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# *Involve, Engage, Empower*

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A toolkit to help your advice agency successfully involve your users and other stakeholders



This toolkit has been developed by Working Together for Advice, a partnership project that provides a range of support services to independent advice centres across England.

Advice Services Alliance is leading the project on behalf of a consortium comprising five of its member networks: Advice UK, Age UK, Citizens Advice, Law Centres Federation and Youth Access.

The overall aims of the project are to:

- **give more people opportunities to get advice**
- **further improve advice quality**
- **demonstrate the value of advice to funders and the wider community**
- **improve the efficiency of advice services**
- **build the capacity of the advice sector.**

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alliance**



**youth  
ACCESS**  
to information, advice and counselling

the charity for  
your community



**advice** UK  
The voice of independent advice

Our thanks to the staff, volunteers and service users of the six agencies that helped to pilot the use of this toolkit:

- **Age Concern Bournemouth**
- **Age Concern Westminster**
- **Cornwall Citizens Advice**
- **North Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureau**
- **Young People's Support Foundation – Manchester**
- **Youth Concern Aylesbury**

Our thanks also to the organisations that have kindly contributed example documents for the benefit of this resource:

- **Breast Cancer Care**
- **Sue Ryder Care**
- **Shelter**

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# How to use the toolkit

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Involving your users can help you to improve and manage the services you provide, as well as secure funding to ensure ongoing provision. Using even just a few of the short exercises in this step-by-step guide can help you to enhance the opportunities for involvement in your services.

The purpose of this set of resources is to enable local information and advice-providing organisations to embed user and stakeholder involvement in the management and development of their services.

In **Section 1: Defining user and stakeholder involvement** the toolkit sets the context of involvement in advice services as well as making clear the definition of involvement, and explores some of the reasons why you should involve your users and stakeholders.

**Section 2: Reviewing your current levels of involvement** then helps you to review the extent to which your advice service is effectively involving users and stakeholders, and establish shared values and definitions for involvement work in your organisations.

Once these first step have been taken, **Section 3: Developing a strategy for involvement** helps you to work through the process of developing an involvement strategy for your advice services, using a series of quick and simple tools.

**Section 4: Methods of involvement** gives you some examples of simple and effective involvement methods you can use when working with users and stakeholders, as well as pointing you towards some other helpful resources if you would like to get some more information.

**Section 5: Policies and procedures for involvement** helps you to think about how you may need to adapt and develop your policies and procedures so that they include and cover involvement work in your organisation.

**Section 6: Skills and knowledge** then helps you to consider the level of skills and knowledge

among those you want to involve. This section suggests some simple ways of building capacity and confidence among your involvement audience so that they are more effective once they are involved with your advice services.

The toolkit assumes that one person will take the lead on user involvement in an advice agency. This could be the manager, other senior staff member, or a member of the management committee. The important thing is that this person has a good overview of how the agency works and, especially, how decisions about running the service are made.

Many of the tools in the toolkit are exercises which the lead person can use with staff, and/or with the management committee. These are highlighted where appropriate.

The tools are designed so that they are not time-consuming or costly. Most can simply form an agenda item in a meeting or committee and don't need any special equipment or resources beyond a flip chart and some pens. They are simply ways of helping you to think about the different elements of involvement in relation to your advice services and to your users and stakeholders.

Blank templates for any tools that have been filled in with illustrative examples can be found in the appendix at the back of this set of resources.

A few hours' work with some of the tools in this resource can help you to plan how you are going to expand and develop involvement work in your advice services.

If you'd like any further assistance or information about involvement work or would like to be put in touch with other advice organisations developing their involvement work, you can get in contact with your national membership networks. You'll find contact details for these networks at the back of this set of resources.

## How involving your users can improve your service – an example follows.

### AC Bournemouth – Reaching new clients

Age Concern Bournemouth has long been aware that although its advice services are open to all older people living within the town of Bournemouth, many people found them difficult to access because of where they lived. In some areas there was very poor awareness that the services existed at all.

There had been previous attempts to broaden our reach into these areas, but these have been largely unsuccessful and have only provided temporary solutions. The tools have helped us to plan a co-ordinated strategy for us to engage with potential users in this area and find out how we can serve them.

Our strategy said that we should go to our users instead of expecting them to come to us, so we set aside time to talk with older people at supermarkets, GPs' surgeries, lunch clubs and day centres in the areas we targeted. We also allowed our conversations to be much more informal, as formal surveys have not been so successful in the past.

We have now started two outreach advice services in new areas of the town, based on what older people told us they wanted. They want a visible presence in these areas of the city, rather than just a telephone service that covers the town, so that they can see that we are there for them .

Both outreach venues were suggested by older people and are proving popular. We can now also legitimately claim to provide advice for older people throughout the whole town and are making new contacts in these new areas.

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# **Section 1:** **Defining user and stakeholder involvement**

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This section sets the context for involvement in advice services and explores some of the reasons why involvement is important in the provision of advice services.

This toolkit defines involvement as:

***‘Any process by which advice service users and/or stakeholders can influence decision making concerning the development, delivery, management or evaluation of advice services.’***

Not all of you will want to share this definition and there are some tools in this section to help you establish a clear definition of involvement in your organisation.

We have defined users and stakeholders as follows:

### Users

Individuals with advice needs who do, or potentially could, access, receive and benefit from the services of independent, not-for-profit advice agencies.

### Stakeholders

Organisations or individuals directly involved in the processes by which users access and receive advice. They aim to ensure positive outcomes for users of an advice service, e.g. referral organisations, families and carers of users, and service providers/organisations that users are directed to by advice agencies.

Establishing clear definitions can also enable you to easily identify involvement when you see it, even when it is referred to as ‘participation’ or ‘engagement’, as it so often is.

Involvement has the primary aim of enabling those that use a service to have some decision-making power over this service. The organisation is prepared to support the decisions that are made by those they involve and to implement

any changes that may be necessary as a result of these decisions. Any service with a genuine commitment to involvement is therefore committed to some degree of organisational change as a result.

### Advice agencies and user and stakeholder involvement – the wider context

The voluntary and community sector has been very successful in engaging users and stakeholders in the management and development of services. However, this has not always been the case for advice agencies. This is largely because of the different relationships that advice agencies have with their users and stakeholders. Users of advice agencies differ from many other users of voluntary sector services as their contact with the service is very often time-limited – sometimes only lasting for the length of one phone call or a drop-in advice session, and very often at a point of crisis or stress. In these circumstances it is not always easy or appropriate to attempt to engage the service user in any subject that is not directly related to their advice query.

Although there are examples of excellent practices of user and stakeholder involvement in the advice sector, these practices have never been mainstreamed in the sector as they have in others. There has also never been a dedicated resource to support the development of this important element of work. These resources, and the training programme that accompanies them, aim to provide this support.

### Why involve?

All statutory and voluntary organisations providing public services are being encouraged to be increasingly participatory.

All best-value organisations in England, which include all local authorities, have a statutory

‘duty to involve.’ The purpose of this duty is to ‘embed a culture of engagement and empowerment. This means that authorities consider, as a matter of course, the possibilities for provision of information to, consultation with and involvement of representatives of local persons across all authority functions’.

Authorities are being asked to demonstrate that:

- they have an understanding of community interests
- information, consultation and involvement opportunities are accessible and well targeted
- they can co-ordinate engagement and involvement activities with partners where appropriate
- local people know how to get involved and feel that they have opportunities to be involved.

The drive for increased involvement and engagement goes beyond the requirements of local authorities or even UK government policy so, for example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 states that it is a young person’s right to have a say on the issues that affect them and for their views to be taken seriously.

This illustrates how much of an emphasis there is on services with genuine involvement at their core, and advice agencies receiving funding from public authorities will increasingly be expected to show how they are effectively involving their users in their services.

