

Ideas for Extending Engagement Methods

Different methods of engagement require different levels of skill and resources to implement them.

Your service may be particularly attracted to (or feel confident in using) one or two methods of engagement, but you should **aim to provide engagement opportunities across all six methods** to ensure that you maximise the benefits that engagement brings to services, parents, children and the local community.

Use the links below for ideas on how to **extend your parental engagement practice** across all six methods.

- [Information](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Consultation](#)
- [Involvement](#)
- [Partnership](#)
- [Devolved power](#)

Use the following as a **checklist to help you choose** the right method of engagement.

- [Things to consider when selecting parental engagement methods.](#)

Information

Communicating with parents about the service. For example - telling parents what is available and/or planned; providing feedback about the service's effectiveness, consultation results, decisions etc.

Information can be given to parents and carers in lots of different ways, including:

Printed materials

- leaflets, flyers
- newsletters
- posters
- diaries
- booklets
- direct correspondence (e.g. letters, postcards)
- via other people's publications (e.g. free papers, parish newsletters, newspaper articles, newspaper advertisements)
- billboards
- notice boards, displays, exhibitions, shop fronts



Spoken methods

- telephone promotions
- telephone help desk or hotlines
- face-to-face via frontline staff
- audio CDs
- via community information champions, parent champions or community leaders
- drop-in information service
- local radio
- presentations at public meetings
- presentations to interest / specialist groups



Using new technologies

- website
- blogs
- social media (e.g. facebook, twitter, myspace)
- interactive information kiosks
- community telephone kiosks with free numbers
- webcasts
- promotional or informational DVDs
- email, email alert services
- text messaging

Other

- open days, road shows
- information workshops

Education

Providing opportunities for parents to learn how they can promote their child's development. For example - raising parents' awareness, developing parents' skills and knowledge, supporting and challenging parents' behaviours and/or attitudes

Educational opportunities and activities for parents and carers can be delivered in many different ways, including:

Printed materials

- workbooks and worksheets
- 'how to... or tips on...' leaflets or booklets
- two-way diaries

Spoken methods

- telephone sessions
- telephone conferencing
- mentoring, coaching or befriending sessions
- drop-in clinics
- one-to-one sessions

Using new technologies

- interactive websites
- interactive online learning
- online visual demonstrations
- online one-to-one or group sessions (eg. Skype)
- video information and demonstration
- video conferencing

Other

- social and learning opportunities combined
- specialist facilitated group work
- parent led groups
- outreach work
- home visiting
- role-modelling
- shadowing or watching someone else
- role-play, drama, art



Consultation

Asking parents to comment or express views. For example - seeking opinions about a document, idea or policy.

Consultations with parents and carers can be carried out in many different ways, including:

Printed materials

- self-completed questionnaires (handed out, posted or assisted completion)
- comments or suggestion schemes
- invitation for written inputs
- diaries
- opinion polls
- ballots
- discussion packs

Spoken methods

- telephone surveys
- telephone polls
- via advocates/people parents trust (e.g. services, community representatives etc)
- interviews (individual, paired or group; face-to-face or telephone)
- use of external person to canvass parent's views (face-to-face or at local meetings)
- talking to parents via exhibitions, road shows and open days
- samoan circles
- open space events
- public meetings
- parent forums
- parent panels
- question and comment time
- quick polling

New technologies

- online questionnaires
- e-polling
- invitation for email inputs
- online interview via video link (eg Skype)
- instant messaging
- video box, video diaries

Other

- use of pictures, cameras, metaphors and drama
- workshops, participant-led workshops
- appreciative inquiry
- mystery shopper
- standing research panels or data bases



Involvement

Ensuring parents have an influence on decisions and are part of the decision making process. For example - parents have a role in finding solutions, endorsing and agreeing decisions.

There are many different ways that parents and carers can be **involved in decision making**, including:

Printed materials

- discussion and solution packs
- ballots

Spoken methods

- discussion forums
- parent advisory boards, committees or panels
- working groups
- 'sounding' boards
- decision panels
- service user or representative groups
- interest or specialist groups
- workshops
- standing panels
- task and finish groups
- neighbourhood forums
- interest forums/panels
- issue based forums
- policy based forums
- direct service user involvement

New technologies

- e-petitioning
- e-panels
- chat rooms

Other

- petitioning, visioning exercises
- consensus techniques
- decision making games and processes
- competitions



Partnership

Working together as equal partners to carry out work or run parts of the service. For example - parents and staff running parts of the service together, involving parents in providing support for other parents.

There are many different opportunities for **working in partnership** with parents and carers, including:

Service delivery

- supporting front-line delivery staff
- co-production of themed workshops
- supporting interviews, recruitment and induction
- providing support for other parents
- supporting communications (e.g. parent friendly literature/policies etc.)
- co-hosting WebPages
- co-hosting e-panels, e-support
- ordering resources
- parent volunteers



Service development and improvement

- joint chair
- steering groups
- scrutiny boards
- oversight groups
- working groups
- management boards, committees or panels
- project boards
- project management teams
- service user groups
- monitoring and evaluation
- critical friends, friends of the service
- people-centred planning
- policy action teams

Other

- joint training
- joint networks and conferences
- virtual partnership

Devolved Power

Handing over power and control to parents. For example - giving a group of parents sole responsibility for the contents and production of a monthly newsletter or the running of an aspect of the service.

There are many different opportunities for **devolving power** to parents and carers. including

Service delivery

- planning and delivering an aspect of the service
- parent-run groups
- planning and delivering an annual event
- running a parent support group
- writing and producing a monthly newsletter or e-newsletter
- parent-hosted WebPages
- parent-run events, workshops, open days



Service development and improvement

- agenda setting
- parent-led management boards, steering groups or scrutiny committees
- parent-only management boards, steering groups or scrutiny committees
- action research
- parent policy formation
- inspection and moderation
- citizen juries
- decision panels

Things to consider when selecting parental engagement methods

Before selecting a particular engagement method, take time to consider the following:



- Is this method of engagement easy for parents to access?
- Does the method take account of the following?
 - the history of engagement with parents
 - the culture of the parents
 - the demographic, social and economic landscape of the parent community
 - literacy levels
 - community implications.
- Do senior managers support this method being used?
- Do we have the skills required to deliver this method of engagement?
- Is there an adequate budget in place to support this method of engagement?
- Is there enough time to deliver a good result with this method of engagement?
- Are resources available to write up the results of the process (if applicable)?
- What support do we need to put in place to help parents to engage through this method?