COMMUNICATION
AND CONSULTATION

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

Education Resources

Policy statement
on communication and consultation

September 2008
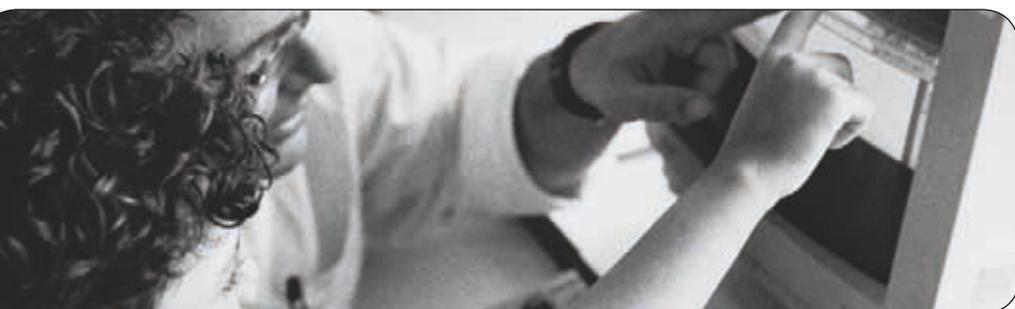
Rationale

Education Resources is committed to providing the highest possible quality of services for children, young people, parents, other adults and local communities. Effective communication and consultation mechanisms are essential in helping to achieve this overall aim.

We are committed to communicating, consulting and engaging with employees, learners, parents/carers, partner agencies and other stakeholders on the development, evaluation and review of our policies and plans in order to secure improvements.

Our aim is to share information with our stakeholders through dialogue, surveys, questionnaires, electronic and other communications in order to provide opportunities to influence and share action for improvement.

To do this we have developed mechanisms to interact with and provide feedback to our stakeholders.

This policy has been produced to provide a clear statement on the communication and consultation practices and mechanisms for Education Resources.

* Within this policy statement the term 'education and community stakeholders' refers to employees, young people, parents/carers, parent councils, elected members, trades unions, other adults and local communities including partner agencies and the voluntary sector, including all minority ethnic groups/ gypsies and travellers, asylum seekers and refugees.

The policy statement will ensure:

1. a common understanding of the terms 'communication' and 'consultation';

2. effective communication with education and community stakeholders, Parent Forum/ Parent Councils, elected members, trades unions, other adults and local communities*;

3. effective consultation with education and community stakeholders*;

4. effective partnership working with education and community stakeholders*;

5. education and community stakeholders*, receive clear and helpful information on priorities and performance;

6. through business continuity planning that there is an effective response to incidents and emergencies;

7. best use is made of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to support learning and communication and consultation.

The components

The establishment of an overall approach to communication and consultation is essential to ensuring consistency and coherence across all services. The components of this Policy Statement are:

1. A definition of communication;
2. Communication mechanisms;
3. A definition of consultation;
4. Consultation mechanisms;
5. Partnership working;
6. Reporting;
7. Incidents and emergencies; contingency planning
8. Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Specific outcomes

The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that in Education Resources there are clearly defined approaches for communication and consultation in all establishments and services.

The outcomes described in this Policy Statement are designed to help take forward the objectives in the Council Plan: Connect.
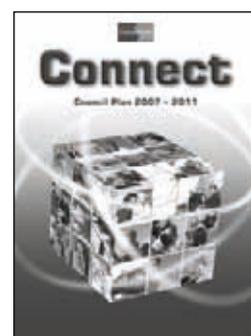
1. A definition of communication

Outcome

The use of a common definition of the term 'Communication'.

Communication is the process of engaging with, listening to, involving, advising and informing education and community stakeholders on matters of relevance to them.

Roles and responsibilities

All employees

All employees recognise the value of communicating effectively in their day to day work and are aware of the Education Resources definition of communication. This is to help demonstrate that communication is valued, dialogue encouraged and information used to develop an ethos of self-evaluation.

2. Communication mechanisms

Outcomes

- strategic management decisions are communicated appropriately to education and community stakeholders*;

- compliance with guidelines on equal opportunities and human rights impact assessments;

- communications reflect the commitment to partnership working;

- feedback is used to inform decision making and help effect improvements in service delivery;

- the format of communications and consultations is suited to the purpose and audience;

- the use of plain English in all communications;

- the format of communications is suited to the purpose and the audience;

- there is ease of access to accurate and up-to-date information across the Resource;

- communication systems enable employees and stakeholders to engage, share and discuss with each other information and matters of interest at both strategic and operational level;

- communications take account of the needs of the audience by making information available when required, in community languages or other formats, e.g

  - provision of signers / interpreters
  - Braille
  - audio
  - large print;

- effective use is made of the range of available communication methods; including email, text and other appropriate systems that encourage engagement;

- there is an efficient and effective system for responding to enquiries, requests for information and concerns, such as:

  - Complaints and suggestions;
  - Freedom of Information and Data Protection issues;
  - Child Protection issues.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensures:
- their actions promote the value of effective communication and engagement;

- strategic decisions are appropriately communicated to education and community stakeholders*;

- consistency with regard to communications with education and community stakeholders.

