

Service User Involvement Partnership – Tip sheet No 2

1.0 Involving Service Users in Service User Involvement (SUI) Group

1.1 Preparing the way

1.2 The following is a suggested practical checklist for both services and service users (SUI) to consider when thinking of establishing/joining a SUI group:

Practical questions for service to Consider

- Do we have a budget for expenses/subsistence?
- Do we have access to appropriate accommodation?
- Can we provide childcare?
- Do we have the staff capacity to support a SU group?
- Do we know as a service how we want this group to link in with service development?
- How frequently can we support this group to meet?
- How will we deal with service users who are under the influence?
- Eligibility criteria for the group?
- How will service promote the group?
- How will service encourage SU to attend the group?
- How will service respond/support training or literacy needs?

Practical questions for service users to consider

- Will I receive adequate expenses?
- Will I receive a subsistence allowance?
- Is childcare an issue for me when attending the proposed group?
- How much time can I commit to this group?
- Will involvement with this group impact on my treatment/support?
- How long can I be part of the group for?
- What is this group for?
- How will this group benefit me?
- Is the group open or closed membership?
- Will other service users be under the influence?
- Who is eligible to join?
- Will my keyworker know what I am saying in the group?
- Will my support needs be met by the service?
- Will my training needs be met by the service?
- How will I be encouraged to be part of the group?
- Who do I inform if I can't make the group?

It is vital that both the service and service users have a shared understanding of the practical implications of a SUI group before the actual group is established.

It would be good practice to bring service representatives and service users together to address these practical questions so that there is clarity on what is expected.

2.0 Communication

2.1 Once the way has been prepared, then the focus needs to turn to communication in the group. Both service and staff need to be clear on:

- Establishing the time and frequency of the meeting
- Establishing an open and transparent mechanism for setting the agenda to allow for both staff and service users to put items on the agenda
- Establishing chairing and minute taking responsibilities
- How are the meetings recorded, who will have access to the records and by what means?
- How will staff and service users as well as the wider organisation be informed of the meeting
- Who will be responsible for "action" points that came up at SU meetings – identifying who's responsible for taking actions forward, how to chase up on actions etc

3.0 Outcomes

3.1 Once the structure of the group and communication channels has been established and the group has started to meet it is vital to reflect on how will we know that the group is working? Some indicators of success may be:

- Increased confidence of service users attending the group
- Regular SU attendance
- Increased confidence in staff team that SUI is internalised into the service
- Direct changes to service provision as a result of the SUI group
- Feedback on why change can not be implemented
- Benefits to staff and service users who are not directly involved in the group

4.0 Service User Involvement Policy

4.1 Once staff and service users have met and discussed the above, in addition to any further concerns not listed, the agreed action can be written up to form a local service policy, which should be seen as a working document and reviewed on a regular basis (perhaps annually) to ensure that the group is developed and improved on over time.

5.0 Evidencing the SU Group

5.1 Whatever form the service user involvement group takes, make sure that all aspects of its activity are clearly recorded, perhaps in a service user involvement file. Examples might include, records of attendance at relevant training or meetings (staff and service users), minutes of meetings, copies of training and staff service user development activity undertaken, copies of contribution to newsletters, recording of suggestions and service response, including changes made to the service as a result of service user views.

Produced by the Service User Involvement Partnership Greater Glasgow and Clyde (SUIP)
Please contact SUIP on **0141 572 6700** at Alcohol Focus Scotland
or email suip@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk
Or on **0141 221 1175** at the Scottish Drugs forum