



For better  
mental health

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## User involvement policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to the Executive Committee, staff and volunteers within Sheffield Mind.

### 2. STATEMENT OF INTENT

2.1 Sheffield Mind is committed to ensuring progress towards meaningful user involvement in all aspects of our work.

2.2 The commitment requires all Executive Committee, staff and volunteers to encourage and support user involvement.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 **Service User:** is defined, for the purpose of this policy as “someone who has direct personal experience of mental distress”. This may or may not mean a user or ex user of Sheffield Mind, or of statutory mental health services.

3.2 **Beneficiary:** is defined as “a service user who is currently, or has in the pass, benefitted from attendance at one of the services of Sheffield Mind”. Where distinction needs to be made between current and ex beneficiaries, this will be made clear in the policy.

### 4. CONTEXT

4.1 Sheffield Mind is committed to the user involvement policy because it:

- Builds on our core values of Diversity, Client Centredness, and Supportiveness.
- Supports our affiliation agreement and contracts with funders.
- Is within the spirit of our Equal Opportunities Policy and associated legislation.
- Reflects the guidance and best practice in modern mental health care.

4.2 In addition to supporting organisational values and objectives the policy aims to build on local experience and national evidence that demonstrates that genuine user involvement can positively:

- promote self esteem of those who take part
- raise user expectations
- promote partnerships to improve service quality
- reduce conflict and exclusion
- facilitate development of skills and experience which is valued by users
- awake us to ideas and needs which we may not have thought of ourselves

### 5. VALUES

Users should have the opportunity:

- To be able to have a say in and make informed choices about the individual support they receive.
- To have information available about their services and rights, including complaints, boundaries, Health and Safety etc.
- To be listened to by staff/volunteers
- To be supported by staff who work in an anti discriminatory manner
- To have a say in and be able to influence Sheffield Mind’s service development, i.e. planning, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, training and recruitment of staff.



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## **6. APPROACH**

Sheffield Mind is committed to offer opportunities for involvement at all stages in a person's contact with the organisation. Service user involvement may be related to a person's individual support, the organisation or making representation to other mental health organisations or bodies on a Sheffield Mind's behalf.

## **7. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Whatever the level or extent of involvement, the commitment by Sheffield Mind to the User Involvement Policy enhances the rights of users. The organisation is keen to ensure that this strengthening of relationships with users is balanced. This means that there may be increased responsibilities upon the user who is actively involved and these should be thoroughly discussed with them. The relationship needs to be underpinned by mutual respect and openness of communication

## **8. USERS INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR OWN SERVICE**

8.1 Individual support is planned in partnership with people who use our services.

8.2 To promote good practice staff must ensure that all users:

- Are involved in defining what they want out of the services they are offered at Sheffield Mind
- Are involved in regular reviews of plans.
- Are able to talk to someone other than their primary worker (counsellor or group worker) if they have a difficulty that cannot be resolved with the person concerned
- Are aware of the complaints procedures available.

## **9. USER INVOLVEMENT IN THE BUSINESS OF SHEFFIELD MIND**

This section outlines areas for potential involvement. It is our goal to increase the range of opportunities for involvement further.

### **9.1 Recruitment and selection**

There should be user involvement in all recruitment of staff. Sheffield Mind aims to build on positive foundations and increase opportunities in this area to achieve trained user representation on interview panels and involvement in job specification development. Where necessary, user representatives will be offered training, support and expenses to facilitate this process.

### **9.2 Evaluation and monitoring**

The organisation aims to work with users to continually improve service quality. To build on existing experience the organisation needs to work with users to determine appropriate techniques for monitoring each project area, and support interested beneficiaries and ex beneficiaries in being involved in offering feedback on Sheffield Mind's services.

(Techniques for evaluation and monitoring may include: questionnaires, interviews, suggestion box, exit interviews and discussion meetings/forums.)



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### 9.3 Governance

This refers to the overall management of Sheffield Mind. The Executive Committee has ultimate responsibility for governance but staff has a responsibility to ensure that services are performing to an agreed standard and potential for improvement identified.

Users and ex beneficiaries who wish to become involved in the organisation's governance (Executive Committee) should be informed what this involves and, when required, receive training and support to enable them to achieve this. Due consideration needs to be taken when, in the course of the duties of ex beneficiaries as members of the Executive Committee, such members may come into contact with staff or volunteers with whom they had a working relationship while they were current beneficiaries, but this should not be allowed to preclude their position as member of the committee.

Users should be encouraged to take part in strategic planning events, policymaking and activities that determine the vision and direction of Sheffield Mind's development.

### 9.4 Involvement in Training of Staff

Users may be able to access internal or external training opportunities to support them to develop skills and participate in services.

A programme for delivery of training in User Involvement is to be developed.

### 9.5 Users becoming Staff or Volunteers

Sheffield Mind believes that service users can bring unique understanding and empathy to staff/volunteer roles and encourages service users to apply for posts and opportunities. However, due to the nature of the counselling and group work services, current beneficiaries are not normally considered as staff or volunteers. Current and ex beneficiaries interested in volunteering in the field should have the circumstances discussed with them, and should be signposted to a similar role elsewhere.

Every application is subject to the Equal Opportunities processes.

## 10. HOW SERVICE USERS WILL BE SUPPORTED TO BECOME INVOLVED

User meetings will be held regularly.

There needs to be continued development of:

- 1) How we inform users about involvement opportunities i.e. events, publicity
- 2) How we support service users who may become pressured or stressed through involvement activities, e.g. supervision
- 3) How we support service users to improve or develop the skills needed for genuine involvement
- 4) How we identify with users any boundaries or restrictions to involvement and why they exist.
- 5) Payment arrangements –we will assertively try to ensure that participating users are not out of pocket.



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## **11. REVIEW OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed every three years and further actions to progress the policy aims will be identified. Identified actions will become part of the organisation's Business Planning objectives as appropriate.

11.1 As the policy is reviewed an audit of user involvement activities across the organisation will be completed to determine degree of progress and encourage sharing of learning between projects. The audit of user activities and subsequent recommendations for policy update will be presented to the Executive Committee.