



# Community Consultants Network

Giving You a Voice!

## Introduction to the Community Consultants Network

The Community Consultants Network (CCN) has recently been set up as a part of Lewisham's commitment to promoting parental engagement. The CCN evolved from a training programme commissioned by the Lewisham's Children and Young Peoples services in 2007 and delivered by Parenting UK.

The initial programme attracted 14 individuals (parents) who completed a levels 2 training course aimed at giving parents a voice; five parents from this cohort worked towards accreditation and have now achieved a recognised qualification with the Open College Network (ONC).

Additionally, and as a direct result of undertaking the training, four parents have secure full or part-time employment in Lewisham.

The CCN management board comprises of six trained and/ or qualified community consultants. This group has worked with designated community development consultants to set up a network that will:

- Promotes parental engagement
- Train parents to act as consultants and advocates representing all sections of the local community
- Appropriately engage parents in the development of strategies, policies and services for families and children
- Develop learning pathways and opportunities for parent and carers
- Build confidence, skills and esteem of parents and carers
- Enhance parenting skills
- Increase employability of parents and carers
- Act as an information resource for other parents
- Represent parents at meetings
- Lead on local consultations

## The Community Consultants Training Programme

The Community Consultants training programme aims to enable parents to take control of their lives and to help other parents to do likewise.

The training enables parents to have an input into initiatives in their local community including schools, Children's Centre's, Extended Schools, health planning and community representation.

Training is offered in short modules, consisting of five days training, covering knowing your borough, community consultant's skills, research and evaluation techniques, presentation skills, recruiting parents and working safely with parents and families.

Once recruited and trained the volunteer parents will be known as, Community Consultants, and can then carry out aspects of work for which they have been trained.

**The advantages of the programme are:**

- The Community Consultants will be a valuable resource for their local community. Since they are local parents, it is highly likely that they will be involved in local schools, family centre's and play groups; thus building local capacity.
- Parents themselves will benefit greatly from training and the work they undertake. It will enable them to help other parents and it gives them transferable and marketable skills.
- Parent's self-esteem is boosted; having parents with high self-esteem is the first step to children having high self-esteem.
- In areas where a large number of community languages are spoken, the only hope of extending services to all parents is to enable representative speakers of minority languages who also speak English, to undertake training. They can then help other speakers of the minority language to access essential services.
- It provides a pool of representatives to sit on local committees.
- The training enables more parents to access services. This applies especially to parents who find services hard to reach in difficult circumstances who would be wary of approaches from professionals.

## **Outcomes**

By the end of the training programme Learners are able to:

- Understand local issues
- Consult local parents
- Engage with and advocate on behalf of other parents
- Provide information to other parents
- Give presentations and speak at meetings or forums
- Represent parents at meetings
- Lead on local consultations

## **Quality Assurance**

Planned evaluation and review of the programme will take place at the end of each programme to address any quality issues and to improve the quality of the programme.

Evaluation and Review will include input from all learners. Learners will complete initial, on course and final evaluation forms. In addition they will complete an evaluation form at the end of each session of the programme as well as some face to face interviews with the evaluators.

The Community Consultants Network will produce an annual report which will include:

- Recruitment and retention statistics
- Summary of participant evaluation and feedback
- Trainer evaluation
- Summary of Internal/Moderation feedback
- Learner achievement statistics
- Action Plan for development of programme where appropriate
- Learner progression statistics

The evaluation is an integral part of the programme; therefore course participants will need to inform the trainers immediately if they foresee any problems in contributing to the evaluation process.