

EAST RENFREWSHIRE LNCT AGREEMENT
CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS

January 2004



Education Department

East Renfrewshire Council: Education Department

Standard Circulars 77(A) and 77(B)

To Heads of All Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

A report entitled "The Management of Quality Development in East Renfrewshire Council Education Department" was published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in November 1998. The review of communication was one of the points for action identified by HMI.

An authority wide survey was carried out to clarify the key issues in relation to consultative arrangements in the Education Department. The survey showed strong 'in principle' support for devolved decision making and consultation. It suggested that the majority of staff were broadly satisfied with the consultation they are offered on DSM and financial matters, although it identified a range of concerns about the operation of local decision making and consultation on other issues.

Standard Circular 77 was issued in November 1999. It sought to address a number of the issues raised through the survey by reasserting the principles of participative management. The paper, jointly produced by the authority and the teachers' side of the Joint Consultative Committee, sets out the expectations of the authority in relation to consultative arrangements.

In 2001/2 five focus groups were established for the purpose of self-evaluation as part of the QMiE process. As a result, the department further developed the range of methods used to communicate with and to consult staff, parents and pupils.

This self evaluation process was revisited in June 2003 with a further series of focus groups supported by an external facilitator. In terms of communication and consultation, the results for the most part were very encouraging. The issues raised resulted in the development of a protocol that sets out the relationship between the central management of the education service and its stakeholders in consultation and communication matters. This is now being issued as Standard Circular 77(A).

The existing Standard Circular 77 was revised as part of the process and is now being issued as Standard Circular 77(B). The circular sets out expectations in relation to consultation and communication at establishment level. Arrangements should also take account of the requirements set out in *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* that place particular responsibilities on school managements to enter into meaningful negotiations with teachers' representatives on aspects of teachers' working conditions. The arrangements for reaching agreement at school level are described in the East Renfrewshire *Local Agreement on the 35 Hour Working Week for Teachers*.

John Wilson
Director of Education
November 2003

East Renfrewshire Council: Education Department

Standard Circular 77(A)

To Heads of All Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Contents

Section 1	<u>Introduction</u>
Section 2	<u>Consultation</u>
	2.1 Corporate Guidelines
	2.2 Education Department Aims
	2.3 Key Principles
	2.4 Consultation Framework
	2.5 Guidelines on the Conduct of Internal Consultation Exercises
	2.6 Externally Driven Consultations
	2.7 Monitoring of Consultation Requests From External Agencies
Section 3	<u>Communication</u>
	3.1 Relationship Between Consultation and Communication
	3.2 Communication Methods
	3.3 Education Department Aims
	3.4 Key Principles
	3.5 Communication Framework
	3.6 Elected Members
	3.7 Parents and the Wider Community
	3.8 Staff
	3.9 Pupils and Young People
	3.10 Use of Technology
	3.11 E-mail
	3.12 E-Government
Section 4	<u>Monitoring and Evaluation</u>
Appendix 1	<u>Framework For Consultation and Communication</u>
Appendix 2	<u>Form To Request Approval to Conduct a Consultation Exercise</u>

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

“A Best Value service is responsive to the needs of its communities, citizens, customers and other stakeholders, and its plans and priorities are demonstrably based on such an understanding. It makes sure that it involves stakeholders in helping to identify policy and service priorities, including service availability, the standards of service to be delivered and improvements that are required.” (Audit Scotland)

SECTION 1- INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A strong focus on effective consultation and communication is a defining characteristic of any service that seeks continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery, is sensitive to the needs of its various stakeholders, and values the contribution they are able to make to the development and progress of the service.
- 1.2** This paper outlines the relationship between the central management of the education service and its stakeholders in consultation and communication matters. It complements Standard Circular 77(B): “Consultation and Communication Arrangements”, which presents the education department’s expectations in relation to consultation and communication at establishment level.

SECTION 2 - CONSULTATION

2.1 Corporate Guidelines

A commitment to consultation is integral to the ethos and spirit of the decision-making process within East Renfrewshire Council and the education department. To this end, the Council has published guidelines on public consultation in the form of the document, “Consulting and Involving the Community: A Good Practice Guide”. The guidelines emphasise:

“The Council is committed to providing better quality services and making them more cost-effective. This can be greatly facilitated by involving the public in the planning and development of services, monitoring public use and satisfaction with services, and testing our ideas and policies...Policies initiated without proper consultation can lead to time consuming explanations and confrontations at a later stage.”

