. Move officers out of 'silos' to work together
 - b. Co-ordinate strategic and practical activity through a service level champion
 - c. Develop a DTI partnership group (e.g. Wakefield)
4. **Develop learning around involvement**
 - a. Share good practice around involvement e.g. through using communication technology better, regional networking.
 - b. Recognise and build upon the engagement they are already doing
 - c. Training – central to effective engagement.
5. **Develop the involvement role of officers**
 - a. Get more clarity and awareness around DTI and implications for staff – all employees need to be aware in order to embrace the culture
 - b. Build DTI into induction of staff
 - c. Get more staff involved in involvement activities
 - d. Middle management should be involved in practical engagement activity (get out of 'ivory towers')
 - e. It should be part of each officer's job (in job description?) – everyone should feel responsible for it
 - f. A good opportunity for encouraging creativity and innovation around how staff work
 - g. Need to overcome fear around engagement/consultation – getting out from behind desks
 - h. Start in your own backyard – engage your own people – make them ambassadors for engagement
 - i. Ensure that staff are visible and available
6. **Develop the involvement role of councillors**
 - a. Get more clarity and awareness around DTI and implications for councillors – how can it positively affect their role
 - b. Facilitators/community champions – need to move away from traditional 'power' role
 - c. Strengthen their role as voice of the people they represent rather than the political steer
 - d. Act as conduit to connect people to the right departments
 - e. Support individuals
 - f. Scrutiny (of involvement processes)
7. **Develop good communication**
 - a. Be open and transparent around how the council works, what it can and cannot do
 - b. Improve feedback mechanisms to residents
 - c. Use plain English (especially at senior level)
 - d. Ensure people understand how councillors work
 - e. Identify groups who have connections that others don't have (fire service and neighbourhood watch given as examples)
 - f. Have a structured approach to communicating opportunities for involvement
 - g. Be clear about the amount of information residents need in order to participate effectively (balanced against financial implications of providing the information)

8. Develop involvement processes

- a. Share data around all engagement going on in an area – mapping
- b. Develop effective ways of co-ordinating engagement
- c. Develop menus of involvement
- d. Be creative in the ways to engage
- e. Run training programmes around citizen engagement
- f. Know who to invite to meetings and the reasons why

9. Engage more with town/parish councils

10. Recognise it's about relationships with councillors and partners

11. Be clear on structures for councillors and officers

Issues that need to be addressed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships between tiers of authority – communication and confusion caused by duplication • Engagement overload • The need to see actions delivered – not just consultation • Involvement v outcome. People do not think they have been really involved if the outcomes are not in their favour • The need to improve relations between officers and councillors to combat the 'us and them' feeling • Involvement skills deficit amongst people in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between different structures (e.g. forums, committees) – could they be combined? • The need to stop doing things in 'pocket's and really change • The difficulties of cultural change with a disempowered workforce • The responsibility for co-ordination – who does it – who pays for it? • Cost – how is DTI going to be delivered (agenda, will, people, resources)? "Democracy is expensive"
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What information do citizens need to help them to be involved?

- Awareness of the current opportunities for consultation and engagement
- How the council works. What it can and cannot do.
- Who is doing what the local level and who to contact
- Feedback on what has been achieved through involvement.
- Where can they go to question decisions e.g. scrutiny

Role of VCS

- Plug gaps
- Capacity – upskilling
- Open doors
- Make people aware of what they can do
- Umbrella organisation – conduit between public sector and community – feed info to and back from smaller groups

Possible involvement techniques/examples of good practice

Structures

- Co terminus areas of operation between police/PCT/councils.
- Duty to Involve Partnership Group at Wakefield – need to share good practice.
- Wakefield - Looking at 7 area delivery model and mapping out engagement.
- Armchair groups/ email groups
- Elected members being included on East Riding local action teams.
- Highways in Kirklees – good engagement structure.
- Area comities can respond more quickly to issues. KMBC
- Community assemblies. Promoting events at a local level.
- SLA community safety – signed up to by crime and safety sub groups, housing, police, They have a two-way agreements on working together and networking issues.
- Social marketing consortium – North Lincolnshire.
- Rotherham Health Network - 50/60 organisations.

