

London Borough of Enfield

Service User Involvement Alcazar Court

November 2011

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1 Purpose and Summary

The Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University (IPC) was asked by Vincent Edwards, Procurement Manager, Enfield Council to prepare an evaluative account of the Question Time event which was conducted as part of Enfield Council's tender evaluation of bids for the service contract for Extra Care Housing support at Alcazar Court. The evaluation assesses the project against the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) guidance on service user involvement best practise and provide recommendations for future service user involvement in similar commissioning projects.

2 Background – the Tendering Exercise for Alcazar Court and the processes used for service user involvement

Alcazar Court offers 45 units of Extra Care Housing for both single occupants and for couples.

The service aims, as set out in the Tendering Service Specification for Alcazar Court, identify the requirements for the provider to establish and sustain an environment where older people with a range of care needs can live comfortably, be independent, feel safe, be respected and can expect to receive good quality services that respond to their individual care and support needs. Alcazar Court should be a place that is socially inclusive for people from all cultures and walks of life and where service users families and provider contribute to the sense of community.

Enfield Council undertook a tender exercise during 2011, in respect of the provision of Extra Care Housing at Alcazar Court. The Council was committed to involving service users in the evaluation process and worked with tenants to plan an effective model for their involvement by way of a 'Question Time' event. This activity would account for 15% of the scoring within the overall evaluation.

IPC were commissioned to provide impartial facilitation on the Question Time events, which involved tenants in separate sessions with four potential providers over two days in September 2011.

After the sessions an interim report detailing responses and scores was sent to the Procurement Manager, for use within the overall evaluation process.

Vincent Edwards as lead Officer was strongly committed to finding a meaningful way of involving residents. This was a considerable challenge given the complexity of the tender process, and the need to provide a fair opportunity for involvement by a sizeable group of tenants, many of whom were very elderly or had significant sensory impairment. While this report does indicate areas for potential improvement and refinement in future exercises the personal commitment of the lead Officer, his willingness to engage in detailed planning with procurement staff, and his strong relationship with the tenant group all contributed to the overall success of the project.

This final report provides an analysis of the process used at Alcazar Court in the context of Social Care Institute of Excellence guidance on stakeholder involvement^{1,2}. While this did provide a suitable standard and framework for evaluating the exercise it should be noted that the guidelines do not specifically cover engagement in Procurement processes which rely heavily on adherence to European and Local Authority rules especially so far as selection processes are concerned. In this respect the project was an unusual and ground breaking one, with significant risks which had to be carefully managed.

¹ SCIE (June 2007) Practise Guide 17: the participation of adult service users, including older people in developing social care

² SCIE (March 2004) Has Service User Participation made a Difference to Social Care Services?

3 Best Practise for Service User Involvement

The Social Care Institute for Excellence guidance indicates service user involvement has a number of potentially important outcomes, namely:

- Positive Outcomes for Service Users;

For individual service users, the benefits of involvement may include increased confidence and self-esteem. Involvement may lead to greater satisfaction and improved quality of life, for instance, older people mental health services and people with disabilities who have had greater control in decisions about the support they receive report greater satisfaction and better health than those that have not. The involvement process may also help create a stronger sense of community.

- Positive Outcomes for Organisations;

Service user involvement can inform service planning and improve service delivery.

3.1 Planning

The following sections outline key stages in planning, delivery and feedback for service user involvement together with the processes and actions followed by Enfield Council.

The key stages of service user involvement are:

- Event Planning
- Consultation Delivery and Recording
- Feedback

3.2 Event Planning

The planning stage can be broken down into a number of key steps and considerations which need to be borne in mind in planning an effective service user involvement. They are as follows:

- Clarity on the Purpose of Consultation
- Promotion Of Event and Expectations
- Consultation Method and Venue
- Advocacy
- Consultation Event Timetable
- Recording of Views/Discussion
- Scoring
- Material and Equipment

In the following sections the key elements of SCIE guidance are identified in italics and followed by an analysis of the Alcazar Court event.

3.3 Question Time Event

3.4 Clarity on the Purpose of Consultation

The objectives and outcomes for the consultation should be agreed before inviting service users to take part. This will ensure clarity of service user involvement and identify how service user views will be used after the consultation.

Enfield Council set clear objectives and outcomes for service user involvement and agreed the format with the council procurement specialists. Providers were clear about their involvement in the 'Question Time' event and the 'rules' for their participation e.g. responding to residents set questions and no provider presentations. The tendering process was clearly communicated to both providers and residents.

