

To: Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member
Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Date: 16th September 2010

Subject: Communities Directorate Consultation, Involvement and Complaints report 2009/10

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report updates Members on the activities that took place across the Directorate (2009/10) to engage and listen to the views of all those who are interested in or involved with our services. It also includes the Directorate's annual complaints monitoring report.

FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In its vision document "Together We're Better", the Directorate articulated three core principles which underpin our work. Involvement is one of these principles¹ and commits the Directorate to putting the customer at the heart of what we do and to enable anybody who is affected by or interested in our work to help shape it.
- 1.2 The Duty to Inform² came into effect on 1st April 2009. This placed a statutory duty on the Authority to 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".

2 A DIVERSE DIRECTORATE

- 2.1 The Communities Directorate includes a wide range of services as shown in the diagram below and their links with the people of Kent are both rewarding and complex.

¹ "Improvement" and "Impact" are the other two.

² Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007



2.2 Some services are “universal” such as Kent Libraries and Archives, consumer advice and registering births, marriages and deaths. Some are more directly targeted towards particular client groups who are vulnerable or require particular support services, for example, the Youth Offending Service (YOS). Some manage both of these relationships, for example the Youth Service, Community Wardens and the Adult Education Service. Others such as Trading Standards and YOS also have a regulatory role and, whilst working on behalf of everyone in the county, their day-to-day relationships include offenders and their victims.

2.3 There are also teams whose roles are strategic or involve commissioning external providers, for example, Emergency Planning; Sport, Leisure and Olympics; Arts Development and KDAAT. Their direct day-to-day contact with residents and end-users in the county is therefore limited but they nevertheless ensure that the views and aspirations of residents and service users are well understood.

2.4 The Directorate’s approach to consultation and involvement reflects this diverse mix of businesses and involves contact with:

- Service Users (adults and young people)
- Residents and local communities
- Organisational stakeholders and partners
- Businesses and employers
- Equality groups (such as disabled people)
- Special-interest / targeted groups
- Non-users

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES

3.1 There are a number of different opportunities for residents, service users and other interested groups to influence decision-making and service delivery across all our functions. The main objectives for these consultation and involvement activities are:

- To find out what customers think about the services they have received or want to receive
- To find out what particular groups or audiences think about a given theme
- To find out what interested or affected people think about a particular proposal, policy or plan
- To include groups of interested or affected people in a decision-making or policy-making process
- To include groups of interested or affected people in service design and delivery, in order to improve those services
- To include groups of interested or affected people in the assessment or evaluation of services

3.2 There are also a variety of methods and tools that are used to meet these objectives, as shown below:-

Satisfaction Surveys: As well as measuring satisfaction levels and monitoring them over time, surveys often include other questions which enable the services to act on the information provided to fix problems or take opportunities. The surveys are usually carried out using questionnaires (paper, email or online) or are done over the phone. They target service users and tend to be carried out by units with high levels of frontline customer contact.

Forums, groups and panels: The purpose of this sort of activity is to examine issues in greater depth and begin to explore solutions to problems or to identify new opportunities. They are 'qualitative' methods and the forums, groups and panels we run are generally groups which meet regularly to talk about a particular service. They typically involve around 5 to 15 people per group, and may be organised around a particular service, location or issue.

Participative events and processes: The main purpose of this sort of activity is to exchange views, opinions and ideas, and often making decisions together.

Market research: Main purpose of this sort of activity tends to be to generate actionable information about people, communities and groups who are, or who could be, using a service which we provide. We use it to identify opportunities for developing certain areas of our businesses.

4 FEEDBACK DURING 2009/10

A detailed synopsis of all Communities consultation and involvement activity during 2009/10 is available on request and copies will also be brought to the meeting. Examples are highlighted in the boxes below in particular to show how feedback has been used to influence decision making.

Collaborative working

Cultural Strategy: The stakeholder consultation for the Kent Cultural Strategy was undertaken via a group of selected delegates who attended three Cultural Summits over the course of a year. These Delegates were selected to reflect the range of partners who the strategy is aimed at – i.e. those with the strategic authority to influence decision making. The first Summit (February 2009) aimed to win support for the development of a strategy and this was achieved by a simple show of hands.

