

Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code

Introduction

The voluntary and community sector is a vital part of civil society and Government wants to work more effectively with it. Consultation is an important part of partnership working and listening to and engaging with the sector effectively will lead to better planning and delivery of services. Consultation is an opportunity for the sector to input their knowledge, experience and expertise to add value to Government policy.

Key Principles

- Planning and consultation should start early, right from the policy design stage
- There should be clarity about what areas are open to change, and any potential impact on the VCS
- Information should reach those most affected and Government should work with the sector to reach them
- Written materials should be clear and available through a variety of formats and languages
- Maximum participation should be encouraged through accessible and varied consultation methods
- Consultations should be announced in advance to maximise opportunities for responding; and sufficient time allowed for responses
- All feedback should be analysed and communicated and promoted widely

Government undertakes to

- Talk with the sector as soon as planning begins by involving sector representatives in departmental stakeholder groups
- Produce clear and concise consultation documents
- Give enough time for the sector to respond (generally a minimum of 12 weeks)
- Ensure the needs and interests of women, and minority and socially excluded groups are included
- Review all feedback and take the results into account in future planning
- Be open with the sector about its findings and the reasons for decisions

The sector undertakes to

- Work together to ensure effective responses to consultation
- Consult their stakeholders directly whenever possible
- Provide clear and objective information to Government
- Ensure the views of women, and minority and socially excluded groups are reflected in responses
- Encourage their organisations to provide their own responses
- Publicise the results of consultation as widely as possible

