



# Service User Involvement: Values and Principles Policy Statement

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## **1. The purpose of this document**

This Values and Principles Policy is designed to provide a framework for service user involvement (SUI) across Liverpool Waves of Hope, which is agreed by all partners and integrated within all service user related activities. This has been developed for the following reasons:

- a) Following a reflection by service user representatives on progress to date and reviewing the findings of the local evaluation, where it was felt that more still needs to be done to develop SUI in a more meaningful and systematic way, and to achieve democratisation of services.
- b) To bring together best practice from the delivery partner's service user policies, in order to develop one cohesive and concise document. This is not to replace individual plans, as each organisation will have its own specific requirements; rather it is to ensure that all partners sign up to key overarching principles and values within an overarching policy, together with common language, that can be monitored across the breadth of the programme. It puts into action some of the key elements regarding SUI in the service specification, and can only positively impact upon SUI participation.
- c) To provide a structured foundation to strengthen the service user voice in such a way that it becomes an important element of the legacy from Waves of Hope. This means the development of an informed user voice which can add value to the commissioning, design and delivery of services across the city.
- d) To provide a framework which, although in this case specifically related to multiple needs, can be transferable to service user interaction across various policy agendas within the city, therefore achieving wider strategic resonance.

This policy statement should be reviewed in early 2018 and 2019, in partnership with service users, to ensure that it is still fit for practice, is being implemented in practice, and is in a position to be utilised by other agencies across Liverpool as part of the programme's legacy.

## **2. What is Service User Involvement?**

SUI is where people using a service are actively involved in the cycle of how the service is planned, delivered and evaluated. Meaningful SUI is where there is full involvement at each stage of this cycle, a systematic process that is embedded across all areas of a service. Moreover, involvement should not be confused with engagement, which is frequently the case. Real SUI places service users at the heart of an organisation's or place's agenda for shaping and improving the delivery of its services. Ultimately SUI, and its direct links with co-design, co-production and co-commissioning, should in future be an intrinsic part of the governance of public services.<sup>1</sup>

### **Benefits of SUI for service users**

- Increased skills and confidence, and empowers individuals;
- Opportunities to build social networks and reduce isolation;
- Build services that are more suited to their specific needs;
- Helps people to feel valued and respected;
- Giving people ownership of services that are provided for them;
- Builds a practical understanding of services and the processes behind them – consequently allowing service users to provide a knowledgeable view on what works and does not work.

### **Benefits of SUI for the partnership**

- A cultural shift in services which creates a constant feedback loop and evolution of delivery;
- Responsive services focused around sustainable pathways, which reflect the range of needs of service users, and are of improved quality;
- Wider benefits, such as being powerful advocates for service reform, promoting understanding amongst other service users, and acting as ambassadors;
- Improves ability to respond to future funding opportunities, providing a more rounded and holistic view;
- Helps in reducing stigma, and encouraging shared values and learning;
- Develops informed voice which can be important in shaping future policy and commissioning decisions.

### **A case for SUI that is rooted in evidence and evolving policy**

There is a growing recognition that people are able to deal with situations more effectively when they have strong, positive relationships, and increasingly this is informing planning in

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that SUI also needs to involve those with wider lived experience, who are not necessarily direct recipients of Waves of Hope services. This is crucial in providing broader informed input in the design, commissioning and delivery of services and initiatives – essentially further supporting the developing of the service user voice. It requires a shift across the partnership in the current perception of SUI, realising the benefits of further support for the programme that can come from those who are not necessarily directly connected to it.

the design and delivery of services. An example of this is 'Realising the Value',<sup>2</sup> a combined initiative between Nesta and the Health Foundation (funded by NHS England), which was focused on enabling people to take a more active role in their health and care. This recognised that utilising asset based personal and community centred approaches, and recalibrating relationships with services based on this, is central to change and sustainability of services. Similarly, the 'People Powered Health'<sup>3</sup> programme was focused around ordering care around the user, whilst mobilising people to recognise their assets, strengths and abilities, not just their needs.

Although more than just SUI, the above has been important in helping the NHS and Public Health England, evolve their view on how policy makers and practitioners should work with people who access services, and SUI is a key part of this. It provides important evidence which illustrates the importance of SUI as a fundamental component of public service transformation.