3.5 Promotion of Event and Expectations

The consultation should be promoted to service users in good time and using appropriate communication methods such as leaflets, posters, forwarding details to families/carers/support workers where appropriate or visiting established groups to talk through the event.

Expectations in relation to attendance and behaviour should be outlined at this point in order that service users or their advocates can make a full and informed choice whether to take part.

The planning process was assisted by the Procurement Manager's considerable involvement and regular contact with the tenants who clearly trusted him.

A number of preparatory sessions for this consultation had taken place as part of residents' meetings, held at Alcazar Court and attended by the Procurement Manager. The two independent facilitators from IPC visited before the event with the Procurement Manager and the whole process to be used was discussed with those who wished to be involved. This advance meeting was significant in reinforcing the importance of event as well as reassuring residents about how they would be involved and supported.

The residents had been informed of the tendering process and how their involvement would contribute towards the overall score for each provider. A leaflet and poster were designed by Enfield Council and provided to residents, their families and carers.

3.6 Method and Venue

The needs and abilities of the group should be identified in order to choose the most appropriate consultation method e.g. focus group, larger group discussion, one to one interviews, questionnaire etc. This will ensure that participants can engage as fully as possible.

The venue should also be appropriate to the service user needs and be a location where they will feel comfortable and safe, this may mean using a venue that is already known to them rather than an unfamiliar venue where they may feel anxious and therefore not willing to engage to the same degree.

It was agreed between IPC and Enfield Council that the most effective method would be a 'Question Time' event enabling tendering organisations to speak face to face with tenants and respond to their chosen questions.

The venue for the consultation was Alcazar Court as this provided the residents with a familiar environment that met all their needs and also gave the providers an opportunity to visit Alcazar Court.

The specific location for the event was the residents' lounge in the main part of the premises. This was a comfortable and accessible space and provided 'common ground' for residents.

3.7 Advocacy

It is important that, where possible, the views of all service users are equally taken into account therefore where appropriate service users should be supported to nominate an advocate who can put their views forward on their behalf.

Several family members attended the planning meeting with the independent facilitators, and they indicated a wish to attend as a representative of their relative. This was agreed after discussion but clear rules were necessary and the change had to be communicated quite late to residents, family members and those potential providers who would be interviewed.

The decision was that residents could have one representative present at the 'Question Time' event if they felt unable to take part. This did enable the SCIE guidelines to be followed i.e. that advocacy should be offered to all participants at the beginning of an involvement process in order that service users have the opportunity for their views to be included even if they are unable to give their views directly. In the event no family member did avail themselves of this facility and all participants were residents of Alcazar Court.

3.8 Consultation Event Timetable

The consultation timetable should meet the needs of the group. The event should begin and end at suitable times, consideration should be given to the length of the event or component parts and that breaks in the programme are appropriately timetabled.

The timetable for the Question Time Event is in Appendix 2.

The planning meeting involving the Procurement Manager and the two facilitators did provide an opportunity for residents to air their views on the process first hand and to be involved in planning the detailed timetable.

It was agreed that a pre meet with all residents taking part in the consultation should take place at the beginning of each of the two days in order that residents could re-familiarise themselves with the timetable for the day, the scoring method and expectations in relation to attendance and behaviour. This reinforcement helped with continuity.

The residents had at earlier meetings with the Procurement Manager identified 6 key themes that they wished to be included in the tender process. These were as follows:

- Striking a balance between security and independent living.
- Relationship with Landlord.
- Support and care planning and liaison with other agencies.
- Provider as part of the living environment; the personal touch.
- Involving Families.
- Maintaining a balanced community; approach to move on.

From these 6 themes 6 questions were written and used in each of the 4 Question Time interviews. This provided a consistency of questioning for each provider. The detailed questions are given in Appendix 3.

Other key timetabling issues were the importance of not trying to fit too much into a single day, and providing sufficient time for feedback and discussion after each interview. In this way it was possible for facilitators to develop a consensus view about performance on each of the questions, and to ensure that all participants were able to have their say.

3.9 Recording of Views/Discussion

The method for recording views/discussions should be agreed ahead of the event.

Participants should be informed how and when their views are intended to be used and if their views are not to be held confidentially then their

permission should be sought before their name is attributed to a particular comment.

The residents were informed that IPC would facilitate each provider session and make notes on all comments. All comments would be confidential. The residents were informed on how their views and scores would be used in the tendering process.

