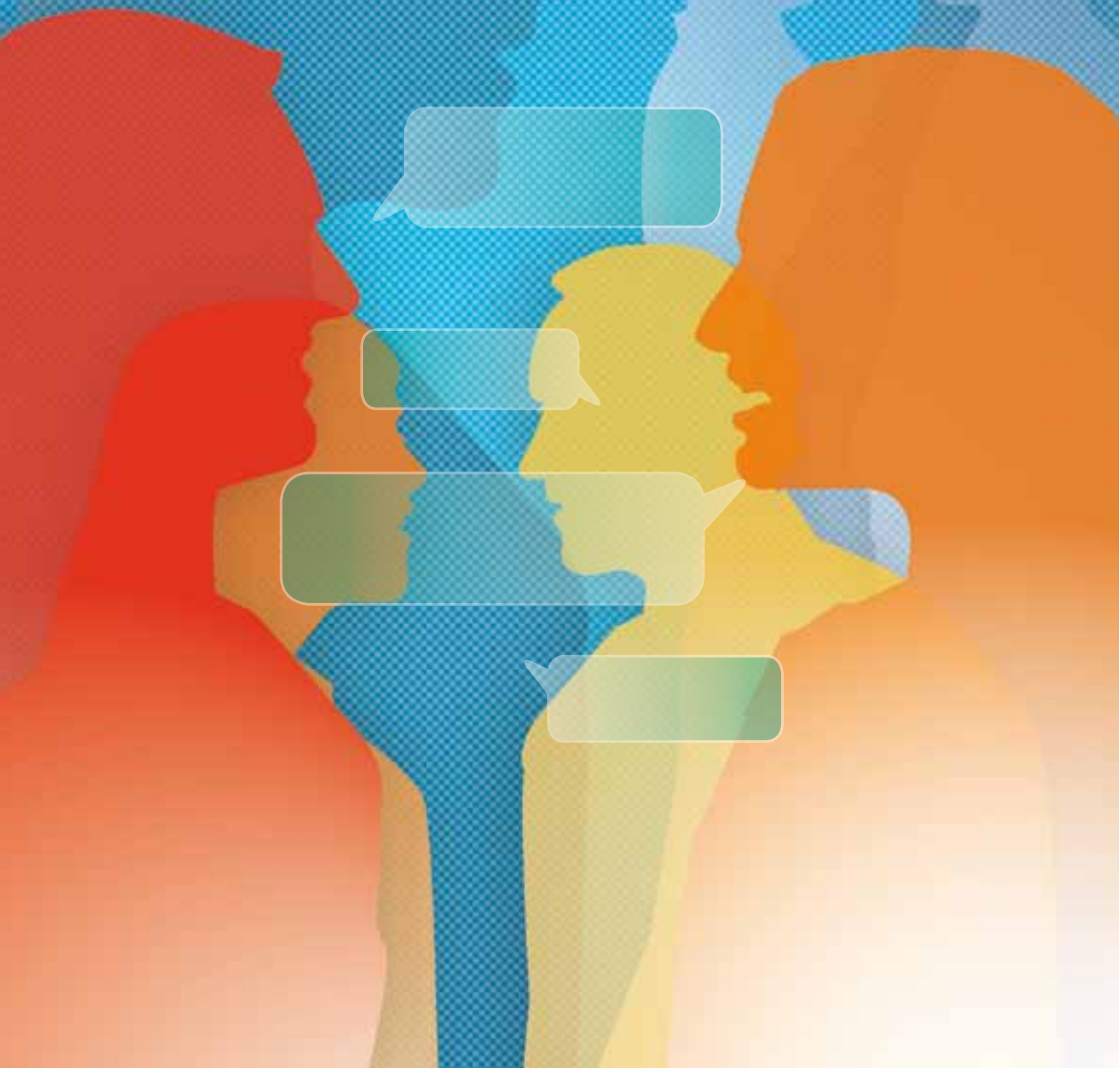


Making Your Voice Heard

# A step-by-step guide to making a submission



Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Childcare Committee, Dún Laoghaire VEC, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Community and Voluntary Forum, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Southside Partnership and Southside Traveller Action Group (STAG) prepared this leaflet for the Social Inclusion Measures Committee. It is an action in the DLR Better Services for Travellers Plan 2007-2008.



# What Is a submission?

A submission is a statement of your group's views, opinions or knowledge on a particular plan or policy being considered by a state agency, government department or County Council (e.g. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council). A submission is usually a written document. It can be a letter or an email. Submissions are sometimes made using videotapes or audiotapes.



# Why make a submission?

Submissions are made to state agencies and government departments so that you and your group can influence programmes, plans and strategies that are currently running or that are planned for the future (e.g. the Traveller Accommodation Programme).

to have your voice or your group opinions heard

to say what works well

to help improve a programme

to say what is needed in the future

to include new suggestions and ideas

to make sure we learn from past mistakes



# How to make a submission

to a state agency or government department

It is very important to prepare and plan well so that your submission is going to make a real impact. There are four stages in making a submission.