2.2 Education Department Aims

In line with corporate guidelines, the department’s consultation framework aims:

- to provide opportunities for staff, users of the service and other stakeholders to contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy and provision within the education service.
- to obtain information on user satisfaction with the service, on future needs and on how the service can be improved

This requires constant attention to the range and appropriateness of approaches to the involvement of establishments, groups and individuals in shaping policies and services.

2.3 Key Principles

The department's approach to consultation is guided by the following key principles:

- the service should be clear about why it is consulting and should target relevant stakeholders
- a wide range of consultation mechanisms should be used, differentiated to the needs of stakeholder groups
- stakeholders should feel that they have genuine opportunities to make their voices heard at all levels of service operation, and that the service listens and takes account of their views
- every effort should be made to consult with "hard to reach" groups
- a balance should be maintained between formal and informal consultation
- opportunities for informal consultation are enhanced where those in management positions are considered approachable and accessible to staff and other stakeholders at all levels
- consultation exercises should be run efficiently in order that they provide value for money
- consultation exercises should result in clear recommendations for action that are implemented: failing this, clear feedback should be provided to explain why recommendations could not be implemented
- consultation should be built into the regular service planning/improvement planning and Best Value review cycle of the department

2.4 Consultation Framework

Consultation structures and strategy continue to evolve within the education department to ensure that all who work with and within the service have a voice in shaping service provision and direction. A wide range of methods and approaches is adopted (surveys, focus groups, meetings, questionnaires) and an extensive formal framework has emerged. This is presented in diagram form in appendix 1. Fuller details of the composition, management and reporting arrangements of key groups within the consultation structure are available for scrutiny.

2.5 Guidelines on the Conduct of Internal Consultation Exercises

Consultation can be costly in terms of time and material resources and it is vital that the process is well-managed and clearly focussed. In order to facilitate a strategic, cost-effective approach to consultation and to minimise the demands made on schools and individuals by an excess of consultation exercises, the following procedures will now apply:

- Within the department approval to conduct a consultation must be sought from the Head of Education Services (Staff and Continuing Education) who has overall responsibility for this aspect of the service. Requests to consult must be made formally, using the proforma appended to this circular, and submitted to the Head of Education Services who will be responsible for tabling all such requests at senior management team meetings.

- Each request should detail the objectives of the exercise, the target group, the methodology, the resource implications and the reporting arrangements.
- In reaching decisions on individual requests, reference will be made to the departmental calendar. All requests to consult with establishments will require to take account of the existing demands indicated in the calendar.

2.6 Externally Driven Consultations

There are many occasions of course when consultation exercises emanate from an external source such as the Scottish Executive, Learning and Teaching Scotland or some other national/ local body. Significant burdens can be imposed on the authority and/or establishments when a number of consultation requests, invariably uncoordinated, arrive within the same timeframe. In the case of externally driven consultation exercises, the department aims to minimise the impact on establishments by requesting cluster forums, focus groups and representative committees to advise on a response. This will not infringe the right of establishments or individuals to make their own responses, should they so wish. Schools will retain the option to make separate responses, but may opt to have their views reflected in the authority response.

- 2.7** All requests for consultation from local or national external agencies are recorded and monitored by the Senior Administrative Officer (Directorate Support). This facilitates an overall view of the quantity and timing of requests, enables the most appropriate internal consultation mechanism to be identified and permits a strategic response to externally generated exercises. Where requests are sent direct to schools, a note of the request should be e-mailed to the Senior Administrative Officer for information.

SECTION 3 - COMMUNICATION

- 3.1** Communication, being concerned with the transmission of information, can be viewed as a separate and distinct process from consultation which is concerned with sharing ideas and views. In practice, the relationship between the two processes is closely interwoven. Effective communication lies at the heart of effective consultation. Moreover, a significant overlap and interchange often occurs between the two processes with aspects of consultation mechanisms often used for communication purposes and vice-versa.