The second Summit (September 2009) introduced areas for debate and feedback was captured through notes taken at facilitated breakout groups, Twitter social media and broader feedback forms for those wishing to provide more considered feedback after the event. The text of some “tweets” was used to influence the first draft of the Cultural Strategy. For example, “Kent should be known for the cultivation of new talent and creativity as well as historical relevance.” and “Build on Kent’s cultural and heritage strengths. Use cultural geographic hotspots and key themes. Celebrate Creativity”.

At the third Summit (April 2010) we presented the draft strategy and delegates debated the content led by key cultural leaders. One of the participants proposed altering “Intention 2” of the draft to a commitment to stewardship (and not custodianship) . The change was supported by all delegates and adopted. Delegates were then given an on-line consultation tool to feedback in detail. Some feedback was used verbatim in the strategy document.

All those who fed back are or will be given the opportunity for a one to one session with the author to discuss how their comments were used and to explore their contribution to the emerging action plan. Finally, the action plan is to remain a live e-document to allow for an ongoing consultation with partners on the delivery of the strategy.

Full reports are available from www.kent.gov.uk/culture



Avtar Sandhu MBE, Deputy
Cabinet Member for Communities,
Kent County Council, during one
of the breakout sessions

Involving service users in strategic decisions

The latest **Supporting People Strategy** (2010-15) provides a framework for future planning and delivery of housing-related support in partnership with local housing, health, social care, probation services, service providers and service users.

To ensure that the strategy is fit for purpose the team consulted with all statutory partners to gain a thorough understanding of their priorities. Consultations employed a range of mechanisms:

- Face to face meetings with officers and elected members of all districts / boroughs, and representatives of Kent Adult Social Services, PCTs in east and west Kent and 26 providers
- 14 focus groups involving 72 service users
- Electronic surveys submitted by 250 service users and 6 providers
- Workshop for members of the Commissioning Body
- Consultation conference for members of the Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Development Group, Executive Board of Providers, and service user panel.

The consultation process involved asking some critical questions about the services, the way the Programme had been shaped and the potential challenges for the future.

A Service User Day (*photos below*) took place at the end of 2009. Through their own experiences panel members are able to help identify ways that the Programme can be improved and gave valuable insight into how effective the support they have received has been.

The material gained through all these processes and activities were analysed and fed into the strategy development process. Details of views and suggestions provided were included in the strategy document as an Appendix.



Planning with partners



Sport and Olympics: Throughout the year, staff within the Sport, Leisure & Olympics Service supported and attended a wide range of networks and groups involved in sport and Olympic/Paralympic work in the county, regionally and in some cases nationally. Locally, this included Kent Association of Leisure & Cultural Officers, Kent Association of Sports Development Officers, Kent School Sport Networks, County Governing Body of Sport Networks, Physical Activity and Health Networks and the 8 sectoral task groups related to the Olympic and Paralympic work.

Regular contact with groups and organisations at local, regional and national level enables the service to be aware of developments in policy as well as gaining invaluable ongoing feedback on partner requirements. In September 2009, staff in the service began to identify potential future priority areas of work for the following year (2010-11) at a Planning Day, based on the knowledge gained through these networks.

Between October and December 2009, Senior Managers then held a series of individual meetings with district councils (as these are key partners). This enabled the Service to "profile" each of the districts and to discuss both their priorities and the future priorities that the Service had identified.

Districts informed us that the priorities that the Service had identified were appropriate and that, they complemented and supported their own local priorities, whilst not duplicating work. This enabled the service to develop the business plan for 2010-11 with confidence and the draft Plan was shared with the Policy Team and Senior Managers and the Cabinet Member for Communities as part of the Business Planning process.

The information enabled us to develop a plan that would complement and support local partners' plans while recognising other local partners' priorities and resources. The individual district meetings on the overall direction of work were felt to be extremely valuable by the district councils and it has been decided that these should take place on an annual basis at the same time of year to assist both ourselves and the Districts to understand each other's priorities and to review the district "profiles".

Design and delivery by service users

The Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team's **Hidden Harm Focus Group** involves people who have been affected by substance misuse.

Their aim is to raise awareness amongst service users, health professionals, social services and the criminal justice system of the harms to children and young people caused by a parent's substance misuse.

To help achieve this they have developed and implemented a public information campaign: "*You Use – Your Children Lose?*" It aims to encourage parents to question the effect of their substance misuse on their children.

Three posters were developed (shown below). Two depict hard-hitting images, which will be displayed where parents have already identified their misuse. The third depicts an iceberg, showing how the effects on children are largely hidden from view, and is for display in general health and community settings.