The Operations Service ensures:

- effective communication systems are operated within Education Resources;

- the provision of advice and support for establishments and services on communications;

- procedural information on corporate standards for communications and responses to enquiries, including Freedom of Information, Data Protection requests, complaints and suggestions is available in all establishments and services;

- the promotion of plain English and the provision of advice on communications in a range of formats;

- it maximises opportunities to promote good practice;

- it undertakes a strategic overview of communications activity.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- their actions promote the value of effective communication and engagement with education and community stakeholders*;

- employees are aware of the range and purpose of the available communication mechanisms;

- they establish and maintain good communication practices

with education and community stakeholders*;

- employees are given access to information in relation to their job and are encouraged to ask questions about their job;

- they promote the use of plain English in all communications;

- employee development opportunities on communication are provided;

- there are mechanisms in place to share good practice;

- they apply corporate standards for communications and responses to enquiries, complaints, suggestions, requests for information, and compliance with legally set response times for:

  - Councillor/customer enquiries (10 days from receipt)
  - Freedom of Information - (20 days from receipt)
  - Data Protection (40 days from receipt)

Employees ensure they:

- recognise the value of communicating effectively in their day-to-day work;

- understand the range, purpose and appropriateness of the different communication mechanisms;

- participate in appropriate employee development related to communication issues;

- take up opportunities to promote good practice;

- apply corporate standards for communications and responses to enquiries, complaints, suggestions and requests for information.

3. Definition of consultation

The use of a common definition of the term 'Consultation'.

Consultation is the process of actively engaging with and providing education and community stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to the decision making process. Having canvassed opinion, consultation also provides an opportunity for all participants to receive feedback.*

All employees recognise the value of consulting effectively in their day to day work and are aware of the Education Resources definition of consultation. This is to help demonstrate that consultation is about exchanging information and ideas in order to develop an ethos of self-evaluation and inform the decision-making process.

4. Consultation mechanisms

Children's Voice
Listening to children and young people and involving them in the decision making process is an important aspect of the work undertaken by nurseries, schools, youth training and other services of the council.

The right of children and young people to have their voice heard is included in Scottish Law through the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 and in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Education for Citizenship (Learning and Teaching

Scotland, 2002) emphasises that citizenship must be implemented in practice, within schools, as well as being taught in the curriculum. Citizenship is also a Core value in 'A Curriculum for Excellence'.

The following statement is provided as a signpost to the legal requirement to promote children and young people's participation in decision making.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

Education authorities must have due regard to the views of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect them, in regards to the child or young person's school education. (Section 2(2))

Education authorities must consult children and young people on the authorities' annual statements of improvement objectives (now incorporated into Integrated Children's Services Plans, Scottish Executive, 2006a). (Section 5 (1))

Head teachers must state how they plan to consult pupils and seek to involve the pupils, on decisions about the everyday running of their schools. (Section 6(3))

Outcomes

- strategic management decisions are subject to consultation with education and community stakeholders*;

- there are effective strategies for consulting with education and community stakeholders*;

- relevant education and community stakeholders contribute at key stages to the development of policy and practice;

- the format of consultation and communications is suited to the purpose and audience;

- engagement and consultation with children and young people provides opportunities to build their capacity and skills as well as enabling them to be active partners in the decision-making process;

- consultation takes account of the additional support needs of

participants, and by adapting information to an appropriate level by making information available when required, in community languages or other formats, e.g.

- provision of signers/interpreters
- Braille
- audio
- large print

- feedback is provided on the outcomes of consultations.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensures:

- their actions create an open ethos which promotes and encourages engagement with education and community stakeholders* to enable views on its delivery of services to be made and acted upon;

- there are opportunities for education and community stakeholders* to become involved in shaping policy and practice;

- engagement with children and young people provides opportunities to build their capacity to air their voice, negotiate options, arrive at decisions which are jointly owned and offer feedback.

- mechanisms are in place to provide feedback on the outcome of consultations;

- a strategic overview of consultation activity takes place.