- 3.2** The department has given careful consideration to the range and appropriateness of approaches to communicating aims, policies, provision and performance to service users and other stakeholders, including staff and establishments, in liaison with East Renfrewshire's corporate communications unit.

3.3 Education Department Aims

A departmental framework has evolved which aims to:

- communicate information effectively to our main stakeholders – elected members, staff, pupils, parents and the wider community, including partner agencies.
- encourage feedback from stakeholders
- use the feedback information to improve service delivery
- incorporate a well-publicised and efficient system for responding to enquiries and complaints

- promote the image of the department as a good communicator

3.4 Key Principles

The departmental communications framework is built around the following principles:

- effective communication enables individuals to play a meaningful role in the service
- communication, far from being solely a top-down process, is a collective responsibility requiring all who work with and within the service to communicate effectively
- information at all times should be relevant, accurate, consistent, understandable, and delivered at the appropriate time
- to be accessible, relevant and meaningful to the needs of different groups of stakeholders, attention should be given to the choice of format or medium used to report information as well as to the style of written documents, including the use of plain English and/or ethnic minority/community languages and the avoidance of technical terms and jargon
- the communication medium should be “fit for purpose” in that it should enhance the accessibility of the information
- to ensure key messages are clearly understood and points of doubt clarified, opportunities for two-way communication and personalised discussion should be optimised
- while meetings can have many advantages (e.g. immediate transmission of messages to large audiences, face-to-face communication, the facility to convey complex information, to clarify and to receive feedback), they are an expensive medium of communication and it is a collective responsibility to ensure that meeting time is used as effectively as possible
- since a great deal of important information is shared within every organisation at the informal level, the main advantages of informal communication being that it is direct, immediate and efficient, it is important that a balance is struck between formal and informal communication

3.5 Communications Framework

3.6. Elected Members

In addition to providing information on request to elected members, the director reports to the education committee on a 6-week cycle. Reports cover all areas of service delivery, with the main categories being:

- policy and strategy
- service provision
- performance monitoring and reporting
- budget planning and monitoring

Regular briefing meetings are held with the Convener and Vice Convener for Education, and with the Opposition spokesperson for Education.

3.7 Parents and the Wider Community

The education department communicates with parents and the wider community on a range of issues relating to service provision, service policy and development, service performance and various administrative procedures. The means of communication

are varied to match the nature of the subject matter and to reflect the interests and needs of parents and the wider community, and include:

- school handbooks (information on the school, examination/testing results, school costs, school leaver destinations, transition arrangements, attendance procedures and statistics, etc.)
- school web sites
- school led consultation meetings; parent workshops; information meetings
- performance reports (progress against targets; standards and quality)
- information leaflets (local improvement plan; choice of school; transport; childcare facilities; school meals; bullying; etc.)
- parent forums - school board chairs; parents' consultative group; SEN parents; black and ethnic minority parents; parents' conference
- meetings of school boards/parents'associations
- East Renfrewshire web-site
- local press; ER Magazine
- posters in public places
- telephone (enquiries/complaints service; emergency helplines)
- video presentations, e.g. demonstrating new parents info line
- Parents information line (available in Urdu and Punjabi)
- Childcare Information Service
- Customer First (for general enquiries)
- Let Us Know (for complaints or compliments)

3.8 Staff

The department employs a range of formal and informal channels of communication to inform and to seek and exchange views with staff in establishments, central support services and headquarters on issues relating to service policy, provision and performance, and to working conditions. These include:

- standard circulars
- health and safety circulars
- circular letters (early years, primary, secondary, general)
- policy statements and guidelines
- school performance profiles
- Local Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers
- APT&C Joint Consultative Committee
- Health and Safety Committee
- booklets, leaflets and posters
- inservice catalogues, courses and teaching packs
- pastoral visits by directorate and other officers
- business meetings
- e-mail, memos and letters
- education department intranet
- staff forums e.g. equality co-ordinators, CPD co-ordinators, subject leaders, working groups, school office managers, probationer teachers.
- 'Insider' magazine
- 'Ernie' publication

In relation to centrally-employed staff, the range of communication mechanisms is additional to the internal organisation and administration of central services which

have been planned to facilitate the free flow of information, e.g. open plan layout of the offices in Barrhead, and the exchange of views and ideas within and across departmental teams – section meetings, principal officer meetings.