### **3. How service users can be involved**

There are many ways in which service users can be involved within any type of programme, from passive to fully proactive approaches. Liverpool Waves of Hope's project and business plans highlight the need for service user involvement to be central to driving the project forward, and the learning from this needing to support, inform and drive systems change. This reflects a fundamental requirement from the national Fulfilling Lives programme.

It is important to note that SUI is at all levels, from ensuring that service users are informed about developments, through to having full empowerment and control over the services which are designed and delivered to support them. Not all service users will want to be intrinsically involved within service design and coproduction activities, but there needs to be adequate provision in place to ensure that each service user has the opportunity for some type of participation – there are individuals at all levels who need to have their voices heard. The Ladder of Participation, illustrated in Figure 1 below, provides a general framework with which to define and recognise the different ways in which the service user may want to be involved.

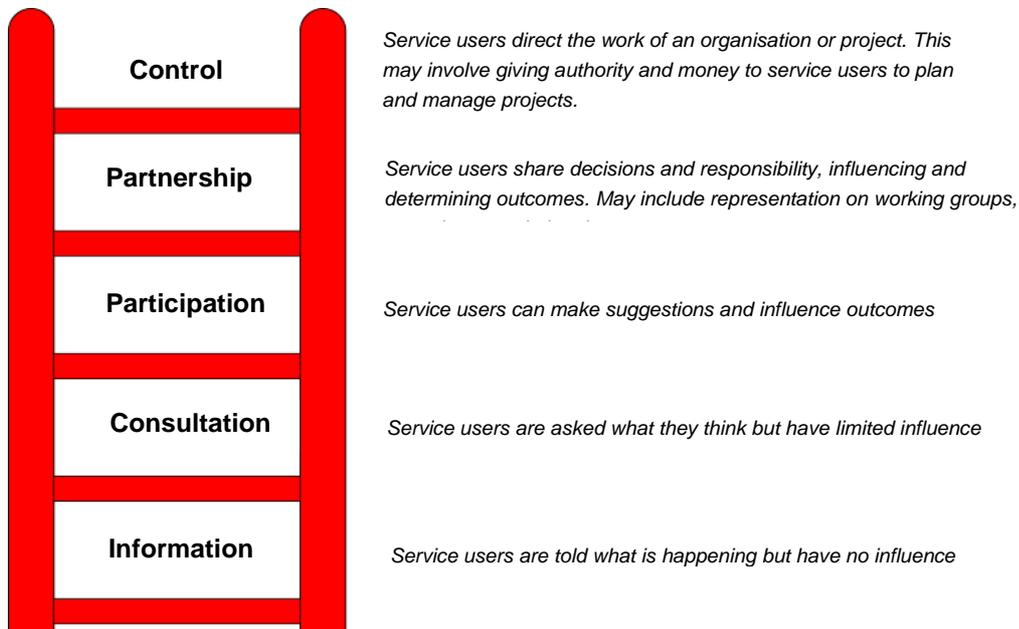
None of these rungs of the ladder is better or worse than the other, or more important than any other. Each kind of engagement is appropriate in particular circumstances and with particular participants, and service users move across different types of interaction depending on the issues concerned. It is important that service users are provided with choice on the level of engagement in which they feel most comfortable. This will result in a range of service users being involved at all levels of the participation ladder.

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<sup>2</sup> See Nesta <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/realising-value>

<sup>3</sup> See Nesta <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/people-powered-health>

**Figure 1: The Ladder of Participation<sup>4</sup>**



Examples at each rung of the ladder may involve:

- a) Information:** open days, local newsletters and bulletins, minutes of meetings from across the partnership, SUI leaflets or posters, verbal updates (e.g. through the Hub and/or Service User Forum).
- b) Consultation:** methods such as surveys/questionnaires, suggestion boxes, graffiti walls, focus groups, discussions with stakeholders, interviews, involvement in workshops, and feedback forms following activities.
- c) Participation:** involvement in service user group meetings (e.g. at the Hub/Forum), peer research activities/monitoring outcomes (e.g. assessing the Hub's effectiveness), reviewing policy and processes, peer support (both formal and informal).
- d) Partnership:** involvement in working/steering groups across the partnership (e.g. Collaborative Case Management Forum and specific work-streams), membership on governance structures (e.g. Core Strategic Group and Evaluation, Learning and Legacy Group), co-evaluation of projects and input into the design and delivery of commissioning processes and services (e.g. Test and Learn Pilots), involvement in the recruitment of staff.
- e) Control:** directing activities (e.g. in the development of the Hub), devolving budgets, running self-help groups, community forums, projects or activities.