# 1. The Research and Consultation Stage

This is the stage when you and your group gather all the information connected to the programme or policy. To do this you need to identify and talk with a range of people and groups connected to the programme or policy.

## You need to ask some important questions:

- › What are the key issues that your group wishes to communicate to the agency?
- › What has the agency said or not said and done or not done up to now on these issues?
- › Which other communities or groups are dealing with similar issues?
- › How have they addressed these issues?
- › What are the options or possible solutions we can suggest?



# 2. The Writing Stage

This is the stage where you write the formal submission. The submission needs to be very clear and focused, so that the organisation you are writing to know who you are, how you identified the issues and why you want to make the submission. If possible, the submission should be typed and be provided electronically by email attachment. Below is a sample submission template that you could use:

## Sample Submission Template

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the purpose of the submission - explain who your group is and why you are submitting these ideas and opinions.
2. What is the current situation - describe how you have arrived at your current situation and include any legal advice, opinions, past experiences or cases you have discovered in stage one.
3. How did you prepare the submission - who was consulted, when, what was said?
4. Make a conclusion - give a brief summary of what happened in the past, based on all the information you have gathered about the plan or the policy
5. Make a recommendation - a recommendation is an idea that can be used for the future to make the programme or policy work better.



## Useful tips when writing a submission on request:

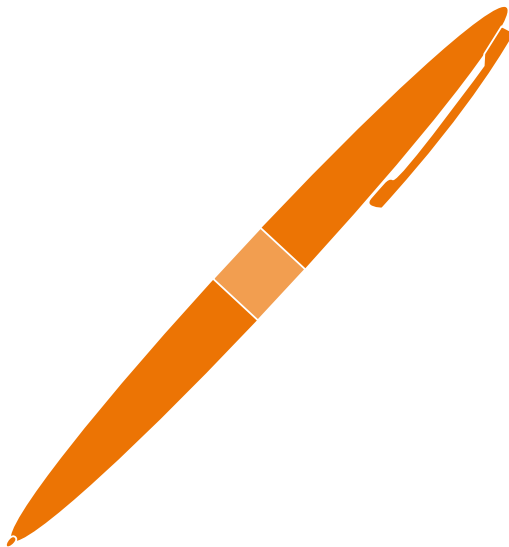
› Repeat the request that the agency has made in the introduction / purpose of the submission.

› Thank the authority for the opportunity to make a submission.

› Make sure the description of the situation is relevant to the highlighted questions.

› Watch timeframes. Make sure you know the exact time (hour, day, month) when the deadline for submission is due. Many groups have been hugely disappointed by missing a deadline by minutes!

› Always make sure that the agency acknowledges receipt of your group's submission. This receipt proves that the submission is 'in the system'. Usually a reference number is given which is very useful in follow-up communication with the authority.



# 3. The Lobbying Stage

This is the stage when you and your group try to influence the decision-makers on behalf of your group based on your key submission points. You need to identify the agencies and key people to lobby.

## **Which agency or section is involved in the programme or policy you are trying to influence?**

For example:

- The local authority (DLRCC)
- A government agency such as FAS, HSE, VEC etc.
- A national department such as Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government etc.

## **Who are the people that will make the final decision on the new programme or policy?**

For example:

- Officials
- Councillors
- TDs

- Arrange meetings with those who will influence the programme or policy to make them aware of your group's experiences, needs, rights and opinions.
- Use all the information you have gathered during the consultation for these meetings.
- Discuss, explain and also listen to why or why not your suggestion is to be included in the new programme or policy.
- These one-on-one communications are important. You can confirm whether or not your submissions have been considered and what significance are being attached to your submission.



## Useful tips when lobbying:

- › Always start discussions with a positive tone.
- › Propose ideas and ways where there is a benefit for both the group and the decision maker (person you wish to influence).
- › Listen and value the other groups interests and opinions.
- › Questions could be asked on how the decision maker intends to balance all interests.
- › Difficult decisions tend to be unpopular. The decision maker can often be blamed for having to make these difficult decisions and for causing some people to have to deal with changes that they did not want. Try to 'sympathise' with this dilemma for the decision-maker.
- › If the strategy is to be more confrontational in discussions, perhaps because of frustrations with previous decisions, more preparation should go into predicting the consequences.



# 4. The Evaluation and Feedback Stage

This is the stage when you and your community group reflect on the submission and the process, what you learned and how to go forward in the future.

**You need to ask some important questions:**

> What worked well?

> What didn't work well?

> What did we set out to achieve at the start?