3.10 Scoring

Participants should understand how their views will be used after the consultation and if participants are asked to 'score' or 'rank' an answer then the method chosen to score or rank should meet all participants abilities, e.g. cards with 3 faces, 1 smiling, 1 frowning and 1 with no expression may be more appropriate than wording to indicate 'I agree', 'I didn't agree', 'I am not sure'.

If the service user's views are to contribute towards a final score then the percentage value that the service user's score will contribute to the whole should be agreed before the consultation in order that the service users are aware of their contribution.

Consideration should also be given to providing a method for participants to provide confidential responses as some participants may, when finally in the consultation, wish to give their views anonymously.

With group consultations there is the potential for participants to influence each other, particularly if there is a friendship group within the wider group or some people are more vocal than others. It is important that these issues are taken into consideration when deciding upon the scoring method.

The method for scoring was agreed in the planning stage between IPC Consultants and Enfield Council. Each resident would be asked to score each of the 6 questions at a separate session with IPC after each of the provider presentations. The provider responses were read back by the IPC Consultants and each resident was asked to score the answer with a 0, 1, 2. Each tenant would hold up their numbered card and the final score for each question was then agreed via a group consensus. The scores for each question were noted.

Finally one overall score was given to each provider taking into account the scores for the individual questions and again through group consensus. The scores per question and per provider together with provider responses are detailed in section 4.

The scoring system was devised by Enfield Council, please see the table below.

Consensus Score	Meaning
0	Significant reservations, an unconvincing response
1	Some reservations (more than minor) but generally a convincing response
2	A largely convincing response, possibly with one or two minor reservations.

3.11 Material and Equipment

The needs of the participants should be identified in relation to the use of materials or equipment. Written documents should be visually easily to see with appropriate font size and they should be easily understood in relation to the context with the use of clear language, no jargon or abbreviations and where appropriate translations available.

Materials should be available to meet any special needs e.g. braille versions may be required for participants with limited vision.

Individual scoring cards were produced for each participant, in a large font for easy of reading and the significance of the scoring was regularly underlined and reinforced by the facilitators.

4 Observations and Recommendations on Event Planning

Observations and recommendations from the Event Planning stage are detailed below.

4.1 Observations

Observations are as follows:

- Enfield Council set clear objectives and outcomes for service user involvement, agreeing format with the council procurement specialists.
- The planning process was assisted by the Procurement Manager's considerable involvement and regular contact with the tenants who clearly trusted him.
- The pre meetings worked well giving residents the opportunity to talk through the programme and scoring method.
- The timetable was carefully planned so as to meet the needs and to maximise involvement.

- The consultation was open to families/carers to act as advocates but not as early in the process as could have been achieved.

4.2 Recommendations

To improve service user involvement in future consultations the following recommendations are proposed:

- Advocacy should be offered to all participants at the beginning of an involvement process in order that service users have the opportunity for their views to be included even if they are unable to give their views directly.

5 The Question Time Event, Delivery and Recording

The following section outlines the key stages in delivery and recording together with the processes and actions followed by Enfield Council:

- Programme and expectations for the event.
- Facilitation
- Recording views/Discussion
- Scoring

5.1 Programme and Expectations

At the beginning of the consultation participants should be reminded of the programme for the consultation and expectations in relation to boundaries and behaviour.

The Question Time events took part over 2 days, 12th and 13th September, the programme for the two days is shown in Appendix 2. The day was broken down as follows:

- Pre meeting – IPC and residents talk through the day and expectations
- Provider Question Time – residence ask their 6 questions
- Consensus Scoring – residence score each question and consensus score each provider.

The attendance for each of the 3 sessions is shown in the table below, the reduction in numbers was due to a combination of residents having prior arrangements.

Session	Number of Attendee's
Session 1	17
Session 2	15
Session 3	10

All residents taking part in the Question Time events attended a short preliminary meeting at the beginning of each day, attendance at this meeting was mandatory as this gave residence an opportunity to talk through with IPC the timetable for the day and for the IPC Consultants to answer questions/queries.

All residents taking part in the provider sessions on day one attended the pre meeting, however on day two, one resident who had not attended the pre meeting asked to take part in the provider sessions, in this instance one of the IPC Consultants explained that his attendance would not be possible as he had missed the initial briefing and to go through the content again would disrupt the wider group and cause the programme to be delayed. The resident accepted this explanation and left.