Events/activities

- Participatory budgeting in North Lincolnshire went out to supermarkets and shopping precincts to get people to vote. Highest response rate ever on an engagement exercise..
- Pilot interactive game DMBC/KNH.
- Skills training programme, future citizens.
- 'Riding around' – East Riding method of community engagement by using council staff to do regular consultation and engagement – the results inform LSP activity, service delivery and strategy/ policy development.
- Wakefield District Housing Challenge Days.
- North East Lincolnshire has an intensive communication week called 'the big conversation' – an old red double decker bus open top and a red sofa under awning councillors and cross section of staff, police and other partners attend at numerous locations.
- Linking schools and elderly people to mentor via use of IT - DMBC.
- Young people involvement – DMBC 'Dietag' via facebook
- Youth forum (via Nintendo wii championship) Wakefield District Housing/Groundwork

Points of contact

- Town crier initiative – East Riding, people out talking to councillors etc.
- Customer first- phone line/contact centre in most area can sort out many issues
- Drop-in centre – Doncaster, local people running it. Service providers there at specific time.
- Community wardens face to face.
- Community police face to face/ neighbourhood watch.
- Community leaders/ champions – link to local rugby league initiative – WDH.
- Feedback from North Lincolnshire Council councillors eg. leaflet re Britannia Corner.
- South Cave parish council send newsletters with questionnaires that can be completed and left at local points such as doctor surgery or post office.
- Facebook communication to engage with LGBT community in North Lincolnshire.
- Reading panels – tenant/ customer friendly check before information goes out.
- Newsletter and questionnaire – very local level, South Cave parish.
- Issue based in local area – councillors go out and leaflet drop etc. surgeries and attending community/ residents meetings.
- Community interest group work in north Lincolnshire – send out an e letter with lots of interesting information from police/events/anything.
- Direct magazine to every household in North Lincolnshire.
- NE Lincolnshire case trust – Chief Exec has sent out message to staff to say they would be supported if they brought forward issues.

A reality check

Ways of assessing if the duty is being met.

Information

Initially it was felt that there needed to be a public awareness campaign around the duty. A consultation database was suggested (a library of information, what has been collected/ what is being done with this information)

Groups

Specific types of groups were mentioned

- A group that co-ordinated the engagement process (both Wakefield and North Lincolnshire had such a group)
- Community or neighbourhood forums (e.g. 'Caring for Crosby' and in Leeds) to provide feedback on whether or not the duty was being met
- Scrutiny or reviewing groups/boards/panels
- Links – local involvement networks.

It was also emphasised that senior management should make it an attendance requirement to ensure that staff actually participate in the groups

Qualitative feedback

There were several suggestions of ways that feedback could be sought on whether or not the duty was being met e.g.

- The Place Survey (e.g. National Indicator 4)
- Focus groups to 'drill down' and uncover more
- Perception/satisfaction surveys - do people feel as though they have been involved.
- Going back to people after an event/consultation, do they feel more involved as a result?
- Annual tenants survey – every 3 years, measure peoples satisfaction with involvement.
- Mystery shoppers.
- Participative methods.
- The councils scrutiny process.

Baseline information was needed before satisfaction improvements can be tracked
It was also important to measure it against how much people want to get involved.

Quantitative feedback

Suggestions were made around measurements that were relevant to assessing involvement e.g.

- Number of public events.
- Numbers attending events, meetings, activities.
- Number of groups involved in consultation
- Number of people accessing support around Duty to Involve
- Comparison with other agencies.
- Levels of complaints (it was noted that increased awareness could lead to an increase in complaints but that this might be part of a positive process of 'bedding in' the duty)

There were also suggestions on methods for measuring the level of involvement e.g.

- Performance management.
- Target super out put areas to measure.
- Target demographic groups to measure.
- Basket of indicators or scorecard.
- Internal inspection regimes and authority self evaluation.
- Monitoring complaints and seeing what action has been taken.

Outcomes

It was felt important to look at the long term outcomes of involvement – what does it achieve.