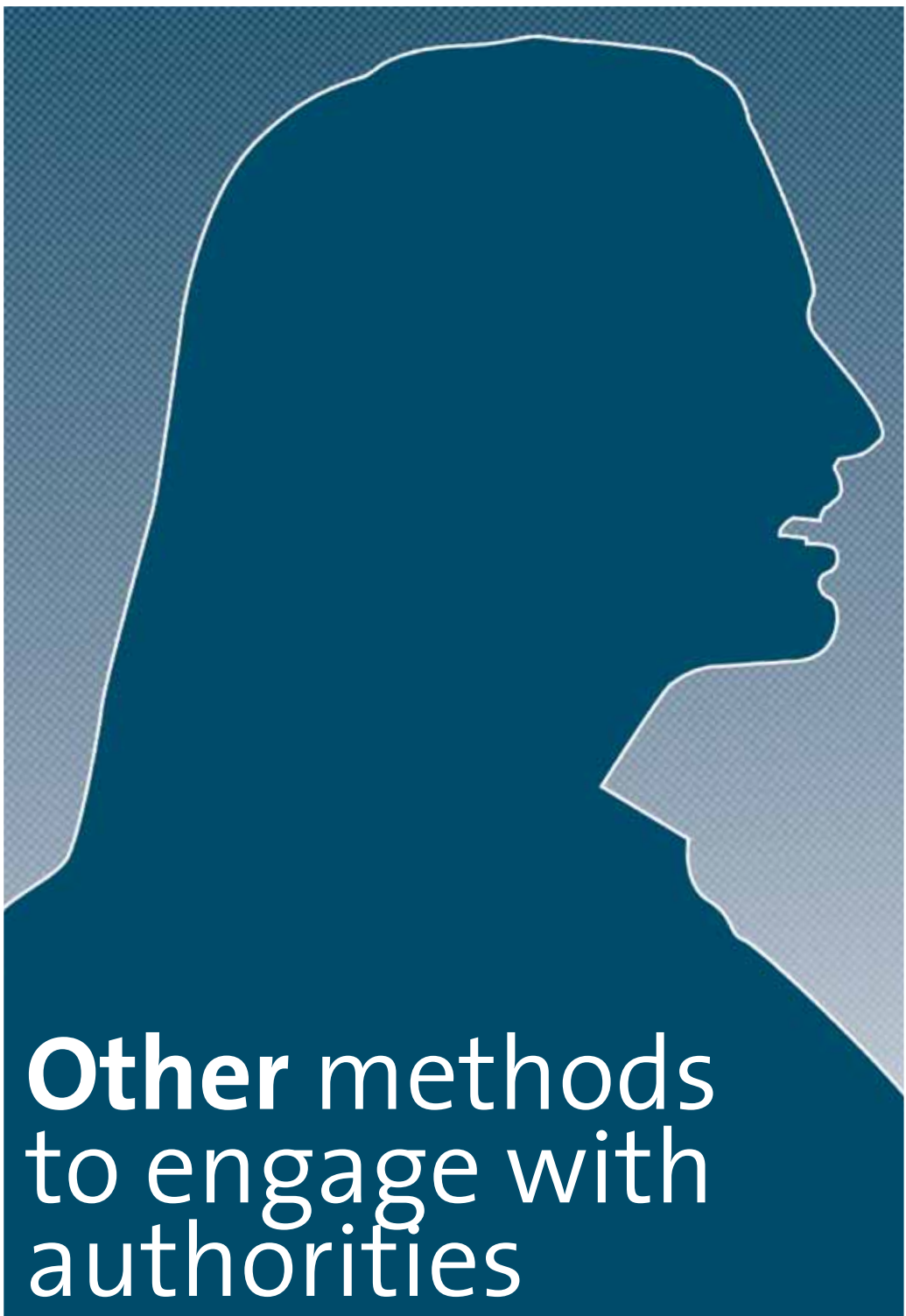
> Where are we now?

> What did we learn about the situation and process that will be important in a future submission?

> What can we do ourselves that we previously would have relied on others to do?

> Sometimes the final outcome may not be what we hoped for. What alternative methods besides submissions to agencies can we use if we feel it was not successful?

> Are we satisfied with the final outcome?



**Other methods  
to engage with  
authorities**

**There are also other methods to engage with agencies that could be considered depending on the situation. These methods also follow a similar process to making a submission.**

**A deputation** is an organised meeting with Councillors and officials where a number of issues raised by a community group are discussed. Generally a deputation is made by a representation of the community group, one or two people. A deputation should include:

- the history of the problem;
- the effect of the problem and
- give your solution to the problem.

**A petition** is a specific proposal by a number of individuals on a single issue. The petition is in writing and signed by all the individuals. A petition is often submitted to object to a decision or pending decision.

If you would like more information about the **Better Services for Travellers Plan for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown** please contact **Rebekah Fozzard**, Social Inclusion Officer:  
**[rfozzard@dlrcoco.ie](mailto:rfozzard@dlrcoco.ie) / 01-2047924.**



Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown  
County Childcare Committee



Get Laoghaire  
VEC