Each Question Time event followed the same format with each provider receiving a total of 35 minutes with the tenants, this was broken down as 5 minutes to provide a short introduction about themselves and their company and 30 minutes to answer the tenants' set questions. Each event was facilitated and responses recorded by 2 IPC Consultants.

Residents were offered the opportunity to ask the 6 questions, on each day approximately half the questions were asked directly by the residents with the other questions being asked by the IPC Consultants and one by the Procurement Manager.

Each consensus scoring meeting followed the same format, following directly on from the provider meeting in order that the residents had the provider's responses to their questions fresh in their minds.

5.2 Facilitation

Facilitators should introduce themselves to the group and explain their role in the event, this may help participants to feel more comfortable or confident.

The same IPC Consultants facilitated all three meetings, the pre meet, the provider meetings and the consensus scoring meetings, providing impartiality and consistency throughout the 2 day process.

All consensus scoring meetings followed the same format, the IPC Consultants read back their notes on the provider's response to each question and the residents were asked to score 0, 1, 2 for each answer with the scores noted on a flip chart.

At the end of this process the scores for each question were shown and read back to the group.

5.3 Recording Views/Discussion

Participants should be told how their views/discussion will be recorded and how the information will be used after the consultation. A method for capturing views confidentially should be made available for those participants who would prefer to give their views in this way.

Notes were taken by both IPC Consultants and where possible noting the same words, terminology used by the providers in order to ensure that meaning was not changed. There was not a process in place to enable residents to give their views anonymously.

5.4 Scoring

Participants should be reminded of the scoring method and how their scores will contribute towards a final score for each provider.

Each participant was given a scorecard with a 0, 1, 2 and asked to score each question, please see the rationale in section 6.5. Once all provider questions had been scored the group was then asked to agree on a consensus score for the provider.

In one session a consensus score for a provider on one question could not initially be agreed as the scores were evenly split between a score of 1 and 2, IPC suggested that the group listen again to the noted answers and the group were again asked to score, this again provided the same result. The group then discussed the issues amongst themselves before agreeing to try the scoring process again and on a third attempt the scoring showed a difference in score, giving a consensus.

The Procurement Manager was present at all provider sessions and all consensus scoring meetings but not at all of the pre meets. His role was to observe the process and to be available to answer questions residents may have on the tendering process. He also volunteered to ask one of the 6 questions when it became clear that residents did not wish to ask all of the questions.

6 Observations and Recommendations on Event Delivery and Recording

Observations and recommendations from the Event Delivery and Recording stage are detailed below.

6.1 Observations

Observations are as follows:

- Approximately 40% of residents took part in the Question Time Event.
- All residents that took part were engaged in the scoring process.
- Approximately 30% of participants chose to ask one of the six set questions.
- The pre meetings worked well as several of the residents had questions regarding the process and this gave the opportunity to talk through the programme and scoring method again.
- All residents taking part were fully engaged with minor adjustments made on the day to support three service users with particular needs, one service had limited sight, two service users with limited hearing.
- Although there is a procedure in place for residents to give views anonymously regarding their day to day experiences in Alcazar Court there was not a method for recording anonymous views as part of the 'Question Time' event.
- The scoring process did not take into account the possibility of a draw between providers. This seems however more to indicate a generally good standard of applicant organisations than any major deficiency in the scoring process. Residents had, it was clear to facilitators, their own strong sense of priorities, as evidenced by their choice of questions. Moreover they were clearly, in discussion, able to weigh strengths and weaknesses between applicants and those views were also recorded. It would be possible, in the view of the facilitators, to have a somewhat more ambitious scoring scheme for future events, though the paramount issues are fairness and the capacity of all those involved to understand the scoring scheme.
- Enfield Council has reported to IPC that all of four providers had found the Question Time event a positive experience.

6.2 Recommendations

To improve service user involvement in future consultations the following recommendations are proposed:

- Any special requirements such as braille documents should be identified in the planning stage in order that service users can participate as fully as possible.

- A method for receiving views anonymously should be in place for all service user involvement events in order that service users who may feel unable to give their views at that time are not precluded from their views being taken into account.
- For future events the scoring system should be reviewed subject to the observations made above.

7 Feedback on The Question Time Events

The following section outlines best practise when requesting feedback from service users on their experience of taking part in a consultation event, considerations when feeding back on how service users views have been used and the processes and actions followed by Enfield Council.