3.9 Pupils and Young People

The rights of young people to be consulted and listened to are enshrined in legislation. For example, the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 gives young people the right to be consulted about school development plans. Involving young people in decision making aims:

- to improve service delivery
- to empower young people
- to develop their skills

Pupils should be aware that genuine participation takes time and consultation and participation is not the same as getting what you want.

“Children are part of the community and the value, attitudes and beliefs of that community will affect them profoundly. It is important to raise awareness of our commitment to the rights of children to have a voice in issues affecting them”

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

In practice this involves:

- pupil councils in every school with representation from children as young as 3 years
- electronic surveys
- schools taking part in dialogue youth initiative
- the director’s forum for senior pupils

3.10 Use of Technology

This framework reflects current practice and existing mechanisms. It is anticipated, however, that the department’s commitment to harnessing emerging technologies will continue to support improvement in information provision in the future. Web-related technologies, for example, offer the advantages of making information available to parents, teachers and other partner agencies on a readily accessible basis and in attractive and stimulating formats.

The use of such technologies poses challenges to security and it becomes a collective responsibility to ensure that no information which could be potentially abused should appear on web-sites. Equally all staff require to be vigilant in ensuring that the basic measures of network security, as defined by corporate ICT department, are always observed.

3.11 E-mail

The wide availability of e-mail presents great opportunities for improving communications. Efficient and appropriate use of e-mail will be secured by adherence to the following guidance:

- e-mail transmissions should be concise

- e-mail distribution is best suited to small documents
- confidential or sensitive information should not be sent by e-mail
- e-mails should not normally be copied to individuals with no interest or stake in the message content
- routine acknowledgement of receipt of an e-mail is unnecessary

3.12 E-Government

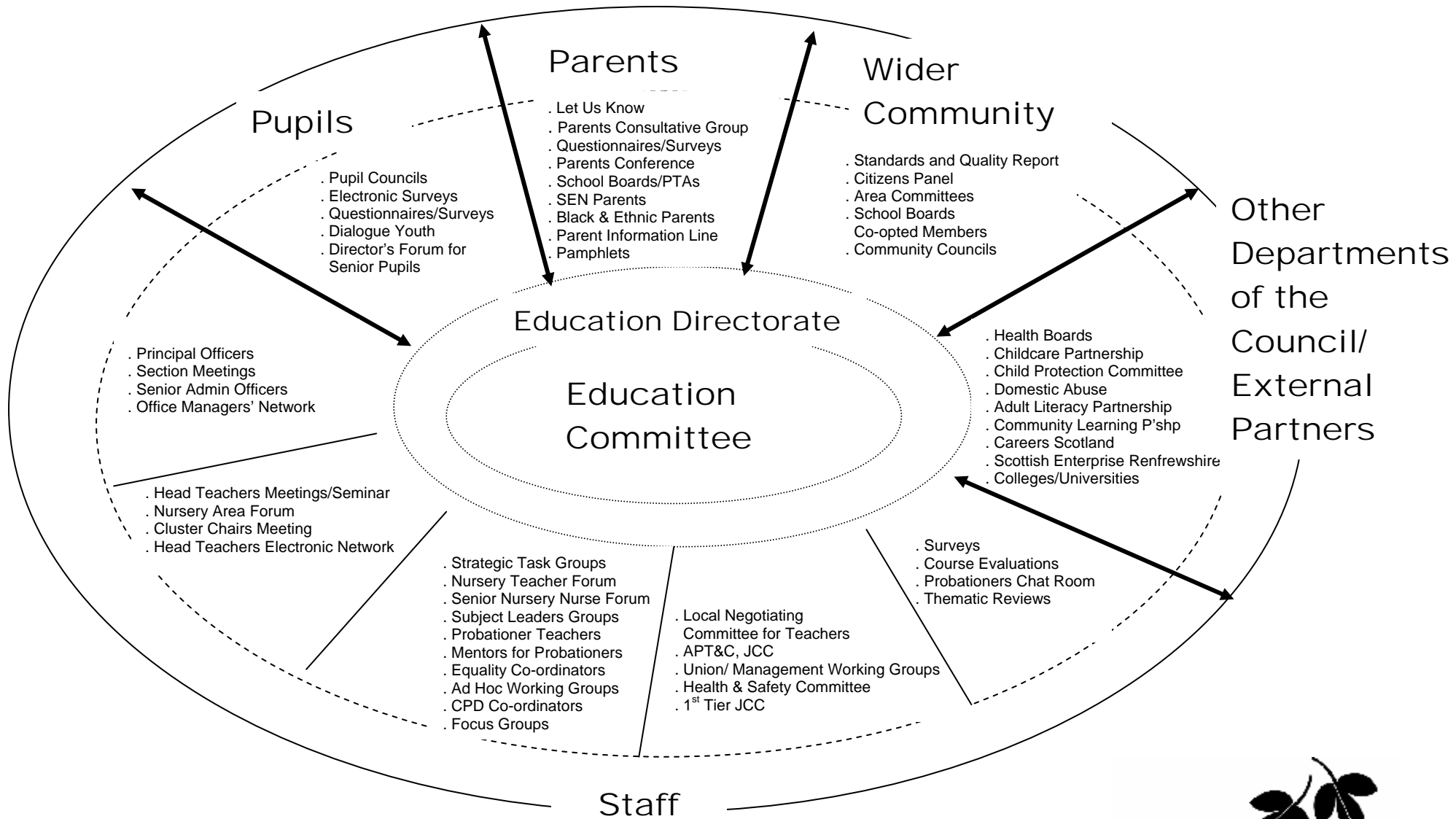
The government envisages all council services being deliverable electronically by 2005. Throughout local government a major review of services and the available supporting technology is currently under way. For example, Smartcards are being developed for use by all local residents, including young people. The department's overall strategy on communication will be framed within the corporate approach to e-government which emerges. This in turn will continue to require a continuing review of communication mechanisms between now and 2005.

