

HAVE YOUR SAY PRINCIPLES

'Have Your Say' is the name given to Hertfordshire County Council's campaign to give as many people as possible a say in the decisions we make.

INTRODUCTION

Hertfordshire County Council's ambition is to make Hertfordshire a better place to live and work and to provide the best possible services.

We want to ensure that whenever and however people contact us, they receive a consistent experience and a consistently high level of customer service.

Our Customer Care Standards can be found at <http://www.hertsdirect.org/havesay/putcustfirst>

We also want to give everyone the chance to have their say on the services we provide, and to be clear how local residents and service users can influence the services we provide.

The *Have Your Say* principles exist to give Hertfordshire County Council staff ideas and tips on how to achieve these aims by helping to:

1. Focus on a **Clear Purpose**
2. Base every exercise on **Effective Planning**
3. **Avoid Duplication**
4. **Consider Everybody**
5. Use **Varied Consultation Methods**
6. Ensure **Robust Data Collection**
7. Produce a **Balanced Analysis** of findings
8. Give effective **Feedback**
9. **Share Information**
10. Produce **Timely Action**
11. Encourage **Learning** within and outside the County Council.

If you have been, or are going to be, involved in a 'Have Your Say' exercise (which could be through a consultation event, a 'focus group' discussion, an interview, or by returning a questionnaire), you may find it useful to compare your experience with the principles outlined below.

OUR PRINCIPLES

SCOPE

These principles relate to public engagement and the development of services and policies, but not for involving individuals on personal decisions or their rights to be involved.

The Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership *Participation, Consultation and Involvement Strategy* draws together the major developments across Hertfordshire which ensures children, young people, parents and carers are involved in both personal and public decision making. For further information please go to <http://www.hertsdirect.org/childrenstrust>

We aim to use the following *Have Your Say* principles to inform and guide every *Have your Say* exercise:

1. CLEAR PURPOSE

All *Have Your Say* exercises should begin by stating clearly how the findings will feed into the final decision, project or service. It should be made clear:

- why we are asking for your views; what the options are; and what you can change or influence.
- when the final decision will be made.
- when and how feedback will be given to those involved
- How the *Have Your Say* exercise is linked to the council's strategic plans
- How everyone will have the the chance to give their view, especially those at risk of disadvantage.

2. CONSIDER EVERYBODY

The County Council is subject to legal duties that require us to deliver services without discrimination irrespective of race, disability or gender. When consulting on service delivery or employment issues we must be able to demonstrate that the views of these groups have been considered. If the topic is an employment issue we must also ensure we take into account the age of the participants, religion and belief and sexual orientation. Best practice does indicate that these groups should also be included in *Have Your Say* exercises.

Throughout the exercise it is important that we take steps to ensure that all of our target audiences have the opportunity to respond. Our *Have Your Say* plan will need to include actions that ensure all 'people at risk of disadvantage' are included in the *Have Your Say* exercise. This might include:

- **People with disabilities** – This includes people with physical disabilities, sensory impairment, people with mental health problems or learning disabilities/difficulties.
- **Black and minority ethnic groups.**
- **Young people.**
- **Women.**
- **Rural communities.**

3. VARIED CONSULTATION METHODS

We need to offer alternative ways for people to respond. Options include:

- Horizons magazine (the best way to reach every household in the county).
- www.hertsdirect.org/havesay. More and more people are now using the internet - 58 % of Hertfordshire residents have regular access to broadband internet at home and a further 28% have dial up access at home (according to the County Council's 2006 survey).
- Qualitative methods such as discussion groups, workshops, face to face interviews.
- In large samples, quantitative research – usually through telephone or postal surveys (although such examples can also be used to produce qualitative data as well).
- Viewscast: This is used by the Customer Service Centre to obtain feedback from callers. The caller is transferred through to an interactive answer phone service where they can leave feedback to a series of questions.

The above list is not definitive, however, and we are constantly searching for innovative and cost effective ways of engaging with people.

Whatever other methods we choose, we must always also use www.hertsdirect.org so that people can respond online. Online questionnaires can be setup.

However, a web-based exercise must not be used as the only method as some people cannot or will not choose to use the web for this purpose.

If we consult in writing or using www.hertsdirect.org/havesay we must make sure that:

- A Freepost address is used for postal surveys
- All documents are written in plain English and other formats such as audio cassettes, large print and translations are offered and provided on request.
- *Have Your Say* documents are easily accessible to the people we are trying to reach.
- It is made as easy as possible for everyone to respond.
- The end of the *Have Your Say* period is made clear.

- A contact point is included – name, job title, telephone number, e mail address.

If we organise *Have Your Say* events we must make sure that:

- Events are held at locations that are local, convenient and appropriate to the people we want to involve.
- Venues have good access for disabled people and good public transport connections.
- Venues where people meet normally e.g. places of worship, community centres, are used where appropriate.
- Nobody is out of pocket for attending an event.
- Events are co-ordinated with other *Have Your Say* exercises with other departments and agencies where possible so that we use our resources wisely and avoid duplication with other exercises.