The group will be presenting at the launch of the Hidden Harm Strategy and are planning to continue this project by producing information leaflets and hosting workshops aimed at both service users and professionals to champion the Hidden Harm agenda.



Campaign posters designed by the KDAAT Hidden Harms Focus Group

Youth participation: young offenders and employment, training and education (ETE)

A focus group of young people within a secure estate (Cookham Wood) was set up in order to obtain their views and listen to previous experiences of Employment, Training and Education (ETE) and expectations upon leaving the secure estate. The working group was set up by the Supporting Independence Programme (SIP) following a discussion at the main New Skills New Lives meeting, and follows on from the participation work carried out by the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

KCC staff visited Cedar House which houses young people in the final weeks of their sentence so the emphasis is on their progression route upon leaving and to try and reduce the chances of them reoffending. Messages from the Focus Group included:

- Prison staff receive limited training on working with young people and therefore are often not qualified or experienced enough to provide the necessary support.
- The young people actively engaged and appeared pleased that they had been asked their opinions and were able to voice their opinions.
- Most talked of feeling judged and stereotyped by being labelled an offender. They also believed employers would be quick to dismiss their applications for employment upon seeing they have a criminal record.
- Most of the young people felt their options were very limited and often that going to college was the only option. Gaining an apprenticeship or employment had proved extremely difficult.
- Some admitted they only agreed to apply to college in order to satisfy their Youth Offending Team worker.
- When about what an Apprenticeship involves most young people agreed that they would make the most of this opportunity if they were given the chance to access it.
- Depending on which area they had come from there appeared to be limited knowledge on the options and career guidance/support that was available to them.
- Accommodation and a fixed address upon leaving a secure environment also presented a lot of problems for the young people, making it more difficult to secure employment. Quite often arrangements are only finalised at the last minute prior to release therefore prior planning is not always easy.

Following the focus group, KCC representatives met and agreed on future developments and outcomes. These outcomes were fed back to the institution, in particular the key staff who work in Cedar House. Due to the young people being in the final stages of their sentence, many have now left the secure unit so it has not been possible to feedback to the group again. However several of the young people involved have secured Apprenticeships to progress into upon completing their sentence.

KDAAT service users give feedback on accessibility

In March 2010, Kent Drug And Alcohol Team's (KDAAT) service user expert panel members were asked to visit a number of the Gateway centres to explore how accessible to the public they are, what potential there may be for signposting to drug and alcohol services and how helpful they are in providing information and signposting in all aspects of supporting their needs (not just substance misuse). The main themes emerging were:

Access and facilities:

- Convenient , central locations alongside other services such as libraries
- Supervised childcare preferred, but children's areas welcomed
- Good access for the disabled
- Internet availability an important facility for this client group
- much more efficient than before i.e. the previous council offices system
- open until 6pm - which is very helpful

Information

- Only one leaflet available concerning substance misuse (KCC's care management leaflet). There should be leaflets on display representing other substance misuse agencies and in a more prominent place
- There was more information on housing and benefits
- Limited material on display but if you are prepared to ask someone will access information and they are knowledgeable

Assistance from staff

- staff are very good / really helpful though some gaps in knowledge (e.g. identifying a PCSO contact)
- one particular service user visited to find out careers advice and the member of staff was very helpful and gave him a lot of advice on requirements and qualifications needed to become a social worker. The member of staff encouraged him to return if he needed more info
- overall his visit was a positive experience.

The main stumbling block for KDAAT clients seems to be that they have to know what they are looking for or must be prepared to ask - which is often a struggle for those dealing with drug and alcohol problems.

Another observation was on the need to promote the service better. One suggestion made was to make promotional material available to agencies who are working with people with drug and alcohol problems so they can find it in places they are already going to. This has all been fed back to Gateway staff and they will use it alongside other customer feedback they have collected.



Customer satisfaction shaping service improvements

The Registration Service undertakes a series of surveys at all their area offices and other locations where they register births and deaths. Analysis of the results show generally very positive findings across all area offices on all counts. Some negative feedback was recorded due to lack of privacy in some locations when recording deaths and this is now being actively addressed.

The results of surveys are posted in waiting areas for customers to see (*see example below*).