SECTION 4 - MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 4.1 In the meantime, it remains the responsibility of service managers to monitor and evaluate on a day-to-day basis the implementation of the department's approach to consultation and communication within their own areas of responsibility, and to ensure that issues and problems which are unable to be resolved at that level are brought to the attention of the senior management team.
- 4.2 The senior management team will monitor and review the effectiveness of implementation of this circular.

John Wilson
Director of Education
November 2003

East Renfrewshire Framework for Consultation and Communication



REQUEST TO CONDUCT A CONSULTATION

NAME AND DESIGNATION OF PERSON MAKING REQUEST	
OBJECTIVE OF EXERCISE	
TARGET GROUP	
TIMESCALE (PROPOSED START DATE/FINISH DATE AND DURATION)	
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

REQUEST APPROVED BY SMT ON _____

REQUEST NOT APPROVED BECAUSE _____

East Renfrewshire Council: Education Department

Standard Circular 77(B)

To Heads of All Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS

Contents

Section 1 Principles of Participative Management

- 1.1 The Development Culture
- 1.2 Policy Making
- 1.3 Participative Management
- 1.4 The Meaning of Consultation

Section 2 Structures For Consultation and Communication

- 2.1 Senior Management Team
- 2.2 Meetings of Principal Teachers
- 2.3 Department/Faculty / Stage Meetings
- 2.4 Pupil Support Team Meetings
- 2.5 Meetings with Support Staff
- 2.6 Meetings with Union Representatives
- 2.7 Consultative Committees
- 2.8 Other Mechanisms

Section 3 DSM - Consultative Procedures

- 3.1 Staff Consultative Committee

Section 4 Helping and Hindering Influences

- 4.1 Helping Influences
- 4.2 Hindering Influences

Section 5 Arrangements at Establishment Level

- 5.1 Individual Arrangements

Introduction

East Renfrewshire Council is committed to participative management. It is vital that decision making processes involve the widest possible consultation with staff at all levels, both in the interests of the efficient management of the service and in order to increase the professional job satisfaction of staff.

