

# Consultation Values and Principles

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## 1.1 General Principles of Consultation

Everyone involved in the receipt and delivery of services should be consulted about decisions, which may affect them.

This includes children, their parents, other significant family members and those charged with providing the service; including managers, staff, carers and professionals or colleagues from other agencies. This means that people's views should be sought and taken into account in relation to all decisions, which are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, reasonable steps must be taken in all cases to consult the parents. Exceptions will include where a child is placed for adoption and where older children with an appropriate level of maturity specifically request that their parents are not consulted and a decision is made to respect their wishes.

Every effort must be made to locate and consult with fathers of children in receipt of our service.

Consultation should take place on a regular and frequent basis with those who need to be consulted and assumptions should not be made about the inability or lack of interest of those who should be consulted.

Where people have communication difficulties of any sort, suitable means must be provided to enable them to be consulted, including arranging access to advocates or representatives who may speak on their behalf.

Consultation should be undertaken in a creative manner.

If consultation is not possible or is restricted for whatever reason, steps should be taken to ensure those affected are informed of decisions as soon as practicable after they are made, and an explanation for the decision given, together with the opportunity to make a comment and express their views.

If it is then felt that a different decision may have been appropriate, steps should be taken to reconsider the decision.

If decisions are made against people's wishes, they should be informed of the decision and the reasons for the decision should be explained. In these circumstances, the person should be informed of any rights they have to formally challenge the decision, and of the availability of the Complaints or Grievance Procedure.

Children should also be informed of their right to appoint an advocate, and if an advocate is appointed, he or she must be consulted in accordance with the principles set out in this section.

## **1.2 Management Consultation**

Unless otherwise stated in specific procedures in this manual, it is assumed that people working in this organisation will keep their managers informed of their actions and will consult and seek their approval where they do not have decision making responsibility delegated to them.

In order to facilitate this, managers must ensure that effective lines of communication are established and maintained.

If procedures in this manual require that managers are informed within specified timescales or their approval is sought before actions are taken, this must be complied with.

## **1.3 Legal Consultation**

It is assumed that, in following these procedures, social workers and/or their managers will seek legal advice as appropriate before taking any action and/or making decisions, which will or may change the legal status of a child or decisions which do not have parental consent. This is particularly so in cases where emergency action is being considered.

In order to facilitate this, managers must ensure that effective lines of communication are established and maintained between Children's Services and the Council's Legal Advisers, and that workers are aware of who may authorise contact, who may have contact and how contact should be made.