



Guide to Effective Consultation with Black and Minority Ethnic Communities



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Why consult BME communities	2
Local context	4
Corporate approach to consultation	6
Consultation Plan	8
Consultation Working Group	9
General Information for Planning your Consultation	10
Cultural information	13
Other Guidance Available	16
Training	16
Conclusion	16
Appendix 1	17
Appendix 2	18

Introduction

Traditionally there are groups that have been excluded from the consultative process and these groups are often referred to as 'hard to reach', they include children and young people, people with disabilities and BME communities. The fact is that people are only hard to reach because of the limitations of methods employed to engage them.

"Many groups in society are labelled 'hard-to-reach'. What this tends to mean is that traditional methods of researching the general public, may not be appropriate for a particular group, or may not yield a sample that will enable us to understand the perspective of the group being approached."

(MORI 2004)

Traditional consultation techniques such as questionnaires and public meetings can be of limited success when trying to seek the opinions and gauge the views of traditionally excluded groups.

With properly thought out and effective consultation, that considers the diverse needs of our population, into the needs, priorities and opinions of these groups the Council will be in a better position to respond, show understanding, commitment and action on improving the lives of all its residents and enhance social inclusion.

What does BME stand for?

BME is used to refer to Black and Minority Ethnic communities, it is a general term used to describe anyone who does not define themselves in the Census records as White British. The last census recorded in 2001 saw the majority of the population defining themselves as White (90.92% or nearly 45 million people), and the remaining 4.5 million people (9.08% defining themselves as belonging to other ethnic groups.

In Stockton far fewer of our residents are drawn from BME communities with 2.8% of residents defining themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group.

This guide is intended to give you practical advice and help you effectively consult BME communities. It should help you:

- Make your consultation accessible to BME communities
- Target consultation specifically at BME communities
- Tap into existing corporate resources
- Use existing networks to support the consultation process

Why consult BME communities?

The Business Case:

When consultation runs well it can help the Council to:

- Make better decisions
- Deliver the services people want
- Check what people think about what we are doing
- Identify and avoid problems caused by changes to services
- Help people understand how we work, and how we reach decisions that affect them
- Involve local people more thoroughly in the democratic process.

The Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) sums up the commitment that is required by Councils to build equality into core business planning:

'The council tax system does not discriminate between citizens on the grounds of race, gender, creed or anything else. Neither should the services it pays for. A council that appreciates diversity in local communities also recognises that one size does not fit all when it comes to developing services. All groups in the community must participate in the design and delivery of services. This commitment must lie at the heart of councils' work. If some sections of the community are receiving a poor service from their council, that council is not meeting its central and simple objective – the efficient delivery of public services to all citizens. It's a question of good business – not politics'.

(I&DeA 2006)

The Legal Case:

In addition to the reasons why we should consult with BME communities there are some reasons why we must:

- **Equality Act 2006** – establishes a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) from October 2007, and a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between men and women (the 'gender duty'). It also makes discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities, services, premises, education and the exercise of public functions unlawful, and provides powers to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, including adoption. Only by consulting with BME residents can we fully meet the requirements of this legislation.
- **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000** amended the 1976 Race Relations Act which was introduced to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality and ethnic origin in the fields of employment, the provision of goods and services, education and public functions, whilst also setting up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). The 2000 amendment to the act introduced onto public authorities the general duties to promote racial equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- **Race Equality Duty**
The duty was detailed in the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and includes both a general and specific duty.

The General Duty as set out in section 71(1) of the Act requires a public authority in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- ◆ Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ Promote good relations between different racial groups.

The Specific Duties are set out in articles 2(3) and 2(4) of the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 which states that a public authority should develop a race equality scheme which highlights:

- ◆ Those of its functions and policies, or proposed policies, which it has assessed as relevant to its performance of the duty imposed by section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act and its arrangements for:
 - ◆ assessing and consulting on the likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality
 - ◆ Monitoring its policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality
 - ◆ Publishing the results of its assessments, consultation and monitoring, providing public access to information
 - ◆ Training staff in connection with the duties
- **Equality Standard for Local Government** sets out a framework for integrating equalities in service and workforce planning. It requires that services across the Council take ownership of the equalities agenda and engage in dialogue with target groups, including BME communities, thereby developing and achieving clear equalities objectives. The Council is working towards achieving level 5 of the Equality Standard. This will mean that it is continuously assessing all its policies, practices and procedures to determine if they have an adverse impact on the community. The Council is focussed on reaching level 3 of the Equality Standard by April 2009.

