

Stakeholder Involvement Website - Focus Groups Report

Context

1. On the 29th June 2007, representatives from the statutory, voluntary and community sector were invited to a Stakeholder Involvement Workshop in the Island Civic Centre, Lisburn. The aim of this workshop was to discuss the concept of creating a 'meta' network of stakeholder groups who would work to improve health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland. This would then be viewed as a way of accelerating the exchange of knowledge, ideas and information to influence strategic planning in health and social care and the development of regional policy and priorities.
2. At Workshop discussion took place on the importance of an E-network for information sharing and a recommendation was made to develop a website for stakeholders to facilitate ongoing communication exchange and discussion.
2. Following the workshop, work began to develop this website and a number of focus groups have been held with stakeholders to canvass views and ideas.
3. Three focus groups were held with voluntary and community sector representatives on:
 - 13th September 12.30 – 2.00 – Plaza Hotel, Antrim
 - 17th September 12.30 – 12.00 – NICVA Duncairn Gardens
 - 3rd October – input at Regional Carers Conference Craigavon Civic Centre
4. The purpose of the focus groups was to engage with stakeholders on the design, content and functionality of the website.

5. This report provides a synopsis of the feedback received from the focus groups. It is not intended to be a definitive record of discussion but should accurately reflect the range of views and opinions expressed.

Setting the Scene

6. At each of the focus groups, participants were given a brief background to the Stakeholder Engagement work and the progress that was being made to develop a stakeholder engagement website.
7. Participants were then shown 3 possible website templates and informal discussion was encouraged around the themes of
 - Design and layout
 - Content
 - Usability
8. All comments and views were welcomed and although not all questions could be answered on the day it was agreed that they would be taken into consideration in the development of the site.

Design and Layout

9. The following views were expressed and suggestions made about the design and layout of the website:
 - Participants generally favoured the second website template which they found most visually appealing.
 - Participants generally favoured bright colours and the use of graphics but noted the need to take accessibility issues into account.

- They emphasised that the home-page should be particularly eye-catching and not text heavy.
- A range of views were expressed in relation to the name of the site and preferred names included 'Engage', E-engage' and Connect.
- Participants agreed that the name of the site should be accompanied by a strapline. 'Your voice matters' was one suggestion received.
- Participants felt that interactive maps and diagrams were useful.
- It was suggested that the Homepage of the site should have one element that is regularly updated to let users know that the site is current.
- It was suggested that there should be a 'Contact Us' button on the main menu.

Content

10. The following views were expressed and suggestions made about the content of the website:
 - Participants emphasised that the content of the site must clearly reflect who its target audience is and its purpose e.g for organisations to facilitate engagement at a policy level.
 - The site should have an FAQ section

- It was suggested that the website should link to the Health Committee and Minister
- Participants queried how the content of the site would link with general information on health and social care.
- The site should link with policy areas within the Department and should allow stakeholders to find out about key policy issues in their area.
- It should have a members section outlining contact details
- Participants suggested that the site should have an engagement toolkit that stakeholders can use.
- The site should not use acronyms or jargon
- It would be helpful to have a glossary should explain commonly used terms
- Participants noted that the website should be written in Plain English
- The site should have a feedback section.
- The content of the site should clearly reflect who has 'ownership' of the site.
- The site should have information on performance standards, direct payments and should include links to Board and Trust reports.

- Participants expressed a range of views about the proposed discussion forum on the website:
 - All stakeholders should have the opportunity to post messages on the site and these should be made 'live' quickly.
 - Stakeholders should receive an email advising them when a new comment or topic is posted that relates to their area of interest.
 - The forum should be clearly broken down into topics of interest and perhaps by geography.
 - Experts are required to moderate the discussion forum and to provide feedback to messages in a timely way.
 - Stakeholders need to be encouraged to post messages on a regular basis.
 - Feedback on comments is crucial to maintain interest in the site.

- Participants had a number of queries about the proposed 'events' section on the website:
 - Participants queried if this section was for all stakeholders to post details of their events.
 - Participants queried the difference between the 'notice board' section of the site and the 'events' section.

Usability

11. The following views were expressed and suggestions made about the usability of the website:
- Participants felt that having a site map would make the website easy to navigate.
 - It was noted that the site should be suitable for users with different accessibility needs
 - Participants suggested that the site should be interactive
 - It must have a good search facility

Miscellaneous

12. The following miscellaneous views were expressed and suggestions made about the website:
- Participants noted that the network of users should be set up before the website is launched.
 - Participants felt that the website needed a strong launch.
 - They felt that the website should not be the only method of engagement.

Way forward

13. It was agreed that a note of the discussion at the focus groups would be circulated to participants.

14. All discussion and questions raised at the focus groups would be considered in the development of the stakeholder engagement website.
15. When the development of the website nears completion a group of stakeholders will be asked to come together to assess the usability of the site, provide further feedback on the design and to quality assure the content.