SECTION 1 - PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

1.1 The Development Culture

A consultative climate takes time to achieve in a school. It incorporates elements of honesty and trust. It implies consultation which must be genuine and be seen to have effect. Schools that have a climate in which a development culture is evident are likely to have all or most of the following features:

- a) a clear collaborative and understood management structure with explicit remits for all posts of responsibility
- b) effective channels of communication both laterally and vertically within the school
- c) experience of collaborative and cooperative working both within and outwith the classroom
- d) an open and explicit resource allocation system
- e) clearly located responsibility for staff development within the school, with overall coordination probably lying with a senior member of staff, with responsibility for staff development as part of the remit of every member of staff in a promoted post
- f) a staff development needs identification system which is clear and which operates at individual, group and whole school levels
- g) experience of organising in-school staff development activities to meet identified school needs
- h) experience of techniques and processes of school self-evaluation which inform staff of development activities to be undertaken within the school
- i) school planning procedures that involve all members of staff
- j) clear school level procedures that are known to all staff

The head teacher and other staff in management positions have a critical role in creating a climate conducive to healthy relationships, high morale and the promotion of learning. Their attitude to and expectations of pupils staff and community; their dealings with them and on their behalf; their commitment to their welfare, advancement and satisfaction - all produce conditions in which learning and teaching can develop fully - or not.

However, all staff have a contribution to make to the development of a positive school climate. The way in which SMT and promoted staff undertake their management roles has a major impact on the extent to which other staff feel 'consulted' and/or feel they are able to

participate. Equally staffroom 'cynicism' can undermine enthusiasm and an individual's wish to participate. It is important that all staff feel involved and are listened to.

1.2 Policy Making

Individual schools and individual teachers enjoy discretion. It is necessary for the proper delivery of a professional service that they should do so. It is equally important however that they should contribute fully to the realisation of policy objectives established nationally or by the local authority.

It is the task of school management to ensure that national and local authority policy statements are fully discussed and imaginatively implemented within educational establishments. Open discussion involving staff at every level is essential if schools are to foster the participative style of management which is required.

Participation in decision making can serve to enhance self esteem and thereby improve motivation. It is likely that staff will feel a greater degree of commitment to policies which they have personally been involved in developing. Teachers as professionals should be entitled to contribute to debates on major policy issues.

1.3 Participative Management

In order to establish an open approach to management, the head teacher and/or appropriate manager must first ensure that proper opportunities exist for the views of all members of staff to be heard.

The consultative process should be one which enables the head teacher / manager not only to listen, but to explain policy decisions which have been taken. It should provide channels through which communication can take place among areas of learning, interests, departments, promoted and unpromoted teaching and support staff and all users of the school. School planning may be enhanced through the involvement of pupil councils and/or school boards in the framing of school policies.

In a small school, regular contact and informal discussion may meet most requirements. A large primary or a secondary school however is a complex organisation where all members of staff will feel involved in the process only if structures and procedures are established with the specific intention of promoting such involvement.

It is acknowledged that secondary schools have evolved numerous structures of committees and meetings designed to allow participation in decision making and to assist with communication. It is considered that there is no single model which is superior to others. Nevertheless it is expected that the elements described in Section 2 will feature in any satisfactory management structure. Head teachers and senior management will also wish to consider, taking account of the individual circumstances of their schools, how best to build upon this basic framework.

1.4 The Meaning of Consultation

It is important to be able to distinguish between matters for popular determination, and predetermined policies requiring implementation. The difference between consultation and the obtaining of agreement requires to be clearly emphasised.

It is important to involve all members of staff in the management process but equally important to maintain individual accountability. Within the individual school the head teacher is accountable to the authority. It thus follows that, though he/she should consult widely, the power of decision making remains with the head teacher on behalf of the authority.

The concept of participation in management therefore does not imply joint agreement. It rests instead upon decision making by an individual having taken into account the views of others obtained through the process of consultation. At all levels of management, failure to clarify such distinctions may result in frustration and discontent.

SECTION 2 - STRUCTURES FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

All schools require a decision making structure which promotes a participative style of management, assists communication and possesses an overall cohesiveness. In deciding the most appropriate structure for their individual circumstances, schools will take into account such factors as the size of the staff, the departmental structure and perhaps the physical layout of the building.

It is essential that the operation of the committee structure be given high priority and appropriate provision made in the timetable. It is particularly important in primary schools, where more limited non-contact time is available, that every effort is made by head teachers to provide staff with the opportunity to be involved in the consultative process.

