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The monthly summary of  
consultation matters by  
Consultation Guru –

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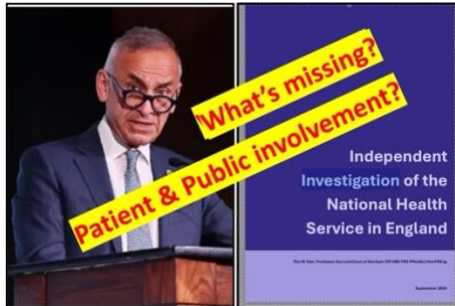


# Consultation Catch-up

With the distressing closure of The Consultation Institute, I have been particularly keen to ensure that there are ways to promote good solid *best practice*, and I'm delighted to see several emerging initiatives that can help. In addition to my friends in the *Association of Consultation and Engagement Professionals (ACEP)*, I now see that several of the excellent Associates who used to deliver advice on behalf of the Institute are getting together to offer free drop-in clinics online to discuss consultation issues. The first is on Wed 9<sup>th</sup> Oct at 12.00noon. [Register here.](#)

## Best of the Blogs

### What's Missing from the Darzi Report? The failure of patient and public involvement? (Blog 79)



Reactions to Lord Darzi's Report into the NHS have been positive but I argue that alongside the many reasons for the state of the NHS, (austerity/Lansley's reforms/Treasury cap on capital/ COVID-19/No social care fix etc), there has been a failure of patient & public involvement. What I mean is that all the worthy people representing their communities have – like the rest of us – acquiesced in the decade-long decline of the service. Instead of being campaigners and advocates for MORE and BETTER, they have been reduced to defending the service from proposals for LESS and WORSE. Although Darzi is an optimist, TOP-DOWN decisions have not worked. We need far more BOTTOM-UP pressure. Without public support and public involvement, the chances of restoring the NHS to the state we need are slim.

### Two TRACTIVITY Articles from the series: Anticipating the Stakeholder Summit What exactly do your stakeholders think? (Blog 78)



Over 20 years plus ... and I've yet to find many organisations who know enough about what their stakeholders really think. Basically, we don't ask them often enough. In this article I discuss the polite conspiracy of ignorance as we mutually deceive each other and the reasons why stakeholder panels are effective at tracking sentiment. I also tackle the difficulties of monitoring the views of transitory and dormant stakeholders – as well as those who may be our strongest advocates!

### Why Stakeholder Management Best Practice is so Elusive?



Why is there such a dearth of literature on what exactly constitutes success in stakeholder management? Because the relationship between procedural *best practice* and substantive outcomes is often very indirect. Indeed, for many organisations, there are few incentives to talk about what works! Despite this, I explore some common sense activities that should help, but conclude that there is no substitute to recruiting really good, well trained staff who really understand stakeholder management.

**On Page 2 this month, the failure to consult the Chagossian islanders, the OFSTED 'Big Listen', Martyn's Law and another 'almost-consultation'! Plus 'Trust at 10' reviewed.**

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## Instant insights

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- A glaring omission from the Government's announcement about ceding sovereignty of the **Chagos Islands** to Mauritius was any reference to [consulting the Chagossians themselves](#). The BBC picked it up as did many politicians who disagree. No doubt top-level superpower politics made this agreement inevitable as the the UK has fewer friends post-BREXIT, but surely there is a matter of principle here – and one which we may one day need to invoke to protect citizens of Gibraltar ...or the Falklands.
- We are seeing a spate of analyses and responses emerging from significant consultations dating from the Sunak administration. Among the more newsworthy was the comprehensive response to the [OFSTED 'Big Listen' exercise](#). The Education Secretary has already announced her acceptance of the headline finding against single-word judgements by school inspectors, but there is rather a lot to digest from the 16,033 responses. [Critics claim](#) that the questions were designed to avoid too radical a change. Was ever thus? The other legacy consultation was the latest one on Martyn's law – legislation that had to be postponed because of the July election. The results of the [Standard Tier consultation](#) that ended in March continues to show high levels of anxiety by those who run small places of worship and village halls, that the burdens of the **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill** will cause them major problems. Parliamentarians will have a tough time striking the right balance between public safety and ease of regulation but anyone who doubts the complexity should look at the [72-page Impact Assessment](#) and the calculation that shows that approx 155,000 premises with 200-799 person capacities might incur £330 anticipated costs per year. I suspect consultations will continue.

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## Straws in the wind

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- The **Equality & Human Rights Commission** has published a rather well-written document called: [How to consider equality in policy-making: a 10-step Guide for public bodies in England](#). At first glance, it looks useful, but the real issue for me is whether it obliges policy-makers to test their thinking through honest and meaningful consultation with key stakeholders. Maybe a Blog soon!
- Yet another variant of 'Not Quite a consultation' has emerged. A **Planning Reform Working Paper** that looks and feels very much like a ten-question consultation has appeared under the title [BROWNFIELD PASSPORT: MAKING THE MOST OF URBAN LAND](#). It boasts this magnificent piece of prose:
 

*"Please note that this is not a formal consultation and is instead intended to inform discussions with the sector, to determine whether and how to take these proposals forward. Alongside these discussions, we welcome responses to the series of questions that are posed at the end of the paper. There is no formal deadline, and we will confirm next steps on these proposals in due course."*

What intrigues me is precisely what aspects of the rules of consultation do civil servants find so toxic and likely to derail their carefully-designed dialogues.

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## The Reading List

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No doubt provoked by those who claimed that her 49 days in office provided insufficient material, Anthony Seldon has produced a magisterial account of how many things went wrong for Liz Truss. In fact, everything! He postulates ten critical success factors for PMs and traces her story by reference to her failures to match the requirements of any of them. The irony is that amid this bleak landscape of arrogant certitude and a refusal to listen to advice, lie a few shafts of sunlight – attributes which could have stood her in better stead had she made fewer mistakes. She is credited with knowing exactly what she wanted to do, but not how to get there or how to carry the country with her. For a forensic analysis of how not to perform the role, this is a rapid, rip-roaring ride to an inevitable conclusion. Having excoriated her immediate predecessor for a different set of failures, Seldon must look forward to being able to write a more generous assessment of a Prime Minister. I wonder if Rishi Sunak will provide him with such an opportunity?

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