<sup>4</sup> Sourced from Shelter's Service User Involvement Toolkit, which is widely referred to across similar projects.

Some of the above examples are revisited and further explored in Section 7.

#### 4. Vision for SUI

The vision for SUI is relatively simple: to embed service user involvement at all levels of the consultation, planning and decision making across the partnership. The vision is for SUI to be conducted in a consistent, robust and meaningful way and strives to make involvement a central focus of the culture and values of policy design, commissioning and delivery of services.

#### 5. A values based approach to achieving SUI

Achieving a meaningful approach to SUI which cuts across all partners and stakeholders, requires a focus on a core set of attitudinal values. It is not enough to develop a number of key principles or procedures in isolation. Without being driven by common values, then the impact on wider behavioural – and therefore systems – change will be limited in the long term. The values outlined below reflect some of those developed by the working group that developed the Lived Experience Hub, and which need to be fully adopted across the partnership.

- a) **Overarching fundamentals:** apply the values of visibility, transparency, cooperation and collaboration, to all aspects of SUI. These four core elements should be at the centre of SUI, and indeed of all activities across Waves of Hope.
- b) **Contribution to society:** visibly acknowledge that all people, no matter their background or circumstances, can make a positive societal contribution.
- c) **Service users as assets:** all services need to view service users as key assets with skills which can be utilised across the programme. This is central in breaking down the barriers between people who use services, and professionals.
- d) **Empowerment and control of services received:** service users – across all services – are able to make decisions about the services they receive, and how those services develop through co-production.
- e) **Shared knowledge:** strive for greater cooperation and knowledge sharing between services to develop service user involvement. This is also central to improving collaboration more widely across services.
- f) **Developing SUI:** actively pursue and make available new opportunities for involvement, learning and development for service users.
- g) **Informed progression:** actively engage with service users in taking control of their own personal growth and development progression; helping them choose the ways they become involved, and to make informed choices.

- h) Access to all:** identify and overcome any barriers to involvement, including physical, environmental, cultural barriers, and attitudes. Everyone should have equal opportunities for involvement, and to progress personal development.
- i) Equal respect between all parties:** all views need to equal and there is a need to ensure transparency of collaboration and partnership approaches. An imbalance of respect either way will lead to less meaningful SUI and inevitably result in limited co-design and co-production.

## 6. Achieving a sustainable model for SUI

There are a number of key strategic and operational components that need to be considered in developing a model which all partners adhere to and is transferable to other policy areas, and crucially, is a vehicle that can be taken forward post Waves of Hope. They naturally flow from the shared values detailed in section 5, and these will ensure that the processes are more systemic and consistent across the whole of the programme, meaning efficient structures and processes in which SUI takes place. This will result in greater added value being provided to Waves of Hope, and importantly means that SUI is perceived as an integrated element of policy and delivery, and not a 'bolt on' to the programme.

- a) Clarity on SUI roles and expectations:** partners will ensure that service users are clear about the level of influence of SUI – what can and cannot be changed. Service users will be fully aware of their role and remit within SUI, and are fully prepared for related activities. Areas for development and opportunities for SUI will be frequently reviewed, clearly articulated and co-produced between delivery partners and service user representatives.
- b) Governance and operations:** service users need to be embedded within the governance and decision making processes of the partnership, across all service areas. This means providing an environment in which services users feel comfortable and at ease to participate. SUI is less meaningful if users cannot influence the strategic and operational direction of the projects and programme overall.
- c) Effective and transparent communication:** communicating in a highly visible way to service users and the wider partnership, about how performance in SUI is being monitored and reported; what measures are being taken to continually improve SUI and to address any challenges. This involves developing the feedback loop, offering different ways to communicate and consistently illustrating to all those involved that SUI is worthwhile and what has changed as a result.
- d) Staff development to implement SUI:** the benefit of SUI can only be maximised if management and frontline workers have skills, knowledge, and capacity to enact it. Too often, policy is not filtered down effectively from a strategic level to significant action on the ground. This requires a commitment across the partnership to provide close support and training, where relevant, for managers and staff to ensure they have the right capability to involve service users at all levels, therefore closing the gap between policy and practice.

