

Thinking About Consultation and Engagement

Reach - April 2014



About this Report



In January 2014, the Learning Disability Partnership Board asked for Reach members' thoughts and ideas about **consultation** and **engagement**.



Consultation is about asking people what they think of plans and ideas.



Engagement is how people are invited to take part, how they are asked about their thoughts and ideas and how the information is collected.

About this Report



Reach held a focus group to ask Reach MPs and Experts for their thoughts, ideas and experiences.



The Reach members who came to the focus group have all been part of consultations about social care and health.



Reach asked MPs and Experts about consultation and engagement at the Parliament meeting in March 2014.



Altogether, **25** people with learning disabilities shared their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

The Questions



Reach project workers looked at things people said about consultations on spending cuts and service changes.



Project workers looked at healthcare consultations Reach members have been part of, like the 2012 Big Health Day and the 2014 Call to Action meeting.



Project workers looked at reports and guides on how consultations should work.



Project workers then wrote a set of 9 questions to help people think about consultation and engagement.

The Questions



1. Why is consultation important?
2. Does consultation work for you?
3. What can be done to make sure all the right people take part in consultations?
4. What can get in the way of people taking part in consultations?
5. What information do people need about plans and ideas?
6. How can people with more complex needs be supported to take part in consultations?
7. How can people find out about consultations?
8. What is the best way to engage with people?
 - focus groups?
 - large meetings or events?
 - drop-ins?
 - internet/questionnaire?
9. How can people find out what happens with plans and ideas after a consultation ends?

Why is consultation important?



Question 1

Why is consultation important?



“To get information, the right information. To make sure you get a true picture of what's going on.”



“People need to have a voice. Some people are scared talk, scared to say what they think.”



“Important for people to learn about what we can achieve - engagement.”



“You don't want people finding things out from the radio or the paper. You get whispers and rumours when people don't know what's happening.”

Why is consultation important?



“Me, I need to know if a new building is being built I can use it with my wheelchair.”



“Helps people to listen to us.”



“So we know what’s happening in our area.”



“Important to change ideas for how you want them to be.”



“Speak up about changes to benefits.”

Why is consultation important?



“Have a chance to say what you think about ideas about change.”



“Getting chance to say no to things you don’t agree with.”



“I think that consultation is a good thing for people to do. They need to be supported in some way. Support is important to all disabled people.”



“Letting them have it. Getting your say.”



“Having a voice and speaking up, sharing thoughts and ideas is important.”

Why is consultation important?



“So people know what's happening with services.”



“Because it's best to ask people. If you don't ask people nobody will know.”



“So people who've got different needs find out. So people who can't talk can find out what's going on.”



“You need to keep people informed so they're prepared for when things change.”



“So people know about different options and choices.”

Does consultation work for you?



Question 2

Does consultation work for you?



“It works if people listen to you and take in what you say. But they don’t always listen, no.”



“I think they’ve already made a certain decision and the consultation is just about giving people some information. I think they’ve decided what they’re doing already.”



“It doesn’t make any difference. They’ve already made their own decision.”



“It’s worked for me. Had the chance to change things for me.”

Does consultation work for you?



“Most of the time the consultations work well.”



“People need the right support to take part.”



“There’s not enough consultation by the council. There’s a lot of changes and closures that people with learning disabilities don’t know about.”



“The information was just brief but I knew what they were planning to do.”



“I’ve had letters but they didn’t tell me everything I need to know. Even when it’s clear I need know more information.”

Taking part in consultations



Question 3

What can be done to make sure all the right people take part in consultations?



“If somewhere’s closing, like a day centre, they need get people together, tell them all together, instead of one person at a time.”



“Have somebody to help you. You need somebody you feel you can talk to.”



“I think people with learning disabilities listen more to other people with learning disabilities when they’re speaking up.”



“You could have people come and see you at home with a keyworker.”

Taking part in consultations



“Have a Reach member to help other people with learning disabilities. It supports people, having somebody you know and trust. A familiar face.”



“Not a lot of people will speak up so having other people with learning disabilities to help them speak up.”



“Using photographs. If people can see other people getting involved they might want to.”

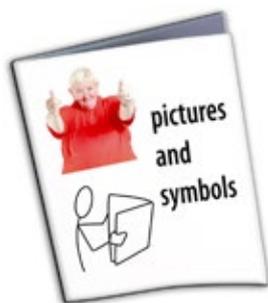


“When I helped Reach with the consultation people asked ‘are they from the council?’ If they were from the council, if they weren’t independent then people wouldn’t have come.”



“People shouldn’t tell other people what to think. They should be independent.”

Taking part in consultations



"Could put together a pack that makes the information clear."



"Work with people in their services and homes."



"Get more information out. Send people clear information letters about consultations."



"Consultation should involve everybody. Changes affect everybody."



