

Duty to Involve - Briefing

On the first of April 2009 a new Duty to Involve comes into force for local authorities and other best value organisations across England, including all Local Authorities.

What is the purpose of the duty?

The purpose of the duty is to: *'embed a culture of engagement and empowerment. This means that authorities 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'*

Citizen, stakeholder and service user involvement is no longer a luxury; it is now a requirement. Some Councils are well prepared and others will struggle to make the most of the opportunities presented by this new duty.

What does the duty mean in practice?

The duty is meant to cover 'routine functions, as well as significant one-off decisions'; in short this means that there are few areas where the duty does not apply.

Statutory guidance also makes it clear that 'Appropriate engagement and empowerment should be embedded as standard practice throughout authorities, central to service delivery, policy and decision making.'

What will you need to demonstrate?

Authorities will need to demonstrate to regulators:

- That you understand community interests
- That information, consultation and involvement opportunities are accessible and well targeted
- That you coordinate engagement activities with partners where appropriate
- That local people know how to get involved and feel that you provide good engagement opportunities

Next steps

The sidebar contains information about where to go for more information about the duty and how to implement it. Involve is currently running a series of events, training workshops and targeted support packages to help local authorities and other affected bodies consider how they best can meet the requirements of the new duty.

Visit <http://www.involve.org.uk/duty-to-involve>

What does the law say?

"Where a best value authority considers it appropriate for representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) to be involved in the exercise of any of its functions by being—

- (a) **provided with information** about the exercise of the function,
- (b) **consulted** about the exercise of the function, or
- (c) **involved** in another way,

it must take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that such representatives are involved in the exercise of the function in that way."

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Further resources:

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1

Statutory Guidance on the Duty: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeprosperous>

Comprehensive Area Assessments (includes guidance on how the duty will be regulated): <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/framework.asp>

Practical Engagement Support: <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net>