

# Joint Public Engagement Strategy for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Boards

## Scope of Joint Public Engagement Strategy

This is the first joint Public Engagement Strategy adopted by Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. It builds on the good work undertaken in both areas through Local Service Board Single Integrated Plans. Adoption of this strategy across Cwm Taf (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf) will represent commitment by all partners that make up the Local Service Boards to build on public engagement in the design, delivery and implementation of services.

## What do we aim to achieve?

The partners that make up the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Boards aim to achieve the kind of involvement that values people and communities and makes a difference, where everyone of all ages, whoever they are, can say:

*'My views are needed and considered in shaping services.'*

*'I can easily get involved in services that affect my community and me if I choose to.'*

*'My involvement is highly valued and it makes a difference.'*

In order to achieve this, partners will work towards engagement where:

- **People are recognised as assets:** transforming the perception of people from passive recipients of services to one where they are equal partners in designing and delivering services.
- **People's existing capabilities are built upon:** an approach that provides opportunities to recognise and grow people's capabilities and actively supports them to put these to use with individuals and communities.
- **There is a mutual 'give and take' relationship between people:** people are recognised for their contribution, which will enable us to work in an equal relationship between professionals and communities, where there are shared responsibilities and expectations.
- **Peer support is encouraged and developed:** networks between people and communities will allow the sharing of skills, knowledge and ideas.
- **People and communities are supported and facilitated:** people are able to develop and deliver services if they want to
- **There is a blurring of distinctions between service providers and people who use services:** more equal relationships develop where power and roles are shared (Adapted from NEF; 2010).

This is sometimes called "co-production", which means:

*"Delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change"* (NEF; 2008).

## Definition of Public Engagement

*"Public engagement is the process by which organisations invite citizens to get involved in **deliberation, dialogue and action** on issues that they care about. In short, 'at its core, public engagement is about citizens having a voice in the public decisions that impact their lives'".*

(WAO (2012), Public Agenda (2010).

These three features, of involvement relates to a broad spectrum of engagement:

Informing	Consulting	Deciding together (Involve)	Acting together (Collaborate)	Supporting local initiatives (Empower)
Giving a message but not receiving feedback or comment	Allowing a choice <i>between</i> pre-determined options with or without the opportunity to propose alternatives	Views shared and options generated jointly. A course of action agreed together	Working with others to make decisions and carry through action agreed	Supporting and empowering groups to develop and implement their own solutions



(Based on Ladder of Participation developed by Arnstein, S (1969)

The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are valuable and dependent on the decision to be made and the level of impact it has on people and communities. What is important is that:

- There is transparency and openness in the influence that people and communities have in decisions.
- Engagement follows the:
  - [National Principles for Public Participation](#);
  - [The National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation](#); and
  - Path towards the principles of co-production.

### United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Article 12

***'Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.'***

## Principles of Public Engagement

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf are committed to the National Principles for Public Participation and the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales:

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|---|--|
| 1. Engagement is designed to make a difference                  | 6. Make it easier for people to take part                        |
| 2. Encourage and enable everyone to be involved, if they choose | 7. Enable people to take part effectively                        |
| 3. Engagement is planned and delivered timely & appropriately   | 8. Engagement is given the right resources to be effective       |
| 4. Work with relevant partner organisations                     | 9. People are told the impact of their contribution              |
| 5. Information is jargon free, clear and understandable         | 10. Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement |

(Participation Cymru (2011))

## The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales

1. Children and young people have **information** about decisions that affect them
2. Children and young people have a **choice** to participate
3. Children and young people are **not discriminated** against
4. Children and young people are **respected**
5. Children and young people **get something out of participating**
6. Children and young people are given **feedback**
7. **Improving** how services work

(NAfW; 2007)

## Equality of Opportunity

Fundamental to the principles of community engagement is genuine equality of opportunity and access; making it as easy and as welcoming for all people to be included regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and the Welsh language.

Given that poverty can also lead to social exclusion, Local Service Board Partners are also committed to ensuring that opportunities to engage with services are accessible to people affected by poverty.

This means designing engagement opportunities in a way that values diversity.

All services recognise that people knowing their rights and responsibilities and being able to trust in local institutions to act fairly, is of critical importance to developing a strong sense of inclusion, belonging and community cohesion (*NAfW (2009)*).

## What we are going to do?

The Local Service Board partners in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf will ensure that this form of public engagement becomes core business. This means that public engagement is fundamental to how services are identified, designed, commissioned, delivered and evaluated.

**Action 1:** All services that impact upon the lives of people and communities will understand the need to engage in this way with the people that they serve.

**Action 2:** All services will use the National Principles of Public Engagement, National Children and Young People's Participation Standards and Equality of Opportunity Principles as a guide for involving people in their services and will work towards the Principles of Co-production.

**Action 3:** Strategic, corporate and operational plans will ensure all partners hold themselves to account in terms of public engagement, in the actions identified, facilitating co-productive approaches with people and communities to deliver better outcomes.

**Action 4:** Local Service Board partners will collaborate with community members and service users to develop an approach that supports people to shape services and the communities where they live and hold each other to account, while understanding each other's different constraints such as the resources, timescales and the commitment required from people who volunteer their time.

**Action 5:** Participation, engagement and feedback will be planned and timely, linking with identified participation leads within all services.

**Action 6:** Local Service Board Partners will measure the quality and impact of engagement with reference to the National Principles for Public Participation, the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards and the Principles of Co-production.

### Understanding each other

All partners will work together to communicate, understand and respect each other. For example:

- Respecting the commitment, availability and capacity of people who give their time voluntarily.
- Respecting organisational and resource constraints.

### How will we evaluate progress?

The key indicators will be incorporated into the following questions

1. I had the opportunity and know how to be involved if I choose
2. I felt supported and respected
3. I felt my views were valued
4. My involvement makes a difference

## Practical Guidance and Resources

### Contact any of the organisations below for further sources of information and support :

- Cwm Taf Engagement Hub: The Engagement Hub aims to provide a one stop shop for all engagement and consultation activity across both Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf and to encourage all partners to work together and pool resources when undertaking consultation or engagement. It provides a place for members of the public to view consultation and engagement work being undertaken across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, to have their say on these activities, to view feedback and to give us feedback on our consultations.

**Hub Link:** [www.cwmtafhub.co.uk](http://www.cwmtafhub.co.uk) **Telephone:** (01443) 424033 - Rhondda Cynon Taf or (01685) 725087 - Merthyr Tydfil

#### Postal Address

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
Headquarters, The Pavilions  
Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale  
Tonypany  
CF40 2XX

**Email:** [consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Castle Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 8AN

[consultation@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@merthyr.gov.uk)

- The County Voluntary Councils, representing community and voluntary organisations:
  - Rhondda Cynon Taff: Interlink RCT [www.interlink.org.uk](http://www.interlink.org.uk) 01443 846200
  - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough: Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil: [www.vamt.net](http://www.vamt.net) (01685) 353900
- Participation Cymru: [www.participationcymru.org.uk](http://www.participationcymru.org.uk)
- Participation Cymru Evaluation Toolkit: <http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles/evaluation-toolkit>
- NESTA: [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)
- Academi Wales: [www.academiwales.org.uk](http://www.academiwales.org.uk)
- NEW Economics Foundation : [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)
- Wales Audit Office: [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)
- Co-production Wales Co-production Wales: [www.allinthistogetherwales.wordpress.com/coproduction](http://www.allinthistogetherwales.wordpress.com/coproduction)