



MACS Guidance on Engagement and Consultation Mechanisms for Disabled People When Liaising with External Stakeholders

Purpose of the Guidance

- To promote the use of the engagement and consultation mechanisms for disabled people when dealing with transport operators and providers, as well as policy makers, to improve travel accessibility for disabled people.

What engagement mechanisms are required?

There is a need for engagement mechanism that will achieve a number of things:

- Evidence the range and nature of opportunities for disabled people through working with partners and stakeholders;
- Evaluate the impact of engagement activities and partnership working in relation to the needs of disabled people and what they want to achieve through their contribution;
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of our interactions with partners and stakeholders in setting priorities, designing and delivery of services;
- Ensure that appropriate structures, capacity and competencies are in place to support a range of engagement and partnership activities;
- Review and report back on the value of engagement and partnership working from the perspective of partners, stakeholders and disability communities;
- Evidence the benefits of such engagements.

Who should MACS engage with?

- Partners, such as transport operators and providers, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), Local Authorities, and Governmental Agencies;
- Stakeholders, Non-Governmental Organisations e.g. ILiS, SDEF, campaign organisations, such as SATA, and other disability charitable pressure groups.

Benefits of engagement

- Empowerment and motivation – feeling respected and valued and having the opportunity to directly influence policies and services that affect their lives and those they represent;
- A sense of ownership and inclusion – creating a greater sense of responsibility for decisions and thus improving their acceptance;

- Capacity building – gaining a better understanding of policy and decision-making processes and how disabled people can contribute effectively with realistic expectations;
- Increasing operator and policy maker accountability – through a better understanding of their strategic and operational aims and involvement in their scrutiny arrangements e.g. Disability Equality Forums

Building and maintaining positive relationships

Building and maintaining positive relationships is at the heart of effective partnership working and engagement. This involves creating a climate of trust, mutual respect and openness across the range of contexts and scenarios where disabled people, service operators and policy makers engage. There are a number of contexts which would highlight engagement opportunities and provide examples of engagement activities:

- Enforcement and Regulation;
- Education, Training and Development;
- Information and Communication;
- Consultation;
- Partnership working and Co-Production.

Engagement and Consultation

In the interests of brevity MACS should consider the key area of engaging through consultation. Consultation could be defined as a dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.

Those seeking to consult prior to deciding whether to undertake a formal consultation, the following should be considered:

- Whether there is a legal requirement to consult
- If the issue is solely an operational matter
- Do disabled people expect to be consulted on a particular issue or policy
- The scope to influence on an issue
- The impact on their reputation
- The potential impact of the decision from the perspective of others, particularly disabled people and organisations

Subsequent to a decision to consult, then the processes must meet the following best practice standards and are robust enough to stand up to scrutiny and challenge:

- Integrity – Honest, willing to listen and prepared to be influenced.
- Visibility – Those who have a right to participate should be made reasonably aware of the consultation.
- Accessibility – Reasonable access to information throughout the consultation, particularly vulnerable and hard to reach individuals and groups.
- Transparency – The processes will be open and transparent.

- Disclosure – Make available access to all material information and disclose minority views.
- Fair Interpretation – Further to data analysis a presentation and objective assessment of the findings.
- Publication – Participants have a right to receive feedback of the consultation output and an explanation of the outcome of the process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All transport operators and policy makers concerned should be committed to a culture of continuous improvement. They should monitor progress in relation to engagement policies and practices in achieving their strategic aims and commitments to disabled people and others. They should also use the information to learn from their experiences to review and inform future planning. There are a number of practical tools already in existence e.g. the National Standards for Community Engagement, and the Public Sector Improvement Framework.