Customer feedback leading to service improvements

“Managers and teachers listen to what learners have to say about specific courses and use this to make appropriate changes”



(Kent Community Learning and Skills Inspection Report, Ofsted, June 2010, page 3)

Folkestone Adult Education Centre

After moving premises from a site that had plenty of free parking to a refurbished building with less parking students who were not able to obtain a parking space had to park in a Pay and Display car park. Following feedback from students, the service approached The Creative Foundation who organised for students to park at The Harbour pay and display car park for only £1.00, when attending a course. Students were informed in writing and in person when the parking permit was introduced and passes were issued at enrolment.

Ashford Adult Education Centre

- Responding to learner's complaints Dancing classes were moved from a school venue to purpose built (air-conditioned) dance studio and silversmithing classes from one school venue to another
- A number of new or additional courses have been set up in response to fee-paying learner requests and these include bee keeping; craft courses; Maths, English and languages.
- Tai Chi students requested that they can use CLS facilities to consolidate their practice independently during the summer months and this is currently being put into action

Maidstone Adult Education Centre

- Set up a “French Extra” course in response to learner demand. This has run with four students who were nevertheless happy to pay a bit more for this course to cover the costs.
- A Spanish course has been reinstated in 2010 in response to learner demand for a daytime course.
- An Advanced Photography course was set up in response to demand from current students for a progression course.

“Kent Community Learning and Skills offers an extensive range of courses responding well to the needs of local communities”

(Kent Community Learning and Skills Inspection Report, Ofsted, June 2010, page 25)

5 COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Communities Directorate adopted the revised and unified KCC Complaints Procedure in April 2009, and 2009/10 is the first full year that all Units have operated their complaints procedures under the same set of standards.

- 5.2 Several briefing sessions were held early in the year to communicate the changes and new tools and templates were created to help our units implement the standards locally while giving them enough flexibility to introduce the procedures in a way that will be meaningful and useful to them and their service users.
- 5.3 The Directorate continued with its Equalities Monitoring process, which was also adopted as the corporate standard for all KCC directorates last year. A total of 143 equalities monitoring forms were received during 2009/10 (nearly 17% of all complainants responded).
- 5.4 The total number of complaints was 863 (up from 799 in 2008/09 and 521, 2007/08) and the most significant contributing factors to the increase are likely to be the continued improvements to the understanding amongst staff about what constitutes a complaint that should be recorded, and the increased visibility of the complaints procedure to customers and service users.
- 5.5 The high number of compliments received (1,247) is encouraging, with Libraries & Archives and the Registration Services, in particular, receiving high numbers of positive comments from customers. In addition to this there were an estimated 5,000 compliments for the "House" project involving the Youth Service and KDAAT.
- 5.6 A more detailed report updating Members on complaints (as well as compliments and comments) received by the Directorate's business units is included as Appendix One.

6 CUSTOMER INSIGHT AND MOSIAC

- 6.1 Some services are now using sophisticated segmentation and profiling tools, especially MOSIAC to increase their understanding of customers, and how they can adapt services to better meet the needs of those who could be benefiting from them. The Libraries Service and the Adult Education Service (now Community Learning and Skills) have been at the forefront of this activity in Communities.
- 6.2 Several district based reports have been created for **Community Learning and Skills** which will be used to influence future business planning decisions. It will ensure local needs are met by looking at "profiles" of the current customer base and what courses they enrol on. The Libraries Service has also been using MOSAIC to gain a deeper understanding of customer need, and they have focused their work around selected target groups: for example lapsed users, NEETS (people not in education, employment or training) and children of deprived families.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The above examples, together with the detailed synopsis available as a background document indicates the extent to which the Directorate's managers and staff are using information from service users and other interested groups to influence its decision making. This is in keeping with the statutory Duty to Involve, and with the culture being fostered across the Directorate, stemming from the Directorate's Vision³.
- 7.2 This work will continue during 2010-11 and two particular priorities will be:-

Exploring how digital technologies could be better deployed to make engagement work, cheaper, quicker, more responsive, more relevant and more convenient for residents and businesses.

Use every opportunity to keep down the costs of consultation exercises; minimise duplication and to make best use of the analysis and information that is collected.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to **NOTE** the contents of this report and comment on the priorities identified in section 7 above.

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Background documents and appendices

Appendix 1. Annual complaints, compliments and comments report for Communities 2009/10.

Background document: Detailed synopsis of Communities consultation and engagement activity 2009/10.

³ Together We're Better", Vision Document for the Communities Directorate, 2007