



## **52. Service User Involvement (Engagement and Participation) Policy**

Those who access Washington Mind services do so without being made to feel obliged to take part in committees, policy making etc.

### **Definitions**

Service user - this term refers to someone who has had "direct personal experience of mental distress". They may or may not have accessed services directly from Washington Mind or from statutory mental health services.

Beneficiary – this term refers to 'a service user' who is currently accessing services from Washington Mind.

Involvement – this term refers to the active engagement and participation of those who access services in their own care and/or the planning, delivery and development of our services.

### **Aims:**

It is Washington Mind's aim to involve those who access services at all levels in the organisation including the forming and review of policies, planning, development and running of services through representation on the Executive Committee.

We aim to do this by:

Actively encouraging different ways to get involved at a level that suits the individual

- Providing training opportunities to equip people with the skills to fully participate in all areas of involvement.
- Using "User friendly" language at all times.
- Assisting people to do things for themselves rather than doing things for/to people
- Fully consulting and involving service users in the forming of policy, planning, governance, recruitment development and delivery of services.
- Empowering service users to make decisions about their own lives, services they receive and the community in which they live.
- Creating a "needs led" service where it is more important that views and ideas flow "from the bottom up" rather than from "the top down".
- Ensuring consultation is an ongoing, two way process. It should not be seen as a series of "one off exercises".
- Ensuring those who access services have access to clearly understandable information about Washington Mind, the services it provides and the organisation's policies and procedures. This information should also be explained verbally to service users to ensure that its contents and implications are understood.

**The promotion of genuine user involvement will remain an ongoing priority. Washington Mind stresses that it is the responsibility of staff, volunteers, service users**



**and committee member to ensure that this policy is put into practice. It is therefore everyone's duty to ensure that everyone who wishes to, has a copy of the policy and that the policy is explained to people to ensure that they understand its content and implications.**

### **How can you get involved?**

The views of all of the people who use our services are important to us and there are various ways you can be involved and have your voice heard:

- Speak directly to a trustee, staff member or volunteer
- Email Washington Mind: [info@washingtonmind.org.uk](mailto:info@washingtonmind.org.uk)
- Write to Washington Mind, The Life House, Grasmere Terrace. Columbia, Washington, NE38 7LP
- Contribute to group meetings
- Use suggestion box provided
- Comments Book
- Notice Board
- Complete services evaluation form
- Speak directly to a Sub Group member
- Attend a consultation event
- Follow the Complaints procedure
- Join the Executive Committee, a group meeting, focus group, steering group or sub group see below:

### **Group Meetings:**

Group meetings take place bi-monthly during Open Mind sessions and are open to all Washington Mind service users, staff and volunteers. All are welcome to contribute to the meeting agenda and minutes of the meeting are available

Typical agenda items include:

- Updates to schedule
- Future plans for events and activities
- What you said /What we did (Feedback from evaluations /suggestions etc.)
- Issues and concerns
- Idea sharing

### **Focus/Steering or Sub Groups**

Various groups are established to work on specific projects, examples include; policy development, service development e.g. therapeutic group programme and service user forum. Washington Mind draws upon the strengths and experiences of service users to contribute to all areas of organisational development.

### **Executive Committee:**

Washington Mind believes it is of fundamental importance that those who access services have a proper voice on the Executive Committee. It is our intention that a minimum of one



third of the trustees should be people who are or who have been users of mental health services.

Service users will be actively encouraged and supported in performing this role by staff and trustees.

Washington Mind will be aware of the impact of mental health conditions and will offer support to those trustees who need to step down from their role.

Throughout the year, on a bi-monthly basis the service user lead representative will be invited to attend a Friends of Washington Mind meeting to discuss involvement in the governance and development of Washington Mind. A standard agenda item is in place on all trustee meetings. There is a service user lead on the executive committee.

### **Recruitment of Staff**

Service users will be involved fully in the recruitment of paid staff and volunteers.

This will include involvement in the following:

- Decisions regarding job descriptions/person specifications
- Wording and placement of advertisements
- Short-listing of applicants
- Interviewing of applicants

### **Delivering Training**

Service users have the opportunity to deliver training to trustees, staff, volunteers in the 'Living with...' model of training. The 'Living with...model' provides training from the view point of those who have experienced mental distress themselves, this model allows for the 'expert by experience' to share their experiences of living with a mental distress, addiction, stressful life events or by providing insight from the viewpoint of the 'carer' role. This training aims to promote greater understanding and acceptance.

### **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of every worker, volunteer, service user and committee member to ensure that this policy is put into practice. It is therefore everyone's duty to ensure that everyone has access to a copy of the policy and that the policy is explained to people to ensure that they understand its content and implications.

### **Monitoring Engagement and Participation (Involvement)**

To monitor the effectiveness of service user involvement trustees will review the following aims:

Washington Mind will...


1. Be clear about aims and scope of participation at outset of process



2. Identify and engage any existing local or regional user initiatives
3. Communicate to potential participants in appropriate, accessible ways
4. Allocate sufficient resources to actively address service user priorities
5. Be responsive to the perspectives, priorities, needs and aims of local service users
6. Be aware of the power relations between service users and professionals
7. Consider ways to prevent or creatively manage any conflict together with the participants
8. Remain aware of the need to share information and decision-making power
9. Value the knowledge and expertise of people who use services
10. Ensure expertise can be communicated in ways that service users find comfortable
11. Create diverse, flexible, continuous participation strategies integrated with organisational decision making structures
12. Strategies should be appropriate, planned with service users and inclusive of new ways of working and communicating
13. Monitor and evaluate the impact of participation as well as the process
14. Plan with participants how feedback will be communicated to them and how to respond further if required
15. Think creatively and consult on different ways to involve people who may otherwise be marginalised from the process
16. Ensure that all staff understand the principles and practice of service user participation and are empowered by organisational structures, processes and management strategies to make it a success

Those who have engaged/participated with Washington Mind will be asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of their involvement in a project. This will enable us to gain feedback regarding their level of involvement and how they feel this influenced service development.



<b>[Ref] Policy</b>	52. Service User Involvement (Engagement and Participation) Policy	<b>File location</b>	S:\13. Policies\Current Policies and Procedures
<b>Approved</b>	December 2021	<b>Signed</b> <b>Jacqui Reeves</b> <b>(Manager)</b>	
<b>Next review</b>	December 2024	<b>Signed</b> <b>Bernie Cornish</b> <b>(Chairperson)</b>	