"Information. People need that. And it's got to be right."

Taking part in consultations



“People who uses services, the staff, the clients, managers, key workers, parents.”



“Information people can understand. Clear and understandable.”



“Have a public meeting. People that could go – MPs, councillors, general public, political parties. Anybody. Changes could affect anybody. Everybody that's got a learning disability will have some experience.”



“Signal Radio. Radio Stoke. Use television, newspaper.”



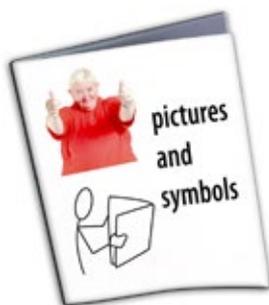
“Advertise consultations better. How do you know what's coming up? They sometimes put things in the Sentinel but what if you don't read that?”

What gets in the way?



Question 4

What can get in the way of people taking part in consultations?



"The information, it needs be clear information."



"News reports – people read part of the story and they get worried about things."



"Staff can get in the way."



"It's hard when people don't understand or people can't hear."

What gets in the way?



“If they’re not interested in it then it goes over someone’s head.”



“Not knowing about it. Not enough information about it. Not enough people and organisations getting involved.”



“Lack of communication. Not listening to people properly. Venues for meetings suitable. If it’s a big public meeting with lots of people you need microphones.”



“Need people be talking about things.”



“People might be frightened of speaking up. Might be scared of raising their hand and speaking up. For them, you need find another way of getting the information.”

What information do people need?



Question 5

What information do people need about plans and ideas?



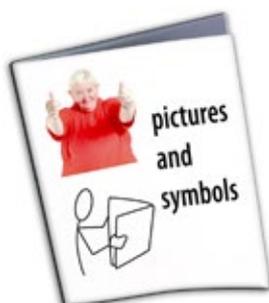
“The consultations need be more positive, have more positive outcomes, more information about what people will be doing if the service they go to closes.”



“Do a DVD to explain the consultation.”



“I like the DVD idea because people can find out about places and organisations. Television, radio and newspapers are good places.”

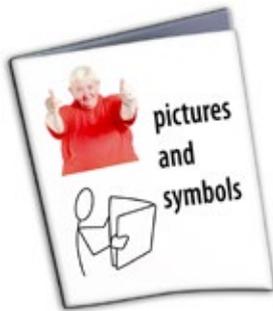


“Use clear information - words and pictures.”

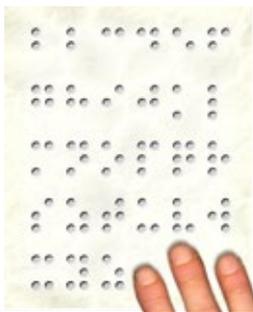
What information do people need?



“People need the truth. Not lying, not making things up.”



“Easy read pamphlets, large print. Big letters. Not too many words. When you're using pictures they've got to be right for the information.”



“Braille for people who are blind. There's no information for them.”



“Speak to people about the opportunities. Long term plans and information. Have meetings somewhere people know. Somewhere that's accessible.”



“For people who are deaf, have someone signing, have things written down, have people trained in how to do sign language.”

People with complex needs



Question 6

How can people with more complex needs be supported to take part in consultations?



“Having somebody that’s independent and knows the person.”



“Could use an advocate – someone who knows person well they would know what language to use – expressions, body language etc. – keyworker helps a lot.”



“You’ve got to be careful. Could be a conflict of interest. If somebody’s got different views to the person they’re supporting.”



“People need be clear about their roles. Supporter needs be passing on the person’s point of view and not their own.”

People with complex needs



“There’s got to be support there for people. Extra support, extra help.”



“Have somebody there that knows about the consultation, knows what’s going on.”



“Person would be affected if can’t understand the words. People who can’t hear or talk. Need to work out what people need to understand.”



“Using pictures, not words. Use sign language and BSL, Makaton.”



“Use machines to communicate, you just press buttons. Find out how listen to a person.”

People with complex needs



“Having somebody to support you who knows you helps give you a voice. Somebody you know. Somebody you trust.”



“Get supporters more information so people can take part. Involve people's support more.”



“More training for staff who support people to take part.”



“Contact companies who provide support and the support workers to get people involved and speaking up.”



“If they've got someone with them they can ask for help.”

Finding out about consultations



Question 7

How can people find out about consultations?



“Not a lot of people know so they’re not taking part. Sometimes that’s because they don’t give you enough information.”



“You need big posters with the consultation on.”



“Using letters, using email, using the phone, telling people who you meet.”



“I find out things by email and the internet but that’s not good for everybody. Lots of people don’t know how to use computers.”

Finding out about consultations



“Word of mouth from friends.”



“I find things out in the local paper, news, TV, radio.”



“You could text people but lots of people don't have mobile phones or can use 'em. And you'd have to have permission to have mobile numbers.”