The Equalities Review made practical recommendations and informed both the Discrimination Law Review, the likely introduction of a Single Equality Act and the initial workload of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. In response to this agenda and the emerging findings of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion the Council has developed and published a Single Equality Scheme. Whilst at this time we are only required to publish schemes about race, disability and gender the Council's commitment to equality is wider, encompassing age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. This scheme including the race, gender and disability action plans can only be developed and delivered in consultation with local people.

Local context

Stockton's BME communities:

At the present time Stockton's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities make up around 2.8% of the Borough's population, roughly 6000 people (2001 census). Stockton has a much smaller minority ethnic make up than the country as a whole, with the largest numbers of BME residents being of Pakistani origin (1.1%), then Indian (0.4%) and then Chinese (0.2%).

The non-White population in Stockton is concentrated in the Parkfield & Oxbridge and Town Centre wards of the Borough. Billingham Central and East have the least proportion of non-White population in the Borough (these trends are based on data from Census and ward boundaries pre-2003). There is a growing number of non-White residents within the rapidly developing wards of Ingleby Barwick and this should be reflected in the 2011 Census.

In Stockton BME communities tend to be a young population with 34.1% of non-white residents being children compared with 20.8% of the White population, this is reflected nationally.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers:

In addition to our established BME communities, the Borough also has around 372 people seeking asylum and a number of residents who have been granted refugee status. (Figure from March 2007) The numbers and backgrounds of Asylum seekers in the Borough is constantly changing. The Asylum Support Team is able to supply the most up to date information.

- Nationally 41% of applications seeking asylum are African Nationals, 22% were from the Middle East and 7% are European.
- Nationally in 2005 83% of applicants were under 35 years of age and 71% were male.

Stockton International Family Centre conducted an audit in 2006 and identified that there are at least 70 nationalities represented across the North East of England including growing communities from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and various states of Africa. Some of the main spoken languages include Urdu, French, Punjabi, Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish.

A Myth Buster guide has been developed with support from the Council that contains a lot of easy to read information about refugees and asylum seekers, for more information please contact the Diversity Team.

BME Network

Stockton's BME Network was set up in 2005 to offer representation to BME communities in the Borough. It is an umbrella organisation managed through the Community Empowerment Programme of the Local Strategic Partnership –Stockton Renaissance, that meets once a month to raise awareness of BME issues and ensure that service providers are made aware of issues that affect BME groups and residents of the Borough.

- ◆ Any group can join as long as it has over 50% of people who are not from the majority White population.
- ◆ There are associate members of the Network for example Cleveland Police's Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

The Network is keen to engage in consultation and put the views forward of its members to public bodies, including the council.

You can contact the Network through the staff at Stockton International Family Centre and arrange to consult directly, attend their meetings or distribute information to member organisations to raise awareness of ongoing consultations.

The network and the staff at Stockton International Family Centre already have established links with BME communities and may be able to facilitate invitations to groups and suggest meeting venues already used by their members.

Corporate approach to consultation

The Research and Consultation Team can provide you with assistance and advice on targeting audiences, planning or designing effective consultation exercises. The main techniques used by the team are Stockton's resident's panels, Viewpoint and Youth Viewpoint.



"The use of Viewpoint and Youth Viewpoint is impressive"
Corporate assessment 2003

Viewpoint is a panel of up over 1500 local residents aged 18 and over from across the Borough. The panel is a demographically representative sample of residents and is used to get residents/users views on Council services as well as other important issues which affect quality of life.

Using the panel is an effective way of talking to a few residents to get the views of many as the panel is representative of the Borough's residents; thereby ensuring results are statistically sound.