2.1 Senior Management Team

All secondary schools, and larger primary schools have a management team consisting of the head teacher and his/her depute head teachers. In all schools the SMT should be functioning collectively as a management team responsible for the overall direction of policy and its implementation. It should meet regularly, conduct its business in accordance with a clear agenda and its decisions should be recorded in organised minutes which should be widely circulated.

In some schools an attempt has been made to broaden the base of certain meetings of the senior management team by involving other members of staff. In a number of primary schools, principal teachers have been incorporated into extended management teams. A system of extended meetings may offer a useful forum for consultation as well as providing a form of management training.

2.2 Meetings of Principal Teachers

Meetings of principal teachers provide a mechanism for consultation and communication. Although different arrangements are likely to apply in different sectors or schools, it is essential that an opportunity should exist for discussion among all those directly responsible for leading the curriculum. It is important that agendas and minutes should be organised so as to allow for efficient communication, both with those attending and with other members of staff.

2.3 Department/Faculty / Stage Meetings

Departmental/faculty meetings in secondary schools and stage meetings in primary schools provide a channel for participation in management decisions. Meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis, and organised formally with agendas and minutes which should be submitted to the head teacher or senior management team. Meetings should be used as a means of broadening discussion of whole school policies and of assisting two-way communication on more general matters. It is therefore good practice for a senior promoted member of staff to liaise with each department/faculty / stage and to be in regular attendance at departmental/faculty meetings.

2.4 Pupil Support Team Meetings

Regular meetings of pupil support staff should take place. It is important that these should be attended by at least one member of the senior management team. Pupil support staff should have the opportunity to meet periodically with appropriate professional colleagues such as careers advisers, psychologists and social workers. As in the case of departmental and other meetings, meetings of the pupil support team should be scheduled on a regular basis. The business should be conducted through a formal agenda and decisions should be recorded and passed to the senior management team.

2.5 Meetings with Support Staff

Meetings with support staff should take place on a regular basis, at least one per term, and be organised formally with agendas and minutes which should be submitted to the senior management team. Meetings may be with specific groups of support staff eg clerical and administrative staff, or special needs assistants, or may include a range of staff where matters for discussion do not relate to specific groups. Such meetings should be used as a means of broadening discussion of whole school policies and of assisting two-way communication on more general issues. It is therefore good practice for a member of the SMT to be in attendance at these meetings.

2.6 Meetings with Union Representatives

Regular formal meetings with the elected union representatives of both teaching and support staff are essential for effective communication. These should have agendas to which all parties can contribute items. Meetings should normally be minuted and these minutes circulated to all relevant staff. The frequency of meetings should be mutually agreed, but no less than 4 meetings per session is strongly recommended. Monthly meetings timetabled at the start of each school year would constitute a model of good practice.

Such procedures can help defuse problems before they become acute. The development of good working relationships between management and union representatives should be fostered by both sides. The national SNCT and devolved JNCT agreements should be implemented following discussion at school level as appropriate. The annual 35 hour collegiate agreements, required as part of the national agreement *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, must be negotiated via the teaching union representative/management model. To enable the smooth working of in-school industrial relations, it is important that union representatives are afforded the facility time and resources as described in local agreements.

Joint trade union/safety officer inspections of the school should take place at least once and preferably twice a session. Ongoing health and safety monitoring should occur throughout the session, in addition to informal ongoing communication on these matters.

2.7 Consultative Committees

Increasingly schools are establishing consultative committees for a variety of purposes. Committees may have responsibility for such matters as DSM, school planning, developing inter disciplinary courses or overseeing some aspect of school policy. The membership should, where possible, be drawn from all ranks within the staff. Normally elections should take place for membership of consultative committees. Consultative committees should generally have a limited life, in order to increase the number of teachers involved in policy making. In order to function effectively, committees should be set up with clear and specific remits. Business should be conducted through a formal agenda and minutes should be freely available.

