

Virtual Consultation Framework

Background

The current Covid-19 lockdown situation, with many staff working from home and restrictions on face to face meetings, means that the consultation methods most often used within ACC are not available just now. Both unions and management recognise, nonetheless, that there is still an imperative to ensure that service redesigns proceed wherever possible. To that end, this framework has been developed in conjunction with union colleagues to set out the options available in terms of consultation during the pandemic. Whilst consultation must be meaningful, there is no requirement for this to take place via face to face meetings. As such, the proposals outlined in this framework- which have been discussed with ACAS- meet the requirements for meaningful consultation.

Managers should ensure that when setting revised consultation timelines and applying the provisions of this framework, they continue to adhere to the provisions of the agreed Formal Consultation Guidance on the link below:

[Formal Consultation Guidance](#)

Please note: Current Scottish Government guidance does not allow meetings of more than 2 individuals to take place; as the situation develops and this guidance is reviewed, this position will change and this framework will be kept under review in line with this guidance.

The framework sets out 4 stages, with a variety of options which can be adapted to suit the specific circumstances of the staff group affected.

Chief Officer meeting via Teams with Trade Unions

The purpose of this meeting is to review the consultation that has taken place to date, and to agree the next steps and timelines, taking into consideration that these might need to be extended due to the current circumstances. This approach should be confirmed via email.



Communication with Employees

Once the next steps and timeline have been agreed, the Chief Officer and relevant managers will communicate the consultation plan to the employees affected. This communication will include details of the Business Case, highlighting any changes which have been made since this was first circulated. A variety of options are available to managers to share this information including:

- E-mail
- Teams channels
- Webinars
- Posting paper copies



Consultation

It is essential that, notwithstanding the current restrictions, meaningful consultation is undertaken on the proposals being made in the Business Cases. Whilst it is not currently possible to hold face to face meetings with groups of staff and their union reps, managers can use a number of different tools to

ensure that all employees have the opportunity to engage in the consultation process and provide their feedback.

The consultation should also include consideration into how next stages of the redesign process are implemented in line with the guidance applicable at the time.

Managers should select the most appropriate methods according to the circumstances, but may wish to use some or all of the following:

- Teams meetings – these can also be recorded (with the agreement of all participants) to allow employees to view them at a time that is more convenient for them. Meetings can also be arranged for individuals who may wish to discuss their own personal circumstances.
- Teams channels/Chat
- Shared documents
- “Drop in” sessions on Teams – where a manager/Chief Officer sets up a Teams meeting and individual or groups of employees can dial in to discuss particular issues/ask questions
- Conference calls
- E-mail
- Written feedback provided in hard copy if no other options are possible



Approval/Implementation

Once the consultation process is complete, the Business Case will be approved, and an implementation plan will be drawn up and communicated.

Where the implementation requires processes such as Job Matching to be undertaken, consideration should be given to the most appropriate means of carrying this out, with digital meetings being used where agreed between manager, the employee and, where appropriate, his/her union representative, to allow the implementation to be progressed. Please tie in with People & Organisation for these scenarios.