

Service-User Engagement Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines [Charity Name]'s approach to engaging with service-users, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs drive the development of our activities and services. It also emphasises compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which promotes equality of opportunity and good relations among diverse communities.

Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers, and service-users involved in [Charity Name]. It is designed to promote inclusivity, involvement collaboration, and cultural sensitivity in all areas of our work.

Principles

[Charity Name] is committed to the following principles:

1. **Empowerment:** Supporting service-users to have a voice, actively contribute to and shape our work, and influence decisions that affect them.
2. **Transparency:** Maintaining clear and open communication about decisions and activities that affect service-users.
3. **Equality and Inclusivity:** Ensuring that no service-user is discriminated against based on religion, political opinion, gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, or dependency status.
4. **Good Relations:** Actively fostering understanding and respect between service-users from different backgrounds and communities, particularly in relation to sectarian divides.

Methods of Engagement

We provide a range of opportunities for service-user engagement, including:

- **Listening:** Ensuring staff actively listen to service-users, individually and in groups.
- **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** Regularly gathering opinions on the services the organisation provides and the impact they have on service-users' lives.
- **Focus Groups:** Hosting discussions that enable service-users from diverse backgrounds to share their perspectives and ideas.
- **Representation:** Inviting service-users to participate in advisory panels and/or committees.
- **Events and Meetings:** Organising forums for service-users to share ideas and concerns in a neutral and inclusive setting.
- **Strategic planning:** Consulting service-users in the development of strategic plans and new initiatives for the organisation.
- **Service-user Rights:** Engaging residents in the development and review of a Charter of Service-user rights and other relevant policies and plans.

Responsibilities

1. **Board**
 - Keep service-users at the heart of all decision-making
 - Consult and engage service-users in the development of relevant plans and policies
 - Regularly review this policy and its implementation to continuously improve how the organisation engages service-users

2. Staff and Volunteers:

- Actively listen to service-users and ensure their views are considered in decision-making.
- Promote good relations and address issues of bias or discrimination.

3. Service-Users:

- Engage constructively with the charity and its services.
- Provide honest feedback to support improvement.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure continuous improvement, engagement practices will be reviewed annually to assess inclusivity and effectiveness.

Complaints and Dispute Resolution

If service-users feel their views are not being considered or experience discrimination, they may follow the [Charity Name] complaints procedure, ensuring fair and transparent resolution.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains relevant, inclusive, and effective in addressing the unique dynamics of service delivery in Northern Ireland.