As Panel members' residents are asked to take part in various forms of consultation including completing questionnaires, attending focus groups or other more interactive activities such as taking part in activities with other users.

Recruitment to the panel is via random mailings from the electoral register, word of mouth, attendance at community and residents groups, as well as recruitment via the internet, publications and information points in all public buildings.

Every year one third of the panel is replaced to ensure that the panel remains representative without being atypical.

Once you have registered an interest with the Research and Consultation Team, they will arrange to meet with you to discuss your requirements. It may be that you want to target a specific group in which case residents from the panel can be selected for consultation according to your needs, for example young, female residents from BME communities.

Youth Viewpoint

Youth Viewpoint is a panel of over 500 local young people aged over 18 from across the Borough. As with the adult panel, Youth Viewpoint is demographically representative and is used to get young residents' views on Council services as well as other important issues which affect quality of life.

As panel members' young people are asked to take part in similar forms of consultation to adult Viewpoint including completing questionnaires, attending focus groups and workshops or other more interactive activities such as visits to Council provided facilities.

Participation Involvement and Consultation – (PIC) Network

The Research and Consultation team work closely with the PIC Network which has over 50 members representing organisations and services in and out of the Council to find the best way to involve young people.

The network was set up to ensure the Council works with other organisations and agencies to find the best way for children and young people to participate in decision making and as a mechanism for getting young peoples views on participation. Vulnerable groups have found a voice through this system which aims to represent all children and young people across the Borough.

A weekly newsletter is distributed to all members of the network; this is a highly efficient way of contacting numerous organisations and promoting your consultation.

For more information please contact Allison Davis on 01642 526415 or email Allison.davis@stockton.gov.uk

Other Consultation Mechanisms

The corporate team offer support and advice on consulting and engaging residents, some of the key mechanisms used are questionnaires and focus groups.

The first thing you will need to consider is who is it that you wish to involve and what you need to know; this information will help to decide whether your consultation will use qualitative or quantitative methods.

For more information see the Consultation Toolkit or contact the Research and Consultation Team.

Consultation Plan

In order to achieve consistency across the Council it is vital that consultation exercises are planned monitored, evaluated and fed back both to citizens and stakeholders.

The Council co-ordinates its consultation through the Consultation Plan. This plan is updated quarterly by dedicated officers from each service who form the Consultation Working Group; this group is a sub-group of the Policy Officers Group. The aim is to provide better information and enhance participation in the democratic process.

The Council's Consultation Plan is managed by the Research and Consultation Team; it is an invaluable tool that enables officers to plan their consultation effectively and efficiently. For example, resources can be shared and existing data or information can be used.

There are a number of benefits to co-ordinating consultation which include sharing best practice, avoiding duplication and consultation fatigue and developing techniques.

The Research and Consultation Team ensure that:

- The plan is up to date
- Consultation exercises are monitored and reviewed
- Results are shared
- Consultation Plan is made available to officers and members
- Partners are kept informed

The plan is used by the Research and Consultation team to monitor activity, support initiatives and offer advice and training where required. It is also the key mechanism for accessing the Residents' Panels-Viewpoint and Youth Viewpoint. Precedence will be given to those who have used this method.

Consultation Working Group

The Consultation Working Group contains representatives from each service as well as representatives from Tees Active, Tristar and Stockton Renaissance.

The group provides a strong focus for continuous improvement in public consultation. This reinforces the culture of information sharing, monitoring, evaluation and feedback both to citizens and stakeholders.

The group is a sub-group of the Policy officers Group and meets quarterly in order to:

- Review the content of the Consultation Plan
- Disseminate best practice
- Audit a sample of consultations
- Conduct reviews of consultation exercises
- Raise awareness of consultation training and ensure officers receive this training as required.

The group is chaired by the Senior Policy and Projects Manager/Research and Consultation Manager and reports quarterly to the Policy Officers Group. The group also has responsibility for implementing the action plan which arose from the Overview and Scrutiny review of consultation.