Examples included:

- Evidence that something happened as a result.
- A mechanism that identifies and proves that the consultation and engagement has influenced policies, strategies and service deliveries.
- Asking people if it is making a difference, bigger sample than place survey?
- Added value to services and groups (Social Return on Investment)
- Voter turnout.
- Increase in diversity
- Increase in trust
- Capturing 'spin offs' from engagement work.

External assessment

The new Community Area Assessment is the key external method of assessment with a big emphasis on involvement. However many delegates were unclear how this would operate, how effectively it would measure if the duty was being met and how much it could be used as 'lever for change' if it was felt that it was not being met.

National Indicator 4 – the percentage of people who feel they can influence decision making locally – was another external method of assessment. However some people felt that many authorities saw it as difficult to measure.

Things you can do if you think the duty isn't being met.

Go through the local authority

- Use local councillors.
- Scrutiny committees
- Petition.
- Councillor call for action.
- Formal complaints procedures.
- Question to leader at full council.
- Internally – if think not being met then could use informal process.

Go through the voluntary and community sector

- Work through community sector infrastructure.
- 3rd sector role in assessing agencies?

Go to external authorities

- Appeal to ombudsman.
- Judicial review.
- Should have a duty to involve scrutiny panel – could be regional.
- Peer review.

Learning and development

- Raise public profile of the duty to involve.
- Training within organisation.
- Look at capacity building – people need to be confident to engage.
- Develop learning through appraisal – core competencies compact needs building into this too.

Other processes

- Appoint a duty to involve champion.
- Social auditing – quality of change – has the process worked.
- Include duty to involve assessment as part of other assessments e.g. impact assessments.
- Include all partners' involvement in risk assessments at the beginning of consultations ie what happens if someone doesn't deliver.

- Cultural change – ‘how to’ mechanism – to be part of every services way of working rather than just community cohesion department.
- Raise issues through websites – issues forums.

Questions raised

Should we be offering incentives for involvement e.g. payment, rewarding time input etc?

How do you get strategic bodies like the LSP involved in the duty, beyond what it usually does?

Should organisations have identified involvement/ engagement budgets?

Does a duty to involve help or hinder embedding a culture of involvement?

How involving, open and inclusive will partnership cabals of middle/senior public sector officers be?

Are there any authorities that are not ‘best value’?

Does the duty to involve it apply to police authorities? Will it be?

Will Audit Commission assessment result in changed behaviour/attitudes where necessary/ appropriate?

Will Audit Commission assessment be used by national government to blame local government?

Is it realistic to expect local members to be able to fulfil their role as community champion?

It is difficult for sub-regional organisations when each local authority sets up their own consultations (consultation fatigue). Why can't regional bodies (e.g. GOHY/LGY) establish sub-regional consultation forums with themed groups that all local authorities and other partners can access?

Duty to inform? How do you get beyond the gatekeepers to information in council and community organisations?

What about accountability? If ‘involve’ does not include the ability of the community to hold agencies to account then there is little power/ influence in practice.

Is it better to have a ward/parish/neighbourhood approach for councils and VCS organisations?

Comments/suggestions

VCS organisations need to reach out and involve more and support to involve more. Supporting and developing ‘the will’ to get citizens involved

Trust and understanding, failure of democratic process, no time to be involved, no resources to be involved, no confidence/ability to be involved, too busy dealing with poverty/unemployment/health/housing/transport issues.

Too many one off indicators and therefore too much complexity to deal with at local level; structural inequalities will remain, top level resistance to cultural change -‘closed’ governance.

Central government needs to adopt duty to involve to itself. Same approach to local government.

There are too many indicators too late, with too little funding to be delivered in unrealistic timescales. Duty to involve takes time! You need to measure direction of travel and outcomes.

BME communities – we make promises but how much do we actually deliver around needs/ engagement.

The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Empowerment Partnership brings together a range of statutory agencies, voluntary and community organisations, networks and people running community empowerment activities. It is managed by **COGS**



National Empowerment Partnership

Managed by the
Community
Development
Foundation

Funded by the
Department for
Communities and
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