2.8 Other Mechanisms

- Although the above are formal structures, the climate of the school should encourage professional discussion and debate among teachers at all levels. Constructive criticism in a supportive environment can be positively helpful. It can assist in empowering staff and in developing the professional role of the teacher.
- Staff bulletin - daily or weekly. Everyone ought to be free to contribute. Circulation to all staff.
- Opportunities for whole staff meetings can be created during in-service days, during collegiate time, by extending the interval by 5 minutes on a fortnightly or weekly basis.
- Memoranda may be used where detail is required and written information or consultation is desirable
- Informal visits by SMT to the staffroom or to departments to meet with staff
- Limited life school improvement groups eg discipline, marketing etc

SECTION 3 DSM CONSULTATIVE PROCEDURES

Transparency is important, and a key element of the DSM scheme is the establishment of formal consultation arrangements involving both teaching and support personnel. In all but very small primary schools the formal mechanism should include the setting up of an elected staff committee, which should wherever possible, involve at least one member of the support staff.

3.1 The Staff Consultative Committee **should:**

- Meet as and when the committee deem appropriate, with a minimum of 2 meetings per year
- Produce and circulate to school staff agenda and minutes of each meeting

- Limit discussion to revenue spend
- Participate in the consultation of all virement proposals and advise the head teacher on such proposals. (It is important that fully documented consultation procedures are observed to ensure that virement proposals are well founded and within the Scheme of Delegation. It is anticipated that the consultation process will contribute to a fuller understanding among staff of the relationship between finance and the school curriculum.)
- Retain the head teacher as ex officio member
- Decide on the length of the term of office of its members

The Staff Consultative Committee **may**:

- Invite the Senior Administrative Officer to attend meetings
- Set up a mechanism to allow staff to make bids for funding

SECTION 4 - HELPING AND HINDERING INFLUENCES

One product of the authority-wide survey described in the introduction to communication and consultation arrangements was an analysis of staffs' perceptions of factors which help or hinder the consultation process. A number of the issues identified are set out below:

4.1 Helping Influences

The consultation and negotiation process is made more effective where:

- SMT is approachable
- head teachers demonstrate a willingness to consult genuinely
- regular and effective staff meetings take place
- issues raised at department meetings receive feedback from SMT - even although the solution is not favourable to the department. An explanation, showing that notice has been taken, is given to the department
- there is clear access for all staff to the head teacher - interviews if time allows
- specific groups eg curricular forum, assessment group etc are given opportunity and status
- a clear link with senior management at department meetings
- regular feedback is provided on all initiatives
- consultation is viewed as two-way and honest - leads to trust
- effective communications exist and are maintained
- consultation takes place on all relevant matters, but only relevant matters
- time is available
- sensible time scale permits 'real' consultation
- good relationships exist
- in negotiations, recognition of differing roles, i.e. union representative/manager, and issues are not personalised
- expertise of staff is recognised
- staff feel they are being listened to
- staff feel that what they say/do is valued by SMT and/or authority
- draft policy documents/information accessible to all
- friendly and supportive staff who are positive about participation
- everyone's opinion taken seriously and acted upon - if not, told why not

4.2 Hindering Influences

The consultation and negotiation process is less effective where:

- there is an autocratic management style
- lack of communication / information flow
- decisions are taken without a clear rationale being given
- there is a 'them' and 'us' scenario
- 'cliques' exist whose views are listened to
- staff are unwilling to participate
- decisions have already been taken - staff are informed not consulted
- lack of feedback/response when views are expressed
- unrealistic timescales
- PTs do not hold department meetings
- lack of accountability
- unfriendly staff relationships
- staff views not taken seriously when offering opinion
- access to documentation/information is limited/selective
- HT is resistant to participative mechanisms
- rigorous emphasis on line management / hierarchical management
- SMT always out of school
- bullying
- teachers are interrupted by senior staff when giving point of view
- where consultative committees merely rubber stamp decisions of SMT
- where elected members of consultative committees fight their own subject corner
- where meetings are badly managed
- in negotiations, the legitimacy of the union representatives' roles and viewpoints are questioned and issues are personalised

SECTION 5 - ARRANGEMENTS AT ESTABLISHMENT LEVEL

This paper was produced by a working group, comprising representatives of the directorate, teaching and support staff trade union representatives, representatives from school based staff and management. It sets out a broad consensus in relation to the organisation of consultation and communication arrangements at establishment level.

5.1 Individual Arrangements

Educational establishments are invited to use this paper, in conjunction with East Renfrewshire's *Local Agreement on the 35 Hour Working Week for Teachers*, as a document for discussion in framing their individual arrangements for consultation, communication and negotiation.

John Wilson
 Director of Education
 November 2003