The Consultation Working Group aims to underpin its roles and responsibilities by integrating the Council's objectives of:

- Working effectively in partnership
- Communicating, engaging with and listening to local people
- Putting our customers first
- Delivering top quality services
- Being flexible and continually improve how we work
- Actively learning and developing.

General Information for Planning your Consultation

At the beginning of the consultation process, make sure the consultation will benefit BME communities. You should:

- Consider what the information is for
- Think about what you can do with the information
- Consider how you will feed back what you have done post consultation
- Set out the process to BME residents at the outset so their expectations are appropriately managed
- Check what other consultation is going on within the authority, to avoid repeating similar consultations and to share resources if appropriate.

Starting out

- Make sure the consultation is people and not data focussed. Yes, you need some information and data from the consultation but the whole point of it should be to improve services to BME communities. Therefore it is the people involved that are the most important part of the process.
- Consider whether you are the most appropriate person to facilitate the process, or whether you need to rely on other people's expertise. If in doubt call the Research and Consultation Team.
- Double check that you are not duplicating work, the Research and Consultation Team will be able to offer advice.

Methods:

- There is no one right way of involving people; in fact it may be the case that no one method will suffice for one piece of consultation, different approaches may need to be tried.
- Local situations and contexts must always be considered.
- Make sure sessions aren't too long.
- Ask participants to comment on how the consultation worked to allow improvement of future consultations.

Planning

- Balance an enjoyable and rewarding process ensuring people are aware the process is important and their views are being taken seriously.
- Ensure you are not consulting at inappropriate times, for example prayer times or religious holidays.
- It is not always appropriate to follow traditional consultation techniques for example questionnaires for language reasons; we need to tailor consultation according to different residents needs. For example attending pre-organised group meetings or meeting residents individually.
- You may find it useful to use a checklist, an example of this can be found in appendix two.

Incentives

- Monetary incentives may not be appropriate double check before offering them.
- Make every effort to find out about any food allergies or religious restrictions on what can be consumed. Provide appropriate food to ensure people are able to

avoid anything that would make them ill or contravene their religion.

- As a minimum provide travel expenses. It may also be a good idea to think of giving travel expenses to get to the event beforehand to prevent the disincentive of having to pay and be reimbursed. Attendance allowances can also be considered. However, there is a risk that people won't come, despite having been given the expenses.

Venues:

- Ensure venues are suitable and appropriate.
- The venue must also be appropriate to the local context for example, if the consultation is solely on a Billingham issue, don't hold the event in Stockton.
- Ensure venues are accessible for disabled people. If you need more general advice about making sure venues are accessible see the Guide to Consulting People with Disabilities and Sensory Loss.

Timescales

- Tell people about the timescales from the outset, and keep them informed if they change to help keep them on board.
- Ensure you give people adequate notice to attend meetings and to complete questionnaires.
- You should invite people to events three weeks in advance and you should leave three weeks for people to respond to questionnaires.
- Timescales for consultation are often underestimated. Ensure you leave adequate time to plan and conduct the consultation effectively and if you need advice, contact the Research and Consultation Team.

Carrying out:

- Ensure language is Plain English and jargon free but not patronising. People want to be treated as valued partners, not patronised.
- Be straightforward and direct and make sure you find the right tone to ensure people know their views are genuinely valued.
- Expect a drop out of at least one third of expected participants; this is a natural occurrence that can be heightened by not planning suitable times or venues.
- When using an interpreter remember to focus on the interviewee, addressing questions to them rather than the interpreter.

Data Protection:

- You must keep data secure
- It is essential to satisfy the requirements of the Data Protection Act. This means keeping hard copy data under lock and key and password protecting electronic data. If you do breach the Data Protection Act, you could be subject to a personal fine.

Managing expectations:

If expectations are too high from the outset people can become disillusioned and be reluctant to be involved in future consultations. This is especially important as BME communities form such a small percentage of the Borough and will be in demand for consultative processes.