The Operations Service ensures:

- effective consultation procedures and practices are in place and are used appropriately;

- information on involving education and community stakeholders* is available to those involved in co-ordinating consultation exercises;

- consultation arrangements include plans for feedback on the outcomes of consultation;

- reference is made to consultation activity in all reports presented to Council committees;

- it maximises opportunities to promote good practice;

- it undertakes a strategic overview of consultation activity.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- engagement with and consulting effectively with education and community stakeholders takes place;

- an ethos is created which encourages stakeholders to participate in consultations;

- effective consultation takes place with appropriate education and community stakeholders*;

- that they know how and the mechanisms they plan to use to consult pupils and involve them on decisions about the everyday running of their school;

- that young people are given encouragement and every opportunity to take part in the decision-making process e.g. (pupil council / youth council, focus groups);

- that all minority ethnic groups including gypsies and travellers, asylum seekers, refugees, and looked after children are given the opportunity to take part in the decision-making process;

- employee development opportunities on consultation are provided;

- that those who participate in and involved in consultation receive appropriate feedback.

Employees ensure they:

- recognise the value of engaging and consulting effectively with education and community shareholders*;

- understand the range, purpose and appropriatness of the different consultation mechanisms;

- participate actively in the consultation process in line with Council policy;

- involve education and community stakeholders* in consultation activity;

- participate in appropriate employee development related to consultation processes;

- provide appropriate feedback

to education and community stakeholders*.

5. Partnership working

Outcomes

- effective partnership working takes place with education and community stakeholders*;

- effective partnership with education and community stakeholders* takes place to promote and encourage parental involvement in children's education;

- employees understand and actively support the commitment to partnership working;

- an ethos that supports effective partnership working exists throughout Education Resources;

- parents and carers have the confidence, through open channels of communication, to contact establishments and services about issues and concerns they may have;

- integrated working is seen as central to the work of Education Resources.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensures:

- the promotion of partnership with education and community stakeholders*;

- they take a proactive approach to promote parental partnership and parent/carer involvement in children's eduction (Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006);

- strategic partnership arrangements are in place and operating effectively;

- Education Resources contributes appropriately to strategic and statutory inter-agency plans;

- the commitment to integrated services is achieved through partnership at strategic and operational levels throughout Education Resources.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- they establish an ethos which values the contribution of education and community stakeholders*;

- they take a proactive approach to promote parental partnership and parent/carer involvement in children's education;

- parental representation is promoted through the Parent Forum / Parent Council;

- formal and informal partnership arrangements are working effectively within services and establishments;

- statutory and inter-agency plans are appropriately addressed;

- there are effective practices in place that encourage and enhance integrated working with key partners.

Employees ensure they:

- understand and actively support the commitment to partnership working;

- contribute actively to informal and formal partnership working

with education and community stakeholders*;

- have open channels of communication to share information with community stakeholders* and to ensure issues are raised on time;

- are aware of the role of the Parent Council/Forum in representing the views of community stakeholders*;

- support and participate in activities that contribute to integrated working with key partners.

6. Reporting

Outcomes

- there are clear strategies for informing education and community stakeholders* about Education Resources' priorities and performance;

- there are clear strategies for reporting information to parents on the progress of their children at agreed times throughout the year;

- clear and helpful information is provided on:
  - progress of learners
  - performance of establishments
  - performance of services
  - public reporting of targets

- compliance with any statutory requirements to report publicly on services and performance.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensure:

- up-to-date and clear information is provided for all education and community stakeholders* on the priorities and work of Education Resources;

- the performance of Education Resources in relation to the priorities within the Education Resources Plan and establishment improvement plans is reported publicly;

- legislative requirements in relation to reporting are met.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- up-to-date and clear information is made available for education and community stakeholders* on services provided by Education Resources;

- the performance of services and establishments is reported appropriately to education and community stakeholders*;

- the progress of individual learners is reported appropriately to children and young people, parents/carers and other adults;

- Pupil Progress Records (PPR) and child protection files contain accurate and up to date information.

Employees ensure:

- the progress of individual learners is reported to children and young people, parents/carers and other adults, as appropriate;

- information on services is provided to education and community stakeholders*;

- they respond to requests for information in line with corporate standards.

7. Incidents and emergencies - Business continuity and contingency planning

Outcomes

- business continuity and contingency plans are prepared to ensure effective co-ordination of emergency procedures and practices;

- procedures and practices are in place to support employees in responding to and reporting on incidents and emergencies;

- the response to incidents and emergencies is prompt and effective;

- incidents and emergencies are dealt with in an appropriate manner observing any requirements for confidentiality and sensitivity;

- incidents and emergencies are reported, as appropriate, to elected members, the Education Management Team, employees, parents other Council Resources and appropriate agencies;

- support and advice is offered and provided to those involved in dealing with incidents and emergencies.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensures:

- business and contingency plans are developed to ensure capacity and resilience to meet the needs of establishments and services in a time of emergency;

- effective co-ordination and provision of advice, guidance, information and support in the event of an incident or emergency;

- the co-ordination and management of incidents and emergencies is handled sensitively and effectively;

- effective liaison takes place with the Council's Emergency Planning Team and elected members;

- incidents and emergencies are analysed, consulting with those involved and debriefing them;

- emergency procedures and practices are evaluated and monitored.