4. ROBUST DATA COLLECTION

Please note that the information you give us will be used only for the purpose stated by Hertfordshire County Council and will not be passed to any third parties, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The categories below may be sufficient for monitoring purposes. However, depending on the target community, the geographical area covered or as a result of previous monitoring we may wish to use the more detailed breakdown which includes the sub headings shown below.

1) Ethnicity

The headline groups for ethnicity in the Census are:

White
Mixed Heritage
Asian or Asian British
Black or Black British
Chinese or other Ethnic Group.

The detailed breakdowns are:

White
 British
 Irish
 Other
Mixed Heritage
 White and Black Caribbean
 White and Black African

White and Asian
Other mixed group
Asian or Asian British
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Other Asian
Black or Black British
Caribbean
African
Other Black
Chinese or other Ethnic Group.
Chinese
Other Ethnic Group

2) Disabilities

The [Disability Rights Commission](http://www.hadnet.org.uk) states that nationally approximately 11 million people have a disability. The census does not contain data on people with a disability so local comparison with our participants will require us to access other sources of data or local groups e.g. Hertfordshire Action on Disability (HAD) 01707 324581 <http://www.hadnet.org.uk>

An exemplar question is given below:

Do you have a disability, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act*?

YES NO

*The Act defines disability as an impairment that makes it difficult or impossible to carry out normal day-to-day activities and that is expected to last for more than twelve months. The impairment may be physical, sensory (e.g. deafness or a less severe hearing impairment, or blindness or a less severe visual impairment) or mental (e.g. dyslexia, learning difficulties or a phobia).

Or

*The Act defines disability as a physical, sensory or mental impairment that makes it difficult or impossible to carry out normal day-to-day activities and that is expected to last for more than twelve months.

3) Gender

The Gender Duty requires that men and women get services that are delivered in a manner that reflects requirements and without discrimination. It is therefore often important for us to understand if responses to our *Have Your Say* exercise are from men or women.

4) Age

The census contains a breakdown of age by each year up to 100. When planning the collection of our monitoring data we need to think about the ages we require data on. For example we may want to include a tick box section rather than a “please state your age” question. The tick box category should reflect the data we will want to analyse, for example, it may not be necessary to include a box for every 5 years (i.e. 20 – 24, 25 – 29, 30 – 34 etc) when a simpler 18 – 34, 35 + will provide the information required.

5) Sexual Orientation

Questions regarding sexual orientation can be included on our *Have Your Say* exercise if we believe that knowing the answer will add value to the process. However, some people may consider this an invasion of privacy and be unwilling to provide this information. Advice on gathering information on sexuality can be obtained from:

- ACAS Equality Helpline 08456 00 34 44 - www.acas.org.uk
- Stonewall - <http://www.stonewall.org.uk>

6) Religion and Belief

Religion and belief may have a direct impact on the way a service needs to be delivered to an individual or community. Employment practices will also need to take these into account.

Census data is provides information on the following categories relating to religion.

- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other Religions
- No Religion
- Not stated

7) Location

If our monitoring analysis requires that we break the data down into small geographical areas we will need to know where a person lives. A full postcode can link someone to a specific area while still retaining anonymity.

A person’s full addresses may be requested if feedback from the *Have Your Say* exercise is to be sent out by post. However, there are other methods of

providing feedback, such as e-mail or public meetings, so these should also be considered.

At the end of a *Have Your Say* exercise, we must know who has responded so that we can assess whether all groups have been reached, and so we can provide feedback to those who took part.

5. BALANCED ANALYSIS

All findings should be balanced. Consideration should be given to statistical data, the opinion of experts, academic research/practice, views of those responsible for managing the service as well as public opinion and concern.

6. FEEDBACK

Everyone involved should receive feedback on key findings and the next steps in decision making and implementation. We must:

- Be specific how and when feedback will be communicated.
 - Show people how their views have been taken into account.
 - Give details of any further opportunities to comment.
 - Encourage participants to continue to give their views if there are further opportunities to comment before a final decision is made.
 - Feature the *Have Your Say* exercise on www.hertsdirect.org/havesay and in Horizons magazine.
 - Publish the outcomes of the *Have Your Say* work in an accessible way – and what has changed as result of the findings – as soon as possible. This may include links to the formal democratic decision-making process (such as Cabinet papers). Individual responses should not be attributable from our publications.
 - Respond to specific individuals and groups who have submitted responses to the *Have Your Say* exercise at the earliest possible opportunity, showing the rationale and reasoning for the decision-making.
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7. SHARING INFORMATION

The principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 should be considered throughout:

8. TIMELY ACTION

The findings should quickly feed into the decision-making process. This delays any negative impact on community confidence about the services they receive and their ability to change and improve these.

9. LEARNING

It is important that all Hertfordshire County Council staff involved in *Have Your Say* exercises are able to learn from each other and from those they have consulted. We must:

- Put the details of the Have Your Say exercise on www.hertsdirect.org/havesay as soon as possible.
- Share our experiences with the internal networks
- Ask participants for their views about the *Have Your Say* process and how it could be improved.
- Identify any barriers which will have prevented people taking part and try to create a more inclusive process.
- Pass on views about other services expressed during our exercise to our colleagues.
- Build improvements into our service plan.
- Make sure things change for the better as a result of what people say.