Feedback:

- One of the most important aspects of consultation is effective feedback, without this we jeopardise future involvement.
- Effective feedback should be timely and in an agreed format.
- Feedback should be outcome focussed; not just repeating what was said.
- As BME communities form a small percentage of our population it is vital we keep lines of communication open otherwise there is a danger they may develop consultation fatigue.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Monitoring what you are doing will help you make any adjustments as you go along to ensure you meet your objectives.
- Evaluating whether you have achieved your objectives will help you:
 - Know whether your consultation is genuinely helping you to listen and respond to people
 - Plan improvements for future consultation
 - Use your resources efficiently

Benchmarking:

- If you want to compare your results with another service, authority or organisation you will have to ensure the questions you ask and methodology are the same, otherwise the results will be misleading

Cultural information

The previous sections outlined the key considerations to be borne in mind when carrying out all consultation exercises. However there are some specific issues to bear in mind in addition when consulting BME communities:

Accessing BME residents

You can access BME residents through the Viewpoint panels, though this is only appropriate if you want a general view. You may need to use other mechanisms to access specific or excluded groups.

You can contact the BME network which meets every month and arrange to attend one of their monthly meetings. Use existing groups, people may feel more comfortable in these settings.

Remember that disabled people from ethnic minority groups are one of the most excluded groups and action must be taken with key community contacts to encourage participation.

If you are unable to gain access to certain communities it is acceptable to recruit opinion from community leaders for example the management of the local temple or mosque. However be aware that community leaders might not always be representative of the community as a whole.

Alternatively you can contact the Research and Consultation Team or Diversity Team for help and advice.

Racism and isolation:

Racism and isolation affect communities in many different ways. For some this can result in insecurity, fear and discomfort, we must work to counter these feelings working in partnership with other agencies.

It is vital that once links are established, particularly with vulnerable groups we keep lines of communication open, regularly feeding back information and acting on issues raised.

Faith and Belief:

Faith and belief can play a very important role for many communities including people from BME groups, in order to carry out effective consultation it is worth doing some research before you begin the process. The Council has produced a guide on cultural awareness which includes information on the major non-Christian religions in Stockton (Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Chinese beliefs).

Language:

The majority of the BME population in Stockton speak, read and write English; however there are some members of established BME communities who may not be confident in communicating in English, similarly with new immigrants. Urdu is the predominant community language spoken in the Borough however literacy levels in Urdu are low.

The Council promotes the use of the National Interpreting Service (NIS) and offers training in the use of this. Stockton Council has a subscription to NIS and we can access telephone interpretation in 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service can be used via the internal Cisco telephone system, from a mobile phone or any landline and can be used on speakerphone so all the parties involved can follow the process. All staff involved in consultation work should receive the appropriate training, through the Diversity Team, prior to the period of consultation.

Written Communication:

The majority of BME residents within Stockton have similar literacy skills in English as the rest of the population but for many there are particular needs.

Where written materials are used Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council will provide copies of its documents on request in the language required. During consultation all documents should be available at the outset, if it is anticipated that they may be required, to enable the same access to materials for everyone. We also need to consider the needs of disabled BME residents and ensure that documents are available in large print and other formats suitable for those with visual impairments.

Full details of how to get documents translated and transcribed, using the NIS interpretation service and booking face to face interpreters are available on the Diversity pages of the SBC intranet system or contact a member of the Diversity Team for further advice.

Timing:

As with all our residents, members of BME communities have calls on their time for work, caring and social responsibilities so we need to be mindful of fitting in with people's daily routines but also take account of times of worship and religious holidays. Staff need to make themselves aware of these regular days and times of worship before consultation begins to ensure that meetings are held at appropriate times.

Childcare and other caring responsibilities need to be accommodated. This may mean organising meetings around local childcare facilities, providing a crèche on site or supporting someone to arrange care for dependent relatives. Any such care arrangements will also need to be delivered in a culturally sensitive way.

An up to date calendar of the major religious festivals is available from the Diversity Team, but there are some simple messages to remember. For example as many of the Borough's BME residents are Muslim try to avoid carrying out consultation on Friday afternoons as this is the most important prayer time of the week.