“I wouldn't be happy giving out my mobile number in case I get sent loads of other stuff.”



“Find out through libraries, Facebook, Twitter, social networking.”

Finding out about consultations



“Putting posters up. Could advertise in bus and railway stations or in the library.”



“Using local radio to let people know about consultations. I shared my story on Radio Stoke.”



“Text message for people who use the services. Wouldn't work for everyone, not all people have mobile phones.”



“Clear information letters to let people know.”



“Could tell people by putting up posters in the post office, in banks, in shops and Safer Places and at the MAC Club.”

Engaging with people



Question 8

What is the best way to engage with people?



People were asked to think about:

- focus groups
- large meetings or events
- drop-ins
- internet/questionnaire



“Internet – not always good for everyone – not everyone has it, it could be difficult.”



“Have a meeting, do things face to face. Big meetings and focus groups work well.”



“I’m happy with doing questionnaires on the internet.”

Engaging with people



“The best option – drop-ins and focus groups.”



“I went to a big meeting at Keele about health that was very boring because we were too far away and things went over my head.”



“Focus groups are good. Get people involved in the conversation.”



“At the Big Health Day there were lots of people and we had pictures and there were staff to support people.”



“Help people to get involved, helping decide when drop-ins should be held to make sure people can come to them.”

Engaging with people



“The internet works for some. People need training to use it though.”



“Sometimes a drop-in at places is a good idea to see people at their respective meetings and work with one another and help each other such as a Reach focus group.”



“Use lipreading. Have deaf people sit at the front so they can lipread and see the signing. Use a loop system.”



“A lot of people can't read. You have to remember that. What about blind people and deaf people? There was somebody doing sign language at the big Stoke CCG meeting in January. I noticed that straight away.”



“At big meetings the room and the layout have got to be good for people.”

Engaging with people



“You could have different meeting rooms. Managers and council in one room, Reach in another. Then people could talk through everything, different issues.”



“At focus groups you get more information. You get a lot more information than in a big meeting.”



“With a focus group you get more time to look at questions. You keep focused on the one subject.”



“At large meetings if there’s too many people you can’t hear. Too many conversations. You get loads of people talking at once. More chance of people being rude, butting in.”



“If you send out questionnaires you don’t get many back.”

After consultation ends



Question 9

How can people find out what happens with plans and ideas after a consultation ends?

“Consultation and plans, doing consultations is more than just having a meeting and then go ahead with your plans anyway. You need three or four meetings. Consult with people at every stage. People being kept up to date and having proper written plans.”



“Meeting with the council – after the consultation. Meeting people face to face.”



“Say what they want the money for, why they need it. The Council need do a proper presentation of what money is being spent where so people know.”



“Taking information back to share with people from meetings. You need feedback on what's happened with consultations.”



One Reach members' thoughts



A few days after the Parliament meeting, another Reach member came to the office and looked at the questions on consultation and engagement.



1. Why is consultation important?

“Consultation is important for planning what's got be done. What I, he or she says everyone in life has different problems and positive and negative comments because long as they're discussed, can make a difference for the future.”



2. Does consultation work for you?

“Consultation does not always work for me because of being between services, mental health and learning difficulties. However I can have a say, a voice whatever it is and make life better for you, me and everyone here today.”



One Reach members' thoughts



3. What can be done to make sure all the right people take part in consultations?



“Get people interested, make the consultation more uplifting using creative ways like video, music, art and poetry. Give the people that are vulnerable a say, give them time for feedback.”



4. What can get in the way of people taking part in consultations?



“Too many questions and boring questions that go on and on about the same subject.”



5. What information do people need about plans and ideas?

One Reach members' thoughts



"They need to have what they are going to do, using and doing creative methods like a rating line, young and old people, different races and voices."



"Use traffic light symbols and give people an ideas box or suggestion so they can have their say in consultation."



6. How can people with more complex needs be supported to take part in consultation?



"I would use creative ways like pictures, videos, make them easy to understand, give them extra time to speak, switch mobile phones off. Use traffic lights and colour."



7. How can people find out about consultations?

One Reach members' thoughts



"Through the internet, using songs, poetry, people's voices."



8. What is the best way to engage with people? Focus groups? Large meetings or events? Drop-ins? Internet/questionnaire?



"Make sure you know where it is. Turn up unexpected. You can't change the questions, use different ways to say the same question if it's the same things on the questionnaire."



9. How can people find out what happens with plans and ideas after a consultation ends?



"Places need send us feedback on what they're going to do. Send it to everyone involved."

Thanks and Contacts



All the thoughts, ideas and comments in this report came from Reach members.



Reach would like to thank all the people who shared their thoughts and experiences.



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Reach is part of Asist, Advocacy Services in Staffordshire.



Thanks to Photosymbols for the images used in this report.