- e) **Service user development:** just as staff need to have the skills and knowledge to implement effective SUI, it is just as important to up-skill the service user asset base. This requires building upon people's existing capabilities so that they are able to engage, providing activities and training to develop service users' skills and roles.
- f) **Developing a pool of best practice:** a commitment across the partnership for research and collaboration with external organisations for developing 'best practice' methodologies, information and resource sharing; communicating what is learned at all levels, across the project.

## 7. Specific areas of service user involvement

This will be determined in part, by individual situations and circumstances, and therefore this document is not intended to be overly prescriptive. However there are a number of central areas for focus which should require inclusion and consistency with regards to SUI. These include:

- **Recruitment and selection of staff:** mechanisms should be in place to ensure that service users are involved across every stage of recruitment of new staff. As part of the process, there should be support/training provided to service users that enables them to play a full and informed role as part of the process.
- **Induction of new staff:** service users should contribute to the Waves of Hope induction programme, with support/training in place to provide skills for involvement.
- **Development of the Lived Experience Hub and Service User Forum:** the Hub is an important development that will be open for members with broader lived experience, not just confined to service users from the Waves of Hope programme. This is important for the sustainability of a meaningful service user voice beyond mid-2019, and in the shorter term, supporting service user representation within the programme. The Hub will be a robust forum for delivery partners and other citywide services to engage with service users.

Directly linked to this is the further development of the Service User Forum, which is based at the Hub. The forum should be an evolving function that is fully supported by delivery partners as per the Waves of Hope service specification, and frequently reviewed with service users to ensure that it can maximise its influence across the programme and wider. This includes assessing the terms of reference, representation, how its outcomes are monitored and communicated, and ensuring that there is a feedback loop directly to the Core Strategy Group. This strategic process could be facilitated by the new Service User Involvement Manager.

- **Peer research:** a key element of service user involvement is within evaluation, and a way of achieving this is through peer research. This involves service users

providing qualitative research support in particular, as they are able to better relate with other service users about the outcomes and impacts that the programme has had on them. Increasingly, research shows that this provides a richer understanding of services and their achievements. This will allow service users to provide meaningful input into the monitoring of the quality of services.

- **Reviewing policies:** service users should play an important role in shaping operational policies of partners where applicable. Service users should be equally involved at all stages of new policy formulation related to the programme, from formation, implementation through to review. The Service User Forum needs to be a central vehicle to achieving this.

Each of the above elements needs to be implemented in a consistent and systemic manner, not in a piecemeal and ad-hoc way. It needs to be fully owned by all partners and service user representatives, and facilitated and reviewed by the Service User Involvement Manager. More broadly, partners need to consider how to meaningfully include service users at each rung of the ladder of participation – information, consultation, participation, partnership, and control.

A final, overarching point needs to be considered by the partnership. This document should act as a spur for partners to reflect on what they are actively contributing to SUI in Waves of Hope, and whether their activities are coherent and consistent. What more can be done to develop the culture and behaviours related to SUI, and targeting activities to develop it? This self-reflection is critical for further progressing this important agenda.

## **8. Accessing further support in developing SUI**

This policy statement is a starting point for implementing SUI in a more effective and sustained way. The next step is taking the principles and values and implementing them practically across the partnership, then utilising the learning from this to support wider systems change. To help achieve this, there are options to access further support, so that SUI's principles can be fully understood, developed and embedded into operations. This can include workshops and mentoring for example, and there is provision and expertise to do this within the partnership. This is important, as without meaningful action, the risk is that this becomes a stand-alone document that is not connected to actual delivery.