Many cultures also use the concept of time differently. Within council working we have a clear and fixed concept of time. "See you at 10 o'clock tomorrow" means that everyone expected will turn up at the appointed venue at 10 o'clock and that anyone who arrives late may be considered disorganised. For many cultures though, who operate on a far more fluid concept of time, the same phrase "See you at 10 o'clock tomorrow" will mean something quite different. Punctuality is far more loosely defined and may mean that a meeting will start sometime after 10 o'clock when everyone has arrived. The team undertaking consultation need to take this into account and if there does have to be a clearly defined start and end time to meetings that this is very clearly communicated to everyone involved-the key is to be flexible.

Gender:

There is the possibility that some groups would prefer for same sex interviewing to occur or for a chaperone to join them. In some instances more would be gained from holding separate exercises for men and women. When you plan your consultation exercise you should ensure you check the best course of action for each individual as everyone has different requirements.

In some Asian culture families sit together but when strangers visit then male and female family members may separate and sit in different areas. Many female consultees will often be more forthcoming in women only groups. Stockton International Family Centre organise several women only educational and social groups for Asian women and can facilitate introductions to the group leaders.

Dress:

You don't have to adopt any specific dress code when consulting but ensure that you cover over your shoulders and legs. Many members of BME communities may feel uncomfortable and be less receptive to officers who they might consider not to be dressed modestly. Be respectful of the way consultees dress and ensure that they feel comfortable in the consultation setting.

Hospitality:

Especially within Asian cultures it is considered polite to share food and drink with visitors so be prepared: If you are visiting people's homes or meeting places you are likely to be offered food and drink. If you are hosting meetings then it is polite to provide refreshments which should respect specific cultural requirements.

Most dietary restrictions centre are around meat and meat products. If you know who is coming to the meeting the Civic Caterers will provide appropriate food on request. If you have issued an open invitation then the best thing to do is provide a vegetarian buffet with any animal products such as cheese and eggs clearly marked and plated separately.

Other Guidance Available

The following guidance is available on the website or in hard copy from the Research and Consultation Team:

- Guide for Effective Consultation with Children and Young People
- Guide for Effective Consultation with Disabilities and Sensory Loss
- Consultation Toolkit
- Myth Buster 3

Training

There is a Corporate Training Programme that aims to improve your consultation skills, for more information please contact the Training and Organisational Development Unit.

Conclusion

It is essential to thoroughly plan, checking for special requirements in order for the process to run smoothly.

When you are unsure of something, ask!

Telephone the team for help or advice on 01642 528955, or use the contacts page overleaf, if we don't know the answer we will endeavour to signpost you to someone that does!

Good luck with your consultation!

Appendix 1

Contacts

Name	Address	Telephone/Email
Asylum Support Team	Arrival GP Practice, Cleveland Healthcall Building Massey Road Teesdale Park Thornaby TS17 4EY	01642 415030 or 01642 527764
BME Network (Stockton International Family Centre)	66 Dovecot Street Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LL	01642 612400
Diversity Team	Municipal Buildings Church Road Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD	01642 528830 diversity @stockton.gov.uk
Research and Consultation Team	Municipal Buildings Church Road Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD	01642 528955 sarah.woodhouse @stockton.gov.uk viewpoint @stockton.gov.uk
Training and Organisational Development Unit	Wynyard House Billingham Stockton-on-Tees TS23 2LN	01642 528361/62 Personnel.training @stockton.gov.uk

Appendix 2

Checklist

Planning Consultation	Yes	No	Comments
Have you ensured you are not duplicating work by using the Consultation Plan?			
Have you written your objectives? Are they clear, specific and realistic?			
Who do you need to consult? Do you need to target a specific age group?			
Will you need a translator?			
Will you need any documents transcribing?			
Do your participants have any special requirements - food? Access? Same sex facilitator?			
Have you allowed enough time for participants to return information and for you to analyse it?			
Have you got back up systems in place - extra staff?			
Have you agreed how you will feedback the results of the consultation exercise?			
Have you agreed how you will feedback any outcomes that occur following the exercise			
Have you communicated the results to the Research and Consultation Team to be included in the Consultation Plan			