*It is also good practise to ask participants for feedback on their experience of the consultation in order that lessons can be learnt and improvements made to future consultations.*³

Feedback from the Alcazar residents was sought on an informal basis, talking to the participants after the event

Feedback should be given to participants on how their views have been used and if possible what affect this has had. Feedback should be timely as leaving too long a gap between a consultation and informing participants how their views have been used could leave participants feeling undervalued. The method used to feedback is also important, giving consideration to the abilities of the individuals.

The Procurement Manager will update the residents on the outcome of the tender and the next residents meeting.

8 Observations and Recommendations on Event Feedback

Observations and recommendations from the Event Feedback stage are detailed below.

8.1 Observations

Observations are as follows:

- Although feedback was sought on the residents' experience of taking part in the Question Time Event, and residents were generally very positive about it there should also have been a process for participants to feedback anonymously.

³ Ibid

8.2 Recommendation

To improve service user involvement in future consultations the following recommendations are proposed:

- More robust feedback methods should be put in place for future consultations, which include the facility to comment anonymously.

9 Overview and conclusions

The exercise provided an unusual opportunity for residents, many of whom were frail or handicapped, to contribute directly to the selection process for a new provider organisation. Their assessment and scoring fed directly into the selection process and gave an opportunity for them to raise well-prepared and agreed questions with providers.

Overall the process worked well and was in line with available guidelines. The leadership and consistent involvement of the project lead was a key factor in the success of the exercise, as was the use of facilitators who had met the group of participants well in advance of the events.

There are adaptations and changes which would enhance future exercise of this kind, around the involvement of family members, the further development of the scoring system and the nature of feedback about the process, but overall the project provides a very good model for future use and certainly enabled the residents of Alcazar court to make a strong contribution to an important selection process.

**Institute of Public Care
November 2011**

Appendix 1

Question Time Timetable

Alcazar Court Tender – 2011
Timetable for Service User Question Time - 10th August, 2011

All timings are approximate

Monday 12th September 2011	Time
<i>Pre-meet (Service Users, LBE & IPC)</i> 11:00am	10:30 –
QT1 – Provider 1	
Introductions (LBE)	11:00 – 11:05am
Tenderer / Service Users meeting	11:05 – 11:35am
Consensus scoring	11:35 –
12:05pm	
<i>Break - (buffet lunch)</i>	12:05 –
13:10pm	
QT2 – Provider 2	
Introductions (LBE)	13:10 – 13:15pm
Tenderer / Service Users meeting	13:15 – 13:45pm
Consensus scoring	13:45 –
14:15pm	
<i>Break - 30 minutes (refreshments)</i>	14:15 –
14:45pm	
QT3 – Provider 3	
Introductions (LBE)	14:45 – 14:50pm
Tenderer / Service Users meeting	14:50 – 15:20pm
Consensus scoring	15:20 –
15:50pm	
End	

Tuesday 13th September 2011

Pre-meet (Service Users, LBE & IPC) 10:30 –
11:00am

QT3 – Provider 4

Introductions (LBE) 11:00 – 11:05am

Tenderer / Service Users meeting 11:05 – 11:35am

Consensus scoring 11:35 –

12:05pm

Break - 30 minutes (buffet lunch) 12:35 – 13:10pm

Appendix 2

Provider Questions

Question 1

Theme - Striking the balance between security and independent living

It is important to residents that there is a balance between security and independent living.

How will you keep residents safe whilst also helping them to live as independently as possible?

Question 2

Theme - Relationship with landlord.

It is important to residents that the Alcazar Court building is well maintained and that there is a quick response to problems such as no hot water.

How will you act on the residents behalf to ensure that all maintenance problems are reported and that the landlord acts as quickly as possible?

Question 3

Theme - Support and Care Planning and liaison with other agencies

The residents may receive care or help from several different teams or groups, these could be from either within the council or from external organisations.

How will you build effective relationships with these teams to ensure that the resident's needs are met?

Question 4

Theme - Provider as part of the living environment: the personal touch

Alcazar Court is the tenant's home and it is where they live their lives, it is important that it feels homely to the residents and that staff are friendly and welcoming towards their family and visitors.

How will you provide the residents and their visitors with a homely and welcoming environment?

Question 5

Theme - Involving Families

It is important to the residents that their families are involved in their lives.

How will you make this happen?

Question 6**Theme - Maintaining a balanced community: approach to move on**

The needs of tenants at Alcazar Court may vary. Some tenants may have more complex needs than others but all tenants should be encouraged to live as independent a life as possible. However, if a resident's care needs become very complicated, Alcazar Court may eventually not be the best place for them to live, as their care needs could be better met in a different living environment.

How will you manage such situations?"