

"Tips Sheet" No.5 Service User Surveys and Questionnaires

1. This "tips sheet" was developed in response to demand from alcohol and drugs services in Greater Glasgow and Clyde for some assistance in developing or reviewing service user surveys or questionnaires.
2. The information here is arranged in two sections; general considerations for services/agencies and specific pointers.
3. **General Considerations**
 - Services should consider carefully a number of questions, most centrally ***who and what is to be surveyed and why do you want to carry out the survey/questionnaire?***
 - *Where does the intended survey or system of surveys, sit within the service's other service user involvement methods and quality assurance arrangements?*
 - *Do service users want to be surveyed? What are their preferred methods of involvement with the service?*
 - *What information is it essential to get at? The temptation is always to seek wider information that would be "interesting"!*
 - *Can you seek out examples from relevant like services? This will help inform your thinking and choices – things that appeal to you and things you would not choose to use.*
 - *What time and capacity has the intended audience to respond? How accessible is the questionnaire? What is known about attention span of the individual, reading abilities, the setting in which it will be completed?*
 - *Who else may be asking the individual the same questions? Avoid duplication and survey fatigue for the service user!*

- *What capacity has the service/agency to carry out, analyse and report on the survey findings?*
- *Who else needs to know the results apart from service users and staff?*
- *What aspects of service can you change in response to demand or service user response? If the answer is "No" don't ask!*

4. **Specific Pointers**

These are some suggestions for consideration when compiling a questionnaire to seek the views and opinions of service users.

When considering the structure of the questionnaire and type(s) of questions:

- State the purpose of the questionnaire and how to complete and return it. This might be best done on a front sheet to the form.
- Always include a clear "thank you" to service users for taking the time to complete the survey.
- State how the information gathered will be used to improve the service and who will get to see it.
- Assure respondents of anonymity and confidentiality should they wish, whilst allowing service users to give their name if they want (they might want a personalised response to what they have to say).
- Consider the "look" of the document – if cluttered it may be off putting – try to make it clear, bright and appealing – people generally like some illustrations – don't be afraid to use humour!
- Ensure questions, illustrations and language is appropriate to the target audience.
- Consider having questions on one side only as "back page" questions may be missed.
- Put "easy" questions at the start to encourage completion.
- Keep wording clear and simple, avoiding jargon or acronyms.
- Group similar questions together – don't "mix and match".
- The order of the questions should be logical and predictable.
- Ensure language is clear – check for possible or unintended ambiguities
- Keep questions brief and avoid multiple or "roll up" questions.
- Avoid leading or biasing by either wording or tone.
- Allow for "don't know" responses

- Put “open” questions towards the end of the questionnaire.
- Allow sufficient space for responses to “open” questions.
- Make it clear how closed questions are to be completed (tick / circle) – if using a scale for responses consider a 4 or 6 point scale to encourage a more definite choice – uneven numbers tend to invoke a mid- point bias.
- Pre- test questionnaire with appropriate pilot group and act on feedback – do service users consider the questions appropriate and relevant? Can they identify useful gaps in the questionnaire?
- Decide in advance a period after which to review the survey or questionnaire for relevance and usefulness. Always seek to involve service users in any review.
- Decide how the information is going to be fed back. If you can feedback to individuals make sure there is a space for preferred contact details.

5. **Evidencing service user involvement**

A perceived strength of using surveys and / or questionnaires may be the high level of anonymity they provide. In such cases the use of an evaluation document may prove useful. This way, participants can comment on how they found the use of the questionnaire or how it might be improved. Alternatively, if service user involvement activity is recorded in a specific file then the names of those who have participated can be captured in this way. This assumes of course, that such methods have been employed with agreed service user buy in

If the survey or questionnaire has been designed to include the name of participants, then a copy of the completed document could be included in the case file.

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