Subject: Annual Report on Social Services Consultations

1. Synopsis

1.1 In June 2001, the Council's Social Services Committee received a report setting out a Consultation & Partnership Strategy for the department. An update was reported to the same Committee in March 2002. The Strategy provides a firm basis for delivering seamless and integrated services within the framework of One Islington, through its development of networks and partnerships, particularly with community and user groups.

1.2 Production of an “annual report on consultation” was one of the key actions set out in the Strategy. The first such annual report was approved by the Executive in November 2002.

1.3 This is the annual report for 2002-3. It covers:

- Details of consultation activity in the department 2002/3, set out in a digest format, as in 2002
- Consultation activity planned for the remainder of 2003/4
- New developments in our approach to consultation during the year
- An update on research governance issues

2. Recommendations

- To note the consultations carried out by Social Services and progress made in setting up regular consultation forums.
- To endorse the Department’s position statement on research and consultation and its approach to research governance.
1. **Background**

1.1 In June 2001, the Social Services Committee approved a strategy for consultation and partnership in Social Services. The need for such a strategy had been highlighted by an initiative from a group of service users and representatives of local advocacy organisations. Their initiative culminated in a conference in March 2001 ("Listening and Talking to Us") funded by Social Services, but run for and by users, to discuss what they wanted and needed from consultation with the Council. These ideas were discussed with officers and incorporated into the strategy.

1.2 As well as setting out the Council’s principles for consultation, the strategy looked at activities and outputs and included an action plan for the first year of the strategy. Progress on implementing this work was reported back to the Social Services Committee in March 2002 and to the Executive in the form of the first annual report, in November 2002.

1.3 This annual report focuses on consultation activity carried out within the Department over the past year, from October 2002 to October 2003 (in detail in appendix 1), on new developments and initiatives and on the practical steps being taken to strengthen consultation and user involvement.

1.4 A further appendix (appendix 2) sets out a Position Statement on Research and Consultation for the Department, to ensure the department is well placed to conform to the Department of Health’s Research Governance Framework (RGF) for Health and Social Care, which was set out in last year’s report.

2. **Discussion**

**Developments in 2002/3**

2.1 Implementing the user involvement aspects of consultation and partnership strategy continues to be a priority for Social Services.

2.2 A range of consultation activities undertaken by the Department during the past year is shown in Appendix 1. Over 20 projects are detailed. These range from large consultations required of us by Central Government (such as on community equipment, the survey of elderly home care clients and Best Value consultations), to small projects instigated at a local level (such as the work with carers and the continuing consultations to inform a Family Support Strategy). This digest, which follows the format of that produced each year by the corporate Communications and Consultation team, is not exhaustive, but intended to give a flavour of the type and range of activity undertaken. It does not, for example, cover routine consultations on strategies, plans etc. or regular forms of customer feedback through feedback forms etc.

2.3 The “Making it Happen” steering group which was set up to oversee the development of user groups for Community Care has met regularly at two-monthly intervals throughout the year. With user, carer and community sector representatives from all client groups, it has continued to act as steering group for Social Services consultations, and has also been pivotal in setting up the framework for a new vehicle for user and community groups to engage directly with leading councillors on policy issues - the new Social Services Forum (adult services)

2.4 The Social Services Forum held its first meeting in July 2003, its second in October 2003, and meetings will be held quarterly throughout the year. It provides a unique opportunity
for groups to discuss issues of importance to them, with the agenda items being set in advance by the representatives of the Making it Happen Group. The topics discussed to date have included day opportunities for people with physical and learning disabilities, access to leisure facilities and information for users. Issues for future forums include the Mental Health Best Value Review and the budget for 2004/5.

2.5 There continues to be a range of initiatives in Children and Families, encouraging participation from both young people in contact with Social Services, and their families. In particular, a parent-carer council is to be set up, and strong links have been forged with the council-wide Listen Up project with the aim of the working with existing projects to establish a mechanism for young people to give their views directly to elected members.

2.6 The Department has worked closely too with both the corporate communications and consultation team and the new patient and public involvement structures in the Primary Care Trust. There are a number of joint consultation projects (such as the single assessment process and Healthy Start, Healthy Futures consultation). The PCT has recently appointed a Head of Public and Patient Involvement who is committed to working with Social Services to develop an integrated process for user involvement, building on the One Islington approach.

2.7 The Department’s own commitment to this process and to strengthening its consultation activity, will be enhanced by the appointment of a part-time user involvement officer from November 2003.

