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Consulting effectively with the target group(s) of your charter

**Citizen Charter, Second Training Seminar
Prague, 19-20 June 2006**



Arguments in favour of engaging with service users and citizens

- 2. Improving the quality of your existing services by tapping wider sources of information, expertise and potential solutions**
- 3. Designing new services which matter to service users and improve their quality of life**
- 4. Setting ambitious targets and not just targets which are easy to achieve by your agency**

(1) Improving service quality by involving service users

In the UK many hospitals use ex-patients to support risk patients

- **before the surgery**
- **during the recovery period**

The ex-patients have the advantage

- **To be more convincing than medical staff**
- **To know better the problems of everyday life**
- **To reduce the number of visits to the GP**

What people are saying

"The Expert Patient Programme has really helped me to take more control of not just my arthritis, but also my life. Prior to experiencing the programme my daily routine each day would be exactly the same"

"I feel that I have made strides forward. It has given me confidence in handling my situation" 3

Group discussion

What is your example from your agency?

(2) Designing new services which matter to users

The consultation of the UK Passports Agency

'We have got much better at asking our customers what they want,' says Christine Nickles, Head of Communication for the UK Passport Service. The service carried out a survey with customers in 2000 to see if the usual turnaround time of ten days satisfied their needs. The survey showed there was a demand for a special, faster service, and that people were willing to pay extra for it. As a result, the UK Passport Service now offers a one-week and a one-day service.

'People want a fast and responsive service,' says Christine. 'Some people will need their passports particularly quickly, and by asking them we discovered a demand for two time spans, a week and a day, and we were able to develop the service to meet those needs. People were prepared to pay extra for this, which means other customers aren't subsidising the faster service.'

Group discussion

What is your example from your agency?

(3) Setting ambitious targets

Many UK agencies believed initially that it is important to answer the phone quickly. Therefore, many agencies set the target to answer any phone call at the latest after 6 rings.

However, consultations with the public revealed that this is not important to citizens. What citizens care about most is that the person who answers the phone is competent and can help them effectively or at least pass them to another person who can deal with the request.

Group discussion

What is your example from your agency?

Consultation with whom?

- The top manager of your agency?
- Your marketing department?
- Your middle manager?
- The external consultants/advisors?
- The minister/mayor?
- The front-line staff in service sector organisations?
- NGOs?
- The service users?
- ... Someone not mentioned here?

Defining quality is a multi-stakeholder issue

	<i>Quality is privately experienced</i>	<i>Quality is socially experienced</i>
<i>Quality is simple to evaluate</i>	Users know about quality	Politicians know about quality (+ 3 rd sector?)
<i>Quality is complex to evaluate</i>	Professionals know about quality (together with users)	No one group knows about quality - politicians must decide

Source: *Walsh, K (1991) Competitive Tendering for Local Authority Services - Initial Experiences. London: Department of the Environment.*

How best to consult?

The selected approach depends on

- the objectives of the consultation
- resources available for the consultation
- timescale
- capacity of the respondents

(1) Surveys

- + useful to assess satisfaction of users with services, in particular if survey is repeated**
- + results have high legitimacy if sample is representative**
- surveys are costly and require staff which is familiar with survey analysis**
- surveys give a passive role to respondents and make it difficult to trigger qualitative information (the number of open questions has to be limited)**

(2) Citizen panels

Representative sample of about 1000-2000 people whose views are sought regularly on different issues

- + Panel only needs to be constituted once (1/3 of the participants are renewed every two years)**
- + Panel allows quick consultations, in particular if done on-line**
- typically, there is no interaction between the agency and members of the panel**

(3) Focus groups

Focus groups consist of a small sample of users who may or may not be representative depending on the design of the focus group

- + focus groups allow to discuss more complex issues, the interaction between focus group participants can be used to produce constructive ideas for improvement**
- + focus groups do not cost much even though a small financial reward should be given to the participants**
- The moderator of the focus groups has to be independent and familiar with interview techniques**

Challenges to consultation

- How to reach out to potential users?
- How to consult with specific user groups (e.g. children, mentally disabled)
- How to convince staff to listen to non-professionals?

Planning your consultation

- **Initial identification of all relevant stakeholders, stakeholder groupings and stakeholder representatives** in relation to each service covered in the Service Charter. These could include internal and external stakeholders such as local councillors, service users, non-service users, minority groups (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, disability), community representatives, charity & voluntary sector groups or organisations etc.
- **Setting clear objectives** for consultation:
 - Establish why you are doing it
 - What information you want to find out
 - Who you are going to consult with and what you are going to ask
 - Which form of consultation will work with which stakeholder group (especially with hard-to-reach groups)
 - Finally, and probably most importantly, what you are going to do with the information.

Next steps

A. **Start to develop a consultation plan** before you leave the seminar

- for your staff
- for the target group(s) of the charter
- for other relevant stakeholder groups

Try to fit each plan on one page!

B. **Send the respective consultation plans, including questionnaires and description of the methodology to be used to Tomáš Zmeškal [zmeskal@mvcr.cz] or Mgr. Tereza Novotná [tnovotna@mvcr.cz] by 24 July 2006**