The Operations Service ensures:

- business continuity planning arrangements are in place to provide a framework through which Education Resources will initiate and manage the response to incidents and emergencies;

- education and community stakeholders* are appropriately informed of actions taken or required in the event of an incident or emergency;

- advice and guidance is provided to enable heads of establishment and managers to respond to incidents or emergencies;

- the provision of an 'Emergency Contact Card' for all employees

- an annual checklist is provided to all establishments

- the reporting of incidents and emergencies is handled sensitively and effectively;

- information is made available in appropriate formats to assist heads of establishment and managers involved in dealing with incidents on emergencies;

- information is provided for elected members, the Education Management Team, Corporate Communications (media), and emergencies;

- effective liaison with other Council Resources and agencies;

- operating procedures and emergency directories are regularly updated.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- business continuity planning arrangements are in place to provide a framework through which Education Resources will initiate and manage the response to incidents and emergencies;

- they are aware of procedures for responding to and managing critical incidents;

- education and community stakeholders* are appropriately informed of actions taken or required in the event of an incident or emergency;

- procedures are in place which allow employees to respond appropriately to incidents or emergencies;

- employees, children, young people and parents are appropriately supported during and after an incident or emergency;

- incidents and emergencies are handled sensitively and effectively;

- effective liaison within Education Resources and with other Council Resources and agencies;

- the co-ordination of press and media enquiries to ensure the release of accurate and factual information;

- all employees are provided with an 'Emergency Contact Card';

- they take a proactive approach to taking forward the actions in the 'annual checklist' issued by Education Resources.

The Council's Emergency Planning team ensures:

- a contingency plan is prepared for dealing with major incidents;

- appropriate guidance and support is provided to Education Resources during emergencies;

- the co-ordination and reporting of incidents and emergencies is effective;

- incidents and emergencies are analysed and debriefings take place.

Employees ensure:

- they are familiar with their appropriate safety and evacuation procedures and reporting requirements;

- they carry an "Emergency Contact Card" and have a point of contact for use in an emergency whilst away from their establishment/ location and when on trips/visits with children, young people.

- they are aware of procedures for reporting an incident/emergency and protocols on responding to media enquiries.

8. Information Communication Technology (including Pc's, laptops, handheld devices, cameras, phones and USB and other electronic devices)

Outcomes

- the effective use of ICT to encourage learning;

- the effective use of ICT to support communications;

- the effective use of ICT to support consultation;

- the provision of internet security through partnership within ICT providers;

- the effective use of ICT to provide feedback to education and community stakeholders*;

- appropriate guidance is issued to protect children, staff and users in the use and misuse of technology;

- the provision of e-mail and internet security;

- the provision of a 'managed service' that has mechanisms in-built to protect children, young people and users.

Roles and responsibilities

The Education Management Team ensures:

- implementation of the Council's ICT strategy;

- that a strategic overview of the use of ICT takes place;

- effective use of ICT to support learning through for example GLOW;

- dissemination of the Council's electronic mail and internet usage policy to employees;

- the 'managed service' has protection measures in place to protect children, young people and users;

- that ICT acceptable use policies and child protection and safety protocols are in place.

Heads of Education, Heads of Establishment and Managers ensure:

- the effective use of ICT to support learning through for example, GLOW;

- the effective use of ICT to support communications;

- the effective use of ICT to support consultation;

- the application of corporate standards on the use of ICT;

- the Council's Code of Practice and information security practices and Data Protection policy is adhered to;

- that ICT 'Acceptable Use Policies' are in place;

- they investigate any breach of a Code of Practice and acceptable use of policies;

- the implementation of appropriate guidance on the use and misuse of ICT;

- Children and young people and users are aware of child protection and safety issues whilst using ICT.

Employees ensure they:

- use ICT appropriately in the workplace;

- encourage users to use ICT responsibly at all times;

- make appropriate use of ICT to communicate with education and community stakeholders*;

- make appropriate use of ICT to consult with education and community stakeholders*;

- participate in appropriate ICT employee development opportunities;

- comply with corporate standards on the use of ICT code of practice, information security practices and that Data Protection policy is adhered to;

- report any concerns and or breaches of use to their lline manager timeously;

- are aware of the appropriate line management for ICT support and advice;

- support users in making them aware of 'Acceptable Use Policies'.

COMMUNICATION
AND CONSULTATION

Education Resources has seven core policy statements

- Care and Welfare
- Communication and Consultation
- Curriculum
- Inclusion and Equality
- Learning and Teaching
- Maximising Resources
- Quality Management

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review will be undertaken 2010.

Further Information

For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language, please phone 01698 454545 or email education@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

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This statement is also available online:
www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk