

## **Service User Involvement Partnership – Tip sheet No 4**

### **1.0 Conducting Service User Consultation**

1.1 Consultation with service users can take place using a wide variety of formats:

- Focus Group
- Interview
- Questionnaire/Survey
- Graffiti Wall/Shout Board
- Suggestion Box
- Participatory Appraisal
- Open Space
- World Cafe

1.2 Regardless of the format of consultation used, there are some key areas of planning and consideration that must take place to ensure that the experience is positive for both the consultant and the participants.

### **2.0 Areas for Consideration**

#### *2.1 Venue*

Ensure that the venue for your consultation is accessible for all participants of the exercise. You should consider whether the venue is easy to find, whether it is easy to direct people to it and the physical attributes of the building i.e. stairs, accessible entrances etc.

The comfort of participants within the venue is important. Consideration should be given to whether the venue is welcoming, and if it is fit for purpose for the activity you plan to carry out.

#### *2.2 Transport*

Participants in a consultation tend to be giving their time on a voluntary basis. It is therefore important to ensure that they are not out of pocket for any expenses incurred in relation to the activity. If you require participants to make their own way to your venue, you should ensure that you are in a position to reimburse any travel expenses they incur.

Additionally, you should consider ease of access of the venue with regards to public transport – local bus routes, nearest transport stations etc. Participants should be provided with as much information and support as possible on getting to and from the venue.

### 2.3 Catering

Water, tea and coffee should be provided as a minimum.

### 2.4 Language

It is important to pitch the information you are providing appropriately for your participants. Consider the language used, the use of jargon and abbreviations and try where possible to provide information in plain English.

### 2.5 Explanation

Ensure that your participants know what they are involved in:

- Why is the consultation being conducted?
- What is it about?
- Who is conducting the consultation?
- Where is the information gathered going?
- What are the timescales involved?

It is good practice to provide both written information on the exercise as well as explaining the above as part of the consultation process.

In most cases it is necessary to gain consent from the participants to go ahead with the consultation and to use the information that they provide in any written reports. A briefing can be provided to the participants that they are asked to sign if they consent to being involved and to show that they understand what they are being involved in.

### 2.6 Feedback

It is essential that all participants are provided with feedback on their input including what information was gathered, what happened to the information and what response there has been.

You should be clear with participants at the start of the consultation how and when they should expect to receive feedback.

### 2.7 Thank You

It is important to ensure that you acknowledge the input that your participants have given.

You may want to consider offering participants a token of thanks for their participation such as a gift voucher for a nominal amount. Sometimes this can act as an incentive to encourage people to participate.