Developments planned in 2003/4

2.8 Overleaf is a summary of consultation projects in planned over the coming months.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Approach/methods</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modernisation of Services for Older People – Proposed recommissioning of Camden Road Nursing Home</td>
<td>Consultation meetings, telephone ‘surgeries’ with residents of Camden Road Nursing Home, their relatives and other stakeholders written response forms</td>
<td>13 October 2003 – 9 January 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Launch/relaunch of two carers groups</td>
<td>Making it Happen for Carers: Monthly event at Islington Carers Forum Relaunch of reference group for carers of mental health service users</td>
<td>From October 2003 December 2003</td>
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<td>Carers’ experiences of short breaks</td>
<td>Health ideas commissioned to find out views of 5 carers groups</td>
<td>October-December 2003</td>
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<td>Consultation with users and their representatives on the 2004/5 budget proposals</td>
<td>As appropriate for relevant client groups. To be consistent and feed into the wider council consultation process</td>
<td>November 2003 and ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving children and young people in the Children &amp; Young People’s Strategic Partnership</td>
<td>To be determined in conjunction with council-wide Listen Up project and through wider stakeholder events being led by National Children’s Bureau</td>
<td>November 2003 onwards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older people’s consultation group</td>
<td>Re-launch of standing consultation group for users of older people’s services and their representatives</td>
<td>Autumn 2003</td>
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<td>Consultation group for deaf and hard of hearing</td>
<td>Regular consultation group with themed meetings to cover range of council and health issues</td>
<td>Launch autumn 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment for deaf and hard of hearing</td>
<td>Through existing groups and new forum to find out range of community equipment required</td>
<td>From autumn 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information and access team consultation on new service</td>
<td>Telephone survey of users of the service, questionnaire/meetings for agencies and staff</td>
<td>Autumn 2003</td>
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<td>Developing a strategy and mechanism for involvement by younger disabled people</td>
<td>Face-to-face interviews, meeting groups, etc as appropriate</td>
<td>Using HAZ funding until March 2004</td>
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<td>Parent Carer Forum/Council (parents of children with disabilities)</td>
<td>To be determined Working in partnership with Centre 404, will include a dedicated worker</td>
<td>By early 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction survey of adult clients with physical and sensory disabilities</td>
<td>Structured questionnaire, probably by post but also using alternative formats Needs to meet DH requirements</td>
<td>January-March 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better Care Higher Standards long term care charter</td>
<td>Targeted information and consultation days</td>
<td>Early 2004</td>
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2.9 **Research Governance**

Revised guidance on setting up a research governance framework for social care (as outlined in last year's annual report), which requires a RGF and system for ethical approval to be established for external research, the Department has produced a Position Statement on research and consultation (see appendix 2). The statement seeks to clarify:

- whether the project is a consultation one or a formal piece of research
- what governance or ethical processes need to be followed

and ensure that:

- all projects will be entered on a database/register
- projects will be coordinated and not duplicate each other, and
- findings will be used appropriately and communicated widely.

The appointment of the user involvement officer, working with the corporate team, will facilitate this process.

3. **Implications**

3.1 **Finance Implications**

Increasing levels of consultation will have budget pressures, which are being factored into budget planning. Alternative sources, in particular external funding, continue to be pursued.

3.2 **Legal Implications**

Consultation forms a very important part in any review process. It is good and fair administrative practice to consult with individuals and organisations that might be adversely affected to a significant degree by a proposed course of action before a final decision is made on that course of action. An obligation to consult applied especially where a decision would have adverse effects for vulnerable members of the community. The essentials of consultation are that persons concerned by a decision should know that the decision is under consideration well before a final decision is made and they should have a reasonable time to put to the council their objections, and their objections should be considered by the Council.

3.3 **Equality Implications**

The consultation activity outlined in the report addresses the needs of a number of disadvantaged groups within the community.

However, it also highlights that more work needs to be done with particularly hard-to-reach groups and looks at proposals for doing this.

4. **Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 The Department continues to strengthen its approach to user involvement, as set out in Consultation and Partnership Strategy. New user consultation groups are being established and existing groups supported in their development; mechanisms are being established so that these groups play a key role in consultation on any key Social
Services proposals or initiatives (e.g. the Social Services Forum). Work carried out in both Adults and Children’s Services shows good practice and innovation.

4.2 There is still a need for better coordination of consultation activity, and wider dissemination of the findings of projects. Joint work with colleagues in the corporate consultation and communications team will facilitate this, as will the burgeoning links and integrated activity with the patient and public involvement structures in the Primary Care Trust.

Background papers:

Consultation activity
Reports to Social Services Committee: 28 June 2001 and 11 March 2002
Report to Executive: 28 November 2002

Islington Social Services: Consultation & Partnership Strategy: June 2001

Islington Council Research and Consultation Digest: 2001-2002

Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care: Department of Health, 2001
Implementation of Research Governance in health and social care: DH consultation, July 2003

Final Report Clearance

Signed by ________________________________

Executive Member for Health & Social Care Date: 10/11/03

Received by for Head of Scrutiny and Democratic Services

Report author : Rosemary Lamport
Tel : 020 7527 4421
Fax : 020 7527 4049
E-mail : rosemary.lamport@islington.gov.uk