But funding considerations are not the only reasons to involve your users and stakeholders:

- You can learn from the people who receive your services. They have a fresh perspective that can enable you to look at your services differently.
- You can ensure that services are fit for purpose, better targeted and effective for the people that they are designed to serve, and thus a more effective use of resources.
- You can find ways to reach communities or groups that may not otherwise be accessing your services.
- You can ensure quality levels in the services you provide and make changes or improvements where needed.
- You can campaign on issues that are directly affecting those you serve and you can legitimately claim to represent them.
- Service users can have the opportunity to ‘give something back’, if they so wish, to an organisation that has assisted them .
- Service users can develop an affinity with the organisation and the work that it does.
- Those you involve can develop new skills and build on existing ones.
- Relationships with stakeholders are improved, and a mutual understanding of purpose and remit, as well as pressures and capacity, can be developed.
- The profile of your organisation can be improved and enhanced and you are consulted more often and more appropriately.





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# ***Section 2:*** ***Reviewing your current levels of involvement***

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This section will help you to think through the extent to which your advice agency is involving users and stakeholders, and to plan a strategy for involvement.

The 'Ladder' tool and the 'Recent decision mapping' tool will help you, as the lead person, to review the current position. You can use these tools alone, or involve others as you see fit.

Then there are two exercises for you to use with your staff team, and/or your management committee. These tools, 'Involvement is ...' and 'Barriers and action', have a dual purpose – they will help to get your team thinking about involvement, and they will provide useful information for you to feed into the next step, drafting a strategy.

These tools are quick and easy exercises which will take about 15–30 minutes each, and are perfect for using as part of a team meeting. Using the tools will help you to establish a clear set of shared values around involvement for your advice service, and help you to be honest about what and how much can be changed as a result of involvement work.

**Tool: A ladder of involvement**

**Time needed: 30 minutes**

Appropriate forum: Can be completed individually or in a group setting, such as a team meeting or management committee.

This table illustrates different levels of involvement for advice services. The ladder serves as a useful way of plotting where you think your current involvement activities fit. It can also help you to plan any new activities and decide what level of involvement is appropriate for your audience and purpose.

The top rungs of this ladder should not be seen as where every involvement activity should be aiming for, just as the lower rungs should not be seen as less worthwhile. If more 'light-touch' activities are what is deemed appropriate for your audience and purposes, then these should be treated just as seriously as if you were planning an activity that may fall into one of the higher rungs.

*(See templates on pp. 54–55)*

## Section 2: Reviewing your current levels of involvement

### Rung 1 – consent and inform

Decisions are made by staff in your organisation with little input from service users or stakeholders.

Your service users and stakeholders probably assume that there is no opportunity for involvement in these decisions.

Service users and stakeholders are informed of the decisions that are made that may affect them.

### Rung 2 – consult

You routinely ask for feedback on the services you provide.

Your service users and stakeholders are aware of the ways in which they can give their views and opinions.

You feed back to users and stakeholders on the decisions that you made and how their opinions and views were taken into account.

### Rung 3 – participate

You actively seek the opinions and views of your service users and stakeholders and take them into account before making decisions.

You share some of the decision-making on service planning and management with your users and stakeholders.

Service users and stakeholders have opportunities to get involved in related aspects of the service, such as fundraising and campaigning.

### Rung 4 – partnership

Staff work as equals with users and stakeholders in planning and managing services.

Service users and stakeholders have the opportunity to initiate and follow through activities themselves.

Users and stakeholders are involved as a general rule in all aspects of your services rather than as a one-off or by special arrangement.

### Rung 5 – control

Service users and stakeholders are able to make strategic decisions about your services.

Service users and stakeholders are able to allocate resources for your services.

Planning and managing services are majority controlled by ex-service users and stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> Some organisations may feel uncomfortable involving current service users on decision-making boards or committees. Indeed, some organisations have developed policies which prevent board members from becoming users of services. There can be a risk of creating an impression of favouritism and the situation can be made more difficult if the outcome of the advice provided is not favourable for the service user. We suggest that you check The Charity Commission

### Example

- You have decided that it is necessary that you change the time and venue of a drop-in service.
- You put notices up in your current venue and your main office a month in advance and inform all current clients of the changes verbally at the end of every advice interview.

- A sample of people who use your service are sent a feedback form once you have finished providing them with a service. The feedback form is sent with a freepost envelope for its return.
- There is also a suggestions/complaints box in your reception.
- All feedback received is systematically reviewed regularly and any changes made as a result of this feedback are relayed to users and stakeholders. Letters are sent to those who contributed specifically and general notices put up at your premises.

- You have a service-user group who meet regularly and review specific services. This group is represented on management boards or steering groups where decisions about services are made.
- Your organisation is represented at a local community forum where other local community groups learn about and contribute to your service development.
- Service users have contributed to fundraising and campaigning by accompanying staff and assisting in making presentations and answering questions about your services and their value.

- Service users<sup>1</sup> and other stakeholders are well represented on your management committee and are equal members of this committee.
- A group of service users from a particular section of the community have also initiated and led on a piece of work aiming to provide greater access to the particular section of the community they represent. Service users are always involved in recruiting service staff and volunteers and contribute fully to shortlisting, sit on interview panels and help provide training.

- Service users and stakeholders make up the majority of those represented on your decision-making bodies. They hold casting votes or committee positions, enabling them to make decisions about services without veto from staff.
- Planning and management of services and new initiatives are led by service users with input from staff.
- Service users are considered experts through experience and they therefore lead the direction of your organisation and its services.

website for guidance (CC24-'Users on Board'). At the time of writing, this guidance could be found at [www.charity-commission.gov.uk/library/guidance/cc24text.pdf](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/library/guidance/cc24text.pdf). Where appropriate, agencies should also check the requirements of any relevant regulatory bodies, e.g., Solicitors Regulation Authority. These issues do not arise with ex-service users who are often able to make a positive and significant contribution.

## Section 2: Reviewing your current levels of involvement

Remember, it is unlikely that the whole of your organisation or even a single service can be neatly fitted on to one of the above rungs. This is more a way of pinpointing where your current involvement activities fit and whether this is the appropriate level of involvement for your audience and purpose.

As in the example below, your current involvement activities could be split a number of different ways:

If you run a generalist advice service and a separate service specifically for the tenants of a local housing association, you may make decisions all the time about your generalist service and then inform the relevant individuals and organisations afterwards. But you would never make a change to the service for the housing association tenants without talking to the housing association first and attending a meeting of the tenants' forum to discuss the proposals or ask what they would propose.

So, this generalist service is probably on rung 1 but the specialist tenants' service is around rung 2 or even 3. The level of involvement in this case is split differently by service.

Some organisations are great at ensuring that stakeholders are involved but are not so good at ensuring that service users/potential service users are involved, as shown in the following example:

Through extensive consultation and planning in partnership with local schools, clubs and youth organisations, the organisation has planned a new advice service specifically for young people. Through these same stakeholders a survey has been sent to a sample of young people asking their opinion on the proposals and they seem to think it's generally a good idea. The stakeholders have now been invited to be represented on the project steering group as partners on the project and they will be involved with recruiting project staff.

So, in this case, involvement with stakeholders (the schools, clubs and youth organisations) is quite extensive and probably around rung 4 of the involvement ladder, but with their users/potential users (the young people themselves) they are around rung 2. The level of involvement here is significantly different for service users and stakeholders.

Remember, differing levels of involvement are not necessarily a problem, as long as the level of involvement opportunities offered is appropriate to both the audience and the purpose. Opportunities at rung 1 of involvement are potentially just as valuable as those at rung 5.

**Tool: Recent decision mapping**

**Time needed: 30 minutes**

Appropriate forum: Ideal for discussion in a meeting setting.

This exercise helps you to map the potential for further involvement within your organisation by looking back over decisions that have recently been made by you or your organisation.

You can then begin to think about whether there was potential for further involvement in those decisions.

Not all decisions made will be appropriate for input from users and stakeholders, but this exercise can help to identify when this input is appropriate and you can build a picture of the potential for involvement in the future.

This exercise is most effective in a group setting. Participants could write down examples of decisions made, and involvement opportunities in these decisions can then be identified and discussed as a group.

The examples below show that some decisions may be fundamental to your advice service, such as in decisions 1 and 2. Others, such as decision 3, illustrate that even decisions not directly related to the provision of advice can provide opportunities for involvement and help foster good relations between your service and its users and stakeholders.

*(See template on p. 56)*

Nature of decision	Decision made by	Involvement?	Potential for further involvement
1. Drop-in service opening hours changed	Advice manager	Yes – initiated after some users commented that opening hours clash with school finishing times.	Could talk to some drop-in users to review how the change in service times has affected them.
2. Funding application made to develop outreach service on other side of town	Advice manager	No – we don't yet have any advice clients from this side of town so there is nobody to involve.	Could have involved other community organisations and services in the area about where best to place our new service. Their users are our potential users too, so could have involved them.
3. Redecoration of entrance and reception area	Board of trustees	No – we always just whitewash the walls every couple of years to freshen the place up.	It's our users who spend most time in reception, so we could talk to them about how it might be decorated to make it more welcoming and comfortable.

**Tool: ‘Involvement is ...’ exercise for staff team and/or management committee**

**Time needed: 15 minutes + 15 minutes discussion time**

Appropriate forum: Any group setting, but also a good exercise to use with your service users.

It is important to clearly define what involvement means in the context of your advice services. A clear definition of involvement can help staff, users and stakeholders alike to gain an understanding of involvement and what they can expect to experience and achieve by participating in it.

‘Involvement is ...’ is a simple exercise to develop the definition and shared values of involvement in relation to your organisation. This exercise can be done in a purely staff setting or with users and stakeholders themselves, helping you to arrive at your definition and shared values.

In small groups, participants discuss what they think of when they hear the word ‘involvement’ and what qualities go towards making involvement a positive experience from both an organisational point of view and from the perspective of potential participants. Ideas can then be written on to an A3 sheet entitled ‘Involvement is ...’.

The group then comes together as one and discusses which ideas of what ‘Involvement is ...’ it thinks are integral to involvement work in its organisation.

The table below gives two examples of what advice workers have come up with when asked what ‘Involvement is ...’ to them.

The National Youth Agency’s (NYA) ‘Nine top answers’ are also included here. These are the nine broad categories that responses to this exercise generally fit into, when advice workers complete a similar exercise during involvement training courses.



<p>Stockton District Advice &amp; Information Service (SDAIS) used this exercise with its case workers, generalist advisers and volunteers and identified that involvement is ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inclusion</li> <li>• influencing</li> <li>• change</li> <li>• service users represented in decision-making</li> <li>• action</li> <li>• engagement</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• rights and needs</li> <li>• sharing being part of the team</li> <li>• involves decision-making, leading to change</li> </ul>
<p>The London Youth Advice Forum, consisting of advice workers from Law Centres and other organisations providing advice to young people across London, said that involvement is ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meaningful involvement</li> <li>• active involvement</li> <li>• dialogue (a two-way process)</li> <li>• coming together with a common purpose</li> <li>• having a say</li> <li>• influence, e.g. over decision-making</li> <li>• control/shared power</li> <li>• spectrum of participation – from tokenistic to meaningful</li> <li>• understanding of, access to, information</li> <li>• open process: transparency</li> </ul>
<p>The NYA's nine top answers are:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change/action/influence</li> <li>2. Rights</li> <li>3. Sharing power/dialogue/decision-making</li> <li>4. Listening</li> <li>5. Active involvement</li> <li>6. Inclusive/democratic</li> <li>7. Meaningful/non-tokenistic/built-in</li> <li>8. Empowerment/developmental</li> <li>9. Fun/engaging</li> </ol>

**Tool: ‘Barriers and action’**

**Time needed: 30 minutes**

Appropriate forum: An exercise for staff team or management committee.

This exercise enables you to think about which individuals or groups of people you wish to involve in your advice service. It helps you to identify any barriers there may be to their involvement and what course of action you can take to negotiate these barriers successfully.

This is a simple exercise that can be used with individuals, but it works best when used in a group setting. This way, you can talk through the possible courses of action that you identify with a range of people from your service and everybody can contribute. You could also split the group into smaller teams then come back together to discuss your contrasting courses of action.

First, have a quick discussion on who you identify to be your users and stakeholders, e.g., telephone advice clients, drop-in service users, local housing association. Then, for each of the users and stakeholders, you identify there may be multiple barriers. You may also find that there are multiple ways in which you can attempt to negotiate these barriers.

The table below shows two examples of common barriers to involvement for advice agencies, with courses of action that agencies have identified to negotiate these barriers.

*(See template on p. 57)*

User/stakeholder	Barrier	Potential course of action
Telephone advice-line clients	Length of contact often only lasts for length of one phone call, so difficult to ask clients for further involvement.  Client often upset or stressed at time of call – not fair to ask questions in this situation.	Be realistic and adapt involvement techniques. These users may not want or be able to participate in a facilitated session but they may be happy to answer one or two simple questions at the end of their call. Rotate the questions we ask on a monthly basis to cover a number of issues. Have examples to hand of changes made as a result of this involvement.  Use discretion. We don't always have to ask the question if it isn't appropriate to do so.
Local housing association which houses many of our advice clients	They have priorities of their own, and it's not in their interests to be talking to us about our organisation.	There are areas where the interests of our two organisations overlap. Identify these and concentrate on them to assist both organisations. May need to accept that we can't always set the whole agenda when talking to the housing association.



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# ***Section 3:*** ***Developing*** ***a strategy for*** ***involvement***

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This section will help you to use the information you have gathered in your review to develop a draft strategy and get it discussed and agreed by your staff and management committee.

## Drafting a strategy

Establishing a strategy for involvement does not need to be a complicated process and many organisations which have spent some time developing a strategy report that the very process of development itself can prove extremely useful. It helps to develop further a sense of shared purpose as an organisation. It also provides an ideal early opportunity to engage with some users and stakeholders

to help you shape your strategy and ask them: ‘Why and how do you want to be involved with our services?’

## What should an involvement strategy contain?

Your involvement strategy will be unique to your organisation, but it should contain the following elements:

Part of the strategy	Where to get the info from
<b>Definition</b> This forms the basis of any involvement strategy. What does involvement mean for your organisation or service?	‘Involvement is ...’ exercise (p. 14)
<b>Commitment</b> How committed is your service to involvement and its potential to impact on services? What amount of decision-making power are you able to give to involved users and stakeholders? Are staff committed to implementing changes as a result of these decisions? Where does responsibility for involvement lie?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘A mandate for involvement’ tool (p. 21)</li> <li>• ‘A ladder of involvement’ (p. 9)</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b> What are the resources that your service is willing to dedicate to involvement? (It is important to be realistic about this. There is nothing wrong with starting small if this is what resources dictate.)	‘Involvement methods’ (p. 27)
<b>Expertise</b> What is the level of involvement expertise that your service has at its disposal? Is there a need for further training for staff, to enable them to facilitate involvement activity? Are there ways that you can help those you wish to involve, to do so more effectively?	‘Skills and knowledge’ (p. 48)
<b>Methods</b> What are the methods that you currently use to enable involvement? Are these methods appropriate for those you seek to involve?	‘Involvement methods’ (p. 27)

This document should, as far as possible, be a 'living' document, flexible enough to apply to a range of activities for a range of purposes. It should also be reviewed regularly so that as your service and the ways in which it involves users and stakeholders develops and grows, so too can the strategy be updated to reflect this and remain relevant.

It may also be useful to think about where your organisation and its services are on the 'ladder of involvement'. This can help you to assess your organisation's current activity and set realistic goals for development.

You can find an example of an involvement strategy on p. 34.

### Things to think about while developing your involvement strategy

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- The development of your strategy can be an opportunity to begin involving your users and stakeholders. They can help you to establish what involvement should look like in your advice services.
- Speak to other organisations that you have contact with and to your national membership organisation. They can link you with other advice organisations developing their involvement work.
- Your strategy should include clear and logical timescales for completion of tasks associated with involvement and make clear who is responsible for reviewing progress.
- Your strategy could also be made accessible for those you wish to involve, enabling them to see how their involvement can influence decision-making in advice services.

### Agreeing the strategy

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Once you have a draft involvement strategy for your advice service, you will need to be able to

take this draft to your management committee and/or staff meeting so that your service can adopt it.

The following two tools will help you to convince staff and trustees of the need for your strategy and also to allay any fears they may have concerning involvement work.

For involvement to prove to be successful, it has to have the backing of staff at all levels of the organisation, including senior management.

Successful involvement may well mean changes to the way that your advice services are run and managed, so it is essential that staff have a genuine commitment to implement and support involvement and any change it may initiate.

If, while establishing your organisational definitions and shared values for involvement there is input and agreement from all members of existing staff, then you have already gone most of the way in ensuring staff support involvement and the changes it may bring.

However, there are still some further elements to ensuring staff are supportive of, and engaged with, involvement.

#### Responsibility

It should be clear who is responsible for leading on developing involvement work and who leads on implementing the resulting changes.

#### Division of work

The staff structure should support involvement in your organisation. It should be clear whether a single person is responsible for developing involvement across all services or if every member of staff has elements of involvement work written into their job descriptions.

#### Recruitment, induction, appraisal, training

Involvement can be built into all of these processes.

**Tool: A mandate for involvement**

**Time needed: 30 minutes**

Appropriate forum: An exercise that can be completed individually or in any group setting.

This simple tool takes the form of a template that can be completed by either an individual or in a group. It will enable an organisation to capture the main points of an involvement project. This basic information can then act as a mandate for involvement, helping you to justify your methods and intentions.

Your group (or individual) should consider all the following areas before you complete the mandate template. An example is given below.

*(See template on p. 58)*

	Example
(1) <b>Identity</b> Who are you, in the context of this piece of work? A whole organisation, a sub-committee or department, a single officer etc?	We (1). Age Concern Bournemouth's (ACB) Information and Advice service need to understand the views of
(2) <b>Target(s) for involvement</b> Who do you want to involve? Any local citizen, people from particular sections of the community, stakeholders representing community groups etc?	(2) both current and potential service users, incorporating BME communities concerning
(3) <b>The issue</b> What do you want to ask those you involve? Is it a broad issue concerning your whole organisation? Is it about a specific project or service? Are you trying to gain knowledge to help you influence another organisation?	(3) possible gaps in our present I&A service, e.g. I&A outreach sessions so that
(4) <b>The actor(s)</b> Who is responsible for carrying out or implementing what you decide? This may be the same as the 'identity' but not necessarily.	(4) ACB and I&A management can
(5) <b>Action</b> What will the actor have to do to implement what is decided? This will not be clear until after decisions are made, but you can plan in terms of the time and resources the actor may need and you can plan for reporting, feeding back and evaluation etc.	(5) tailor their service to suit the needs and wants of the community on/by
(6) <b>Dates</b> When does the actor need to take action by? The work associated with what comes out of your involvement activities may be ongoing but building in deadlines can be useful to ensure that action is taken in good time. Those you involve will also be keen to see when they can expect action or feedback.	(6) one year after pilot completion in order to achieve
(7) <b>Overall objective</b> What is it that you would like to accomplish through this particular piece of involvement work?	(7) the goal of filling any potential gaps and providing a full service to all members in the community who may not presently be able to access our service. To strive to be as inclusive as possible.

Building a bank of simple mandate documents like this can also provide you with a quick historical reference of planned involvement projects. This can be really useful when measuring success against the objectives set out in any strategy document or measuring developments in the ambition and purpose of your involvement work over time.

**Tool: Fear of involvement**

**Time needed: 1 hour**

Appropriate forum: These fears can be addressed in a one-on-one session or in a wider group setting.

Some decision-makers within your advice service may have certain fears concerning involvement. They may not have much experience of involving users and stakeholders or may have previous experience of poor involvement work.

The easiest way to begin to address these concerns and fears is simply to ask what they are. You may even be able to anticipate some common fears concerning involvement. The sooner you engage with reluctant decision-makers on the subject of involvement, the more likely it is you will be able to allay fears and gain support for involvement work.

The simplest way to complete this exercise is to either bring together your advice service decision-makers; usually the service manager and other senior staff who have an input into strategic and service delivery decisions; or complete the exercise at an appropriate team meeting. You will probably need to start/lead the discussion and capture people's thoughts on a flip chart. The following table includes examples of common worries held by advice service decision-makers about taking on involvement work. It could be useful to frame the discussion around these common fears. In the right-hand column are some of the arguments that you can make to challenge or overcome these fears.

*(See template on p. 59)*



Fear of involvement	Response to this fear
Involvement will result in demand for impossible change or raised expectations	You can make it clear that you are able and willing to set parameters for participation, to equip those that you involve with the knowledge and expertise that will enable them to make informed and reasonable decisions rather than impossible demands.
Involvement means handing over all decision-making power	This is not true. Even the top rung of the involvement ladder only advocates giving up some decision-making power. Most successful, high-level involvement means working in partnership with users and stakeholders rather than one or other party holding decision-making power.
Involvement is expensive. Money is tight	This does not have to be the case. If you are just beginning to involve your users and stakeholders then you can start off small. Even if you are beginning to plan activities that may need more financial backing, you will find that successful involvement means that services are more efficient, cost effective and better targeted, and more appealing to funders as a result. This will more than make up for the initial outlay. In future, you can build involvement activity into funding bids. Many funders are increasingly demanding that the services they fund are visibly participatory.
Staff time spent planning and facilitating involvement is time away from the front line – away from the services we are paid to provide	As above, successful involvement is more likely, not less, to ensure the sustainability of the services that your advice service provides.

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# **Section 4:** **Methods of involvement**

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This section looks at the variety of methods your agency can use to involve users and others.

Whatever methods you choose, they should have the following three key components:

### **Be appropriate**

The methods you use should be appropriate to those you wish to involve. A service-user panel, for example, may be appropriate for some, but others may find this environment intimidating. If the majority of your clients value the one-to-one time and confidentiality your service offers, the involvement opportunities you offer should look similar. Making structures appropriate also means making them engaging and interesting.

### **Be able to influence change**

Any methods that you develop should have the genuine potential to make changes to your service, otherwise they will be seen as tokenistic. If you invite stakeholders to take part in reviews of your service, they will soon grow frustrated if they see no changes to your service as a result. Even very 'light-touch' methods of involvement, such as questionnaires and suggestion boxes, should have the power to change. A good way to make clear that involvement opportunities are an opportunity to influence change is to be open about the changes you have made or intend to make as a result of involvement.

### **Be flexible**

Methods of involvement should not become sacred. Even structures that have proved successful in the past should be flexible enough to be adapted. Taking a flexible approach can help keep your involvement methods fresh and interesting for those that are involved and encourage new participants. Flexibility also means that you can adapt your methods so that they are appropriate for the task or subject at hand.

## **Methods**

Listed below are a number of simple methods and techniques that can help you to engage with a group or an individual in an involvement setting. Some of these exercises and techniques take longer than others and not all are suitable for all circumstances, but all can be extremely effective if used appropriately, are enabled to influence change and are used flexibly. Also, this list is not exhaustive and there are plenty of excellent online resources for further inspiration and guidance. A list of some of these resources can be found on pp. 30–31.

### Focus group

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#### What is it?

A facilitator guides a small group (up to 12 people) through a discussion on a specific topic or issue. The discussion is recorded so that a report can be produced and distributed to participants. Focus groups are usually a one-off meeting or series of meetings to focus on a particular issue.

#### Time needed: 1–2 hours

#### Cost

- Costs can be minimal if you already have access to an appropriate venue to host the group.
- You may need to provide incentives to encourage participation and offer to reimburse travel and other associated costs to participants.

#### Advantages

- A small group allows you to explore specific issues in detail.
- A small group allows a high level of input and interaction from participants.
- Participants can be recruited to fit demographic profiles.
- It's useful for getting opinions from people who may usually be less likely to give their opinion on your services, such as those whose first language is not English or those who do not already use your services.
- Professional interpreters are usually trained to operate in this kind of environment.

#### Disadvantages

- Groups can sometimes be dominated by one or two strong personalities and others may feel unable to contribute fully. A skilled facilitator will minimise the impact of this.
- You cannot gather quantitative responses from a group like this, so focus groups cannot be used to gauge wider opinion.

### User panel

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#### What is it?

User panels are regular meetings of a group of users of a particular service. They can help a service to identify the concerns and priorities of its users and address any problems that users identify. User panels should have clear terms of reference that detail the amount of decision-making power and influence the panel has.

#### Time needed: 1–2 hours at agreed regular intervals

#### Cost

- Costs can be minimal if you already have access to an appropriate venue to host the group.
- Participants' expenses should be reimbursed.

#### Advantages

- Changes resulting from the panel decisions can be tracked over time.
- User opinions and views can be tracked over time.
- Panel members can become very well-informed about services and develop their own skills.
- User panels provide a constant user perspective on your service.

#### Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to make panels truly representative of your user group.
- As a more long-term commitment, it can be daunting for some users. Others may find it difficult to step away from a panel. It is a good idea, therefore, to have a range of pre-defined time commitments, such as suggesting that someone tries it out for two meetings before committing any further.

## Opinion poll

### What is it?

Opinion polls are quantitative surveys carried out to gauge and compare the views and experiences of a sample of people on a particular subject. An opinion poll is a flexible and low-cost method that can be conducted face to face, over the telephone or in web and print formats.

### Time needed: Minimal

Actual time demands can be as little as the time it takes to ask and then record the answer to a single question with each participant.

The lifespan of a particular poll question is either pre-defined, e.g. 'ask everybody we provide advice to for two weeks' or is defined in numerical terms, e.g. 'ask everybody we provide advice to until we have asked 100 people'.

### Cost

- Very low cost, especially as polls can be developed and delivered in-house easily.
- Market research companies specialise in large-scale, professional polling and will develop questions, deliver the poll and provide collated data and analysis. This can become very costly if you decide to take polling to this level.

### Advantages

- A simple opinion poll can be very cheap and quick to develop and deliver but still provide extremely useful information.
- Opinion polls are also very quick and simple for your users. A simple question with a 'yes' or 'no' answer at the end of an advice session is manageable for most people.
- They are less time-consuming and less daunting for participants than traditional surveys or questionnaires, which mean more responses.
- You can still ask a range of questions over time to build up responses to a range of questions as in a traditional questionnaire.

### Disadvantages

- Opinion polls do not provide qualitative data.
- There is limited scope for ongoing dialogue with individual participants.

The methods listed above are all more formal, research-based methods that you can use with your users and stakeholders. However, what people often need are ideas as to how your users and stakeholders can be involved and engaged in an effective and interesting way once you have their attention.

The following are simple ideas that you can use to help your audiences engage with planning and prioritising in your advice service. The cost of setting up and running these activities is next to nothing.

### Dot voting

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#### What is it?

Present a list of possible answers to a question on a flip chart or on a poster on the wall. Provide your participants with sticky dots and ask them to use them to vote for their preference by sticking their dot next to their preferred answer.

#### When to use it

- It can be used at the beginning of any meeting with your users and stakeholders to prioritise the items on the agenda. The items with the most votes are addressed first. Those with few or no votes are addressed at the end, if at all.
- It can be used to ask a question with a number of possible answers. You could hang the poster in your reception area and service users could vote while they wait.

#### Advantages

- You can very quickly create a very strong visual image as well as very clear priorities or preferable answers to your questions.
- Votes are anonymous and participants are not expected to vocalise or justify their opinions and preferences.
- When used at the beginning of meetings or consultations with your users, it can be an excellent way of transferring the balance of power to your audience, as they have decided the agenda.
- There are a number of simple developments that you could introduce, such as colour-coding the dots to allow second and third preferences or to monitor responses over time or by different groups.

### The worst possible ...

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#### What is it?

When asking a group to explore a certain issue or theme, you get them to describe the features of the worst possible example they can imagine. For example, you may ask them to describe the worst possible reception area or the worst possible advice centre. You can then discuss ideas as to how to avoid or overcome the features of the worst possible scenario.

#### When to use it

It can be most effective when you are talking to your users and stakeholders about their experiences of using your service.

#### Advantages

- You are not actually addressing the issues of any particular service – you are addressing the issues of the fictionalised worst possible scenario you have just created with the group.
- The worst possible features that people think of can be quite amusing. This can help to break the ice for a group but also to address serious issues in a more light-hearted atmosphere.
- The activity can easily be developed. You could ask people to draw their ideas for the worst possible scenario or to act them out in a role-play exercise.

## Discussion wheel

### What is it?

Group members form two circles, one inside the other, and face someone in the other circle. The participants are given a topic and the outer circle give their opinion on that topic to the person opposite for 30 seconds to two minutes. The roles are then reversed so that each person listens to the opinion of someone else and gives their own. The outer circle then moves clockwise together so each person is facing someone new. Each person then gives their own opinion again, as well as the opinions of their previous partner, to their new partner.

### When to use it

This is an excellent exercise to use in situations when people may feel that there are some people's opinions that will be given more weight than others, such as when staff are participating alongside users or external stakeholders.

### Advantages

- Everyone has to play the role of speaker and listener for a designated amount of time. This helps to stop individuals dominating discussions and others being put off from participating fully.
- The fact that you only need to talk for a short amount of time and just to one person at a time means that less-confident members of the group feel more able to participate.
- Everyone has to express the opinions of others they have spoken to. This can be a very effective way of encouraging people to think about alternative points of view, especially in a mixed group of staff and users.
- You can easily combine this activity with others. For example, you could run a 'dot voting' session on the same subject before the discussion wheel and then one afterwards to chart how opinions have changed through discussion.

## Evaluation target

### What is it?

Draw a target shape on some flip chart paper with an evaluation question above it, such as 'Have we achieved today's objectives?' or 'Does our advice service meet your needs?'

Then ask participants to put a sticky dot on the area of the target that they think corresponds to how they feel about this particular evaluation question. So, if they feel that the day has met all of the objectives, they will put their sticky dot right in the middle of the target. But if they feel it has met none of the objectives, they will put it right at the edge.

### When to use it

- The evaluation target can be used at the end of a group session of involvement work to gain a quick idea of how people have felt about their experience. You can phrase the question to be a very general one about the session as a whole or you can make a series of targets about particular aspects of the session.
- This exercise can also be used as a scene-setting exercise at the beginning of a group session. You could ask a question about what people think of your advice service or an element of it, such as 'Does our advice service meet your needs?' or 'Did you find our information pack helpful?' An early, quick indication of how the group of participants view the subject you are to discuss in the session can be really useful.

### Advantages

- The exercise is very quick and easy to set up and run.
- It creates a good visual image of the range of opinions in your group.
- Participants don't have to write down their opinions or speak about them in public.
- A number of targets stuck around the room can provide a quick, energising exercise that gets people moving about the room.

### Ideas race

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#### What is it?

On a large piece of paper draw a grid of squares that can act as your ‘racecourse’. Each row of squares will represent one of the ideas or options that you have proposed in response to a particular question or issue. For example, you may ask: ‘Where do you go when you need money advice?’ and provide four possible options: ‘friends and family’, ‘my bank’, ‘the council’ and ‘the advice service centre’.

Provide a sticky note for each of the four options on the grid and begin the race. The race is run as every person moves the sticky note that represents their preferred option along the grid one square at a time.

#### When to use it

This is a really useful exercise to use when you can only demand your participants’ attention for a short time or need something to grab their attention in the first place, such as when talking to people in a public area about your service.

#### Advantages

- You can adapt your racecourse to make it a much greater visual spectacle with drawings and even models. This can help grab people’s interest and is more inclusive.
- The exercise gives a very clear idea of preferred options quickly.
- This exercise is more likely to create interest and encourage participation than traditional stalls or surveys in public spaces.

### Methods and techniques – further resources

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Countless methods have been developed to enable involvement in decision-making. This means that there is likely to be a tried-and-tested method that can be adapted to suit your purpose, setting and audience. You just need to know where to look to find them. The websites below all have useful examples and descriptions of numerous involvement methods.

#### [www.peopleandparticipation.net](http://www.peopleandparticipation.net)

A vast resource that has lots of useful features such as an A–Z listing of involvement techniques and methods, how-to guides and example documents and templates.

Methods include everything from ‘Democs’, a way of involving users in an informal setting on a number of subjects over a two-hour period, to ‘Future Search’, a way of mapping the future of your service in detail with your stakeholders over a period of up to two days.

Each method listed contains information as to the situations that method may be most relevant and, perhaps more usefully, when the methods are not appropriate, as well as guidance on potential costs.

There are also further resources available for those that sign up for free online membership, such as a well-used discussion forum and an ‘ask the expert’ feature.

#### [www.user-involvement.org.uk](http://www.user-involvement.org.uk)

This site was created by the members of the ‘User Involvement in Voluntary Sector Organisations Shared Learning Group’ and contains lots of guidance on choosing appropriate methods, as well as plenty of practical examples and case studies provided by members of the group.



The site is constantly updated with new material from member organisations, including honest appraisals of methods used and their success. Each member organisation has also provided their 'story of involvement'. These chart how and why involvement has developed within member organisations over time and can prove a useful tool in planning your own development.

You can become an associate member of this group for an annual fee of £50. This gives access to further resources, including discussion forums, training and development resources and access to annual training and networking events.

**[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)**

This large bank of resources and guides can be easily adapted for use with any audience even though the resources are developed with services for young people in mind.

The section on 'Building a Culture of Participation' in your organisation is especially useful for any type of organisation. This site also has some resources to help you involve users and stakeholders in the recruitment process, as well as training resources and case studies.

**[www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)**

The 'Toolbox' section of this site contains very useful 'Adapt and Print' template forms for workshop planning and event evaluation.

The 'Methods A-Z' section contains details of a huge range of involvement techniques and tools, including an excellent prioritising exercise that will help you to establish priorities and timescales for action with your users – an invaluable tool in managing the expectations of those you involve.

The 'Projects A-Z' contains case studies from around the world showing these methods being adapted and put into practice in a range of different settings and circumstances.

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# ***Section 5:*** ***Policies and*** ***procedures*** ***examples***

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This section helps you to think about the kind of policies and procedures that you may consider adopting to support involvement work.

As with any kind of work that brings staff and volunteers into direct contact with the public, it is important that appropriate policies and procedures for involvement are in place.

When initiating involvement within a service, it is not always necessary to start from scratch when developing the policies and procedures to support this involvement. Many of these systems may already exist and may just need some adaptations to make them relevant to involvement.

Consent and confidentiality agreements, protecting children and vulnerable adults policies, and complaints procedures are all good examples of systems that are equally important in an involvement context as they are in the context of the day-to-day running of your service. These can be adapted to cover involvement work.

However, there are some systems that you may need to adopt specifically to ensure that your involvement work is effective. The basic policies and procedures that need to be in place to cover involvement work are:

- **Remuneration and incentives policy**  
Are you able to cover the travel costs of those you involve? Will you be paying them for their time or providing other incentives? You may find a good starting point for a policy like this in your volunteering policy.
- **Financial systems** What is your budget for involvement work? How is this budget to be spent?
- **Evaluation system** How will you be monitoring what those you involve thought about their involvement? Will this system be developed so that the impact of involvement can be measured over time rather than just at the point of contact?

- **Communications and promotion** How will you be promoting your involvement opportunities to encourage potential participants? How will you communicate the success of your involvement work and the changes that it has enabled?

Some organisations decide that rather than adapting a range of policies and procedures to suit involvement, it is more effective to develop an all-encompassing charter or agreement for involvement. A central document such as this will encompass all of the above factors in the specific context of involvement. Essentially, this document lays out what those you involve can expect from you as an organisation.

Examples of some involvement policies and procedures as well as involvement charters and agreements can be found on pp. 34–45.

### Policies and procedures – things to think about

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- Think about how you may involve your service users and stakeholders in the development of these policies and procedures?
- Depending on who you wish to involve, you may need to be creative to ensure that the subject matter is engaging and interesting for your audience.
- Your policies and procedures should encourage inclusive involvement and take into account factors such as event timings, methods of communication, venue accessibility.
- Your procedures need to allow for prompt payment of expenses for involvement participants if needed.

# Strategy for Service User Involvement Age Concern Bournemouth Information & Advice (I&A) Service

## Introduction

This strategy outlines the expectations in terms of service users and involving them in decision-making within the I&A service with a view to providing new services based on service-user and potential service-user need. It also maps the future plans for service-user involvement in Age Concern Bournemouth's (ACB) I&A service.

## Context

### Information and Advice

Engaging with our current service users is a key element within the I&A service. However, we feel that we are not engaging with current service users to our full potential and have little or no engagement with potential users. Our view is to open communications further with an expectation that those who receive I&A support are effectively involved in shaping future provision and evaluating the service's quality. Equally important is the potential to seek the views of non-I&A service users, to ensure that we are providing an inclusive service that takes into account their need.

The key principles of Age Concern Bournemouth as seen in our values and mission statement:

**Our vision** – To ensure that ACB is positioned to provide the best possible support to older people, in a variety of ways, and to ensure that older people's voices are heard and reflected upon. To achieve this, ACB needs to be a strong, dynamic, financially sound and responsive organisation.

**Our mission statement** – ACB promotes and develops services and activities to enable older people to maintain physical and mental well-being. We will work with older people to help them attain this. This will aid all older people in helping make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. To achieve our mission we will work in ways that are: caring, effective, innovative, enabling and influencing to give the individual choice, flexibility, respect and fairness. We aim to give the older person a voice and would not discriminate against any individual or group.

Successful services will potentially be achieved if service users are involved in the shaping of future provision by allowing them to voice their wants and needs.

### Opportunities for service user involvement in the I&A service

Service users should have opportunities to get

Level	Opportunity	Issues/questions
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voicing personal opinions/forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The type and level of service required/desired</li> </ul>
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGMs/meetings</li> <li>• Steering/strategy groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What constitutes a good quality service</li> <li>• Effectiveness and appropriateness of current services</li> <li>• How services could be improved</li> </ul>

(Involvement at a strategic level is not applicable at present).

Our planned involvement is for a specific purpose – to find public opinion on the need for an outreach service for those who are unable to access the service at our office in Moordown. We will be consulting individuals at various locations in the Bournemouth area during a one-week period which will launch on Older People’s Day (1 October 2009). The launch date will allow us to utilise the already planned events within the town and make contact with individuals that we may not ordinarily have contact with. The views will be collected via the use of a pre-planned survey that takes into account the individuals’ thoughts on the viability of such a service.

Participating in the planned events can raise awareness of Age Concern Bournemouth’s services and allow individuals to raise issues with a face-to-face contact.

**Consultation strategy**

At a strategic level the organisation should ensure that its strategy for involving users in service planning and delivery is related to a wider consultation strategy. However, we are not presently applying our involvement at this level but it may be a possibility in the future.

Sometimes an activity is labelled a consultation, when it is not. The table below is a useful guide to understanding at which level service users are to be engaged – this should be communicated to them at the outset.

We are working to the level of involving.

This is a very good example of setting clear standards, which can act as a comprehensive checklist to ensure that we are being clear, concise and inclusive with a view to gaining appropriate and meaningful results.

**Service user involvement**

**Steps to take**

**1. Research**

The first step is to identify what consultation vehicles and groups already exist. Service users are increasingly being consulted and ‘consultation fatigue’ can become an issue. It is important not to duplicate what is already there by setting up new groups. The focus should be on targeting existing groups/events as we are aiming to do. We do not plan to set up a consultation group at this stage as we are engaging as a ‘one off’ at this stage. However, results may indicate that there is a need for such a group/forum.

**2. Overcome the barriers to involvement**

There are a number of options for consulting with service users. The following is not an exhaustive list but highlights some of the main choices. An important point when consulting with service users on a large scale and an ongoing basis is to offer a variety of opportunities for involvement:

<b>Informing</b>	Where a decision has been taken and consultation is not required.
<b>Researching</b>	Where information is being sought to help to make a decision.
<b>Consulting</b>	Where views will be taken into consideration when making a decision.
<b>Involving</b>	Where the outcome will be heavily influenced by the results of the consultation.
<b>Partnership</b>	Where a decision is taken with others.

- **Road shows** – this concept involves going to the users. Road shows are mobile information/publicity devices that could be used to promote services and generate comment on service-delivery issues.
- **Focus groups** – these bring together users to discuss a particular issue. They are not representative of the general population, but can involve groups of people who have things in common – e.g. group of Chinese residents in the community. They are good for exploring issues in depth and typically last for 1-2 hours.
- **Citizens panel** – a group of citizens from the borough who can be used as a means of consultation.
- **Mystery shopping** – this technique is useful for monitoring and reviewing services. Users pose as potential customers to test the quality of the service received and service standards (through on-site visits or telephone calls). This approach can also be used by consultants and can involve voluntary groups.
- **Attend other events/meetings** – this can be one of the most effective ways to consult with a wide range of stakeholders. At the early stages in a consultation process it is a good idea to give a presentation and take part in a Q&A during other organisations' meetings.
- **Surveys** – questionnaires provided to a wide range of people. You may use customer satisfaction surveys to consult with a large number of service users.
- **Forums** – meetings to discuss specific things.
- **Others** – suggestion boxes, visioning exercises and texting service users may be possible options.

### 3. Be inclusive

We should aim to gain feedback from as many members of the community as possible, including black and minority ethnic communities.

It is essential that we provide individuals with clear information during engagement to ensure that they are aware of how their views can make a difference. Adhering to basic quality standards will assist in making us an inclusive organisation within our diverse community:

- Ensure that we present documents that are clear and accessible, written in plain language and can be provided in alternative formats/ languages if required.
- Communication needs of the community should be catered for, such as providing interpreters, if necessary.

### Some issues to consider for the future

1. When planning events it is important to check dates of meetings and ensure that they do not clash with cultural and religious events.
2. Ensure that material can be made available in a range of formats (large print, Braille, translations, audio etc.).
3. Provide signers if required, e.g. Makaton can be used if understood by people in the community.
4. Meetings should be wheelchair accessible, be well lit, have induction loops.
5. Food at events/meetings should be appropriate – Halal, kosher, vegetarian etc.
6. There may be other needs – which is why it is important to ask for this information when sending out joining instructions for events.

### **User involvement in the review and monitoring process**

There are many opportunities for service users to get involved at the individual, organisational and strategic levels. Again, we are involving service users for a specific reason with a set goal in mind, so our present level's results will be assessed internally. This initial engagement may lead to further and regular engaging with service users, so will need a more thorough reviewing and monitoring process.

#### **Peer review and monitoring**

One option would be to set up a pool of service-user review volunteers. This pool could be trained to help the organisation bring a service-user perspective to the reviews.

#### **The service-user reviewers could be involved in:**

- attending planning and reviewing team meetings
- carrying out site work, including meetings with staff and service users
- mystery shopping and focus groups
- telephone and face-to-face surveys of service users
- commenting and contributing to the draft inspection report.

Now that we have planned this initial service-user involvement programme, we may find that there is room for future and regular engagement with both present and potential service users.

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# Payment and Expenses Policy – Breast Cancer Care

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User support and involvement is one of Breast Cancer Care's key aims. It supports the principle that people affected by breast cancer should not be out of pocket for user-involvement activity (associated with Breast Cancer Care). For example, requests to attend conferences, seminars, meetings or working parties. In addition, in specific circumstances they should receive appropriate payment in recognition for time, energy and expertise spent on this role.

The policy acknowledges that for people with breast cancer their involvement may be affected by issues such as fatigue, which will need to be taken into account when making travel and accommodation arrangements, financial considerations, e.g. living on low incomes, benefits, and pensions or being self-employed. Also the fact that involvement takes people away from their normal domestic life, which may mean they prefer to travel with a companion or family member.

It is recognised that the policy should be subjected to periodic review to reflect developments in user involvement and developments within Breast Cancer Care, including budgetary constraints.

**All** claims for expenses must be supported by a receipt or bill. Breast Cancer Care is audited annually, and is legally obliged to demonstrate that its accounts are in order, so among other things, this includes producing legitimate receipts for all expenses.

Breast Cancer Voices can claim for all reasonable expenses incurred on behalf of work for Breast Cancer Care. Usually, this will fall into one of the following categories:

## 1. Travel

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Breast Cancer Voices can claim for travel to take part in user-involvement opportunities, including working parties, panels, training courses and so on.

This may be travel by public transport (bus or train), travel by car (mileage) or occasionally by taxi. They must ensure that they obtain a receipt if they are not given, or cannot keep, a ticket.

Breast Cancer Care will reimburse mileage claims at the rate of 40 pence per mile. Mileage claims do not need to be supported by receipts. However, please note that if there is a feasible, safe, cheaper alternative by public transport, Breast Cancer Care will reimburse mileage to the value of that fare.

## 2. Meals

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If Breast Cancer Voices are taking part in a user-involvement opportunity with Breast Cancer Care, meals and refreshments will be provided. However, you may occasionally need to buy a meal (for instance, if a Breast Cancer Voice is taking part in an external opportunity where expenses have been previously agreed, a Breast Cancer Voice may need to buy a sandwich for lunch, or if a Breast Cancer Voice is travelling down the night before an opportunity, they may need to go out for an evening meal). In these cases, we will reimburse up to the value of £7 for breakfast, £10 for lunch, or £15 for an evening meal. As a charity, we cannot reimburse expenses for alcohol.



### 3. Accommodation

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Unless otherwise agreed in advance, all accommodation for Breast Cancer Care work is agreed and arranged through the User-Involvement Facilitator.

### 4. Childcare expenses

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Breast Cancer Care will pay a contribution towards childcare costs that arise from having to attend organisation business, up to a value of £3 per hour. However, any childcare expenses should be cleared in advance with your Centre Administrator.

### 5. Additional out-of-pocket expenses

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#### a) Accompanying carers

If a user requires the support of a carer then carers' costs will be covered in line with the above guidelines on travel, accommodation and meals.

#### b) Caring responsibilities

The term 'user' includes carers of people affected by breast cancer whose ability to attend an event or meeting may depend on having someone to sit with or care for their relative.

If a user has adult caring responsibilities then reasonable carer's expenses will be reimbursed at the discretion of the manager concerned.

#### c) Accompanying companions/ family members

Any accompanying companions/family members are welcome to travel with user representatives as long as this does not incur any additional costs in line with the above guidelines. If costs are incurred these must be met by the user.

This excludes cases where the accompanying companion/family member is the carer. Users should ensure they clarify the position

with the Breast Cancer Care User Involvement Team regarding any of these additional costs prior to booking.

#### d) Administration expenses

Reasonable administration costs for activities undertaken will be reimbursed where there has been prior agreement; for example, to cover the costs of phone calls, printing cartridges, stationery and postage.

### Other claims

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We have found that Breast Cancer Voices rarely need to claim for anything other than the items listed above. If they would like to claim for anything else, however, we may still be able to help you – please discuss with the User-Involvement Facilitator.

### Can Breast Cancer Voices claim money in advance?

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Expenses, by definition, are usually paid in arrears. Sometimes, we may be able to pay claims in advance if the expense is significant or will cause the participant difficulty.

### External training courses and conferences

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Breast Cancer Care does not pay for Breast Cancer Voices to attend external training courses. We will not reimburse Breast Cancer Voices for attending conferences or seminars unless this has been agreed in advance.

### Reimbursement

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Reimbursement will be made from the budget of the Breast Cancer Care team or department requesting the user's involvement. Users should be made aware of who their key Breast Cancer Care contact is and who can advise them about what expenses and fees will be covered.

Reimbursement will only be made for expenses that have actually been incurred and agreed. Breast Cancer Care expense claim forms should be given to all user representatives. Full details of every claim and all original receipts must be submitted.

Reimbursement should be dealt with as a priority by Breast Cancer Care staff and will normally be made by the Finance team within one month of activity.

### Approaches from external organisations for user representatives

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The organisation making the request should make it clear what involvement they are asking for and what expenses or payments are being offered.

If the organisation does not have its own policy it will be directed to Breast Cancer Care's policy but the organisation will be under no obligation to adhere to it or Breast Cancer Care obliged to cover expenses incurred. It will be the responsibility of the user representative concerned to accept or decline the offer to be involved.

### The position of people dependent on benefits

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People affected by breast cancer will often be dependent on welfare/state benefits of one kind or another. Breast Cancer Care will need to make them aware that they need to make their own informed choice about whether or not to accept payments and to give their time to user-involvement activities.

### Confidentiality policy

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One of the organisational principles of Breast Cancer Care is to preserve confidentiality for clients and user representatives. Clients have a right to expect that when they contact Breast Cancer Care or any representative of Breast Cancer Care they do so in complete confidence. Users also have a right to expect that their personal details will be kept securely and kept in confidence.

### Keeping users' details confidential

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Breast Cancer Care will not pass on users' personal information to other users without their express permission. While not wanting to obstruct contact between users, we are responsible for preserving confidentiality.

If Breast Cancer Voices are provided with contact details for another Breast Cancer Voice, please store this information appropriately. It should not be available to other people and should be destroyed when contact has been completed.

Under the Data Protection Act, no information should be stored on a Breast Cancer Voice, identifiable to other Breast Cancer Voices, without their knowledge and permission. Further advice on data protection will be supplied.



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# Service User Involvement Charter – Sue Ryder Care

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## Welcome

*On behalf of Sue Ryder Care may I welcome and thank you for getting involved. We can only provide the best for people in our care with your help and support. It is a partnership.*

*Whether you are a resident in one of our care homes, a client of homecare services, a patient at one of the hospices, a friend or family member of someone in our care, or a local volunteer, we value your contribution.*

*Your involvement will make all the difference. You will help keep us in touch with the things that are most important to those who receive our care. Your views and your ideas can help us get things right today and help us plan for the future.*

*Thank you for being involved.*

## Introduction

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The Charter provides guidance and information for you about getting involved. It highlights the importance of confidentiality and safety as well as openness and mutual respect. It talks about how you can take part, and sets out what we expect of you as a representative of service users, and how we can support you.

## Information about Sue Ryder Care

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Sue Ryder Care is a charity providing health and social care to people with long-term, palliative and end-of-life needs. We deliver our services in people's own homes, in the community and through our hospices and care centres across the UK. We specialise in caring for people with conditions such as cancer, Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, brain injury, stroke and dementia.

Each year, we provide 4 million hours of care, make 1.4 million home visits to people in need and deliver 100,000 days of long-term

residential care. We are one of the largest providers of specialist palliative and end-of-life care in the UK.

## How the organisation is run

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We have over 2,000 staff and 6,000 volunteers based across the UK who contribute to our work. Our Trustees are responsible for the overall governance of the Charity. They must satisfy themselves that the right planning and policies are in place, approve our goals and agree the way the budget is set. They are responsible for the appointment of the Chief Executive who manages the charity day to day.

## Opportunities for involvement

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There are opportunities to be involved locally and in national discussions and events. You are also welcome to apply to join our National Service-User Advisory Group. This group advises the charity on the views and priorities of service users.

## The Charter

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Our commitment to you:

1. Your health and well-being is top priority for us.
2. We will treat you with respect and dignity, and only involve you when you agree to this.
3. We will protect your right to privacy and confidentiality.
4. We will respect your integrity and independence.
5. You will have an opportunity to influence decisions about your services through contributing your views and ideas.
6. We may not always agree but we will encourage conversations to find common ground.
7. We are committed to equality and opportunities and will help all service users to be involved.
8. We will be honest and open with you.
9. During your involvement you will have support and guidance from a member of staff.
10. You will be entitled to claim agreed expenses linked to your involvement work.
11. You will have access to training to help you fulfil your role as a service-user representative.

## What we expect of you

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1. You will keep confidential any information that you receive about service users or staff or about the commercial interests of the charity.
2. You will be courteous to others.
3. You will uphold the good name of the charity.
4. You will treat people fairly and not discriminate on the grounds of race, disability, illness, gender or sexuality.

5. You will respect the contributions of others even if you disagree with them.
6. You will declare any interest that may conflict with your role as a service-user representative and you will not promote any personal business through your activities with Sue Ryder Care.
7. You will do your best to distinguish clearly, when speaking or writing, between personal views and those of the group.
8. You will be accountable to the wider community of service users and the general public.
9. You will be honest and open in your communication with others.

## Support and working with the local link person

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A local member of Sue Ryder Care staff will be available for you to speak to about any issue related to your involvement. This is your local link person.

They will let you know about local opportunities to get involved and introduce you to other people you might be working with. Staff will do their best to match your specific interests with involvement activities.

It is helpful if you keep in touch with them about the work you undertake for Sue Ryder Care and keep them informed of developments. Let them know if you will not be able to do something that you agreed to do.

*If you have any concerns about the way you are received or the conduct of any staff member you meet in the course of your involvement, please report these issues to the local link person or the Service-User Involvement Lead, so the problem can be resolved.*

### Expenses policy

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The centre or service with which you are involved will provide you with information about how to claim expenses locally. Travel expenses, by car or public transport, will normally be met for attendance at service-user meetings, or other events where your attendance has been agreed with the local link person.

The following activities may be included:

Attendance at events, seminars, or conferences related to your involvement within Sue Ryder Care; training for service users organised by us; visits to the centre or service or visits to community organisations in furtherance of the business of Sue Ryder Care.

Other expenses that may be met are special transport needs, or the support of a carer or advocate to help you attend meetings. Please discuss these and other needs with your link person ahead of time.

Expenses that have not been agreed in advance may not be met.

### Claims procedure

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All claims must be made on a claims form and receipts must be provided. Claims under £20 may be paid in cash immediately on the authority of the service manager. Claims of more than £20 will be paid by cheque. This can be drawn on the day by advance arrangement, or a cheque will be sent to your home address within 14 days.

Claim forms must be submitted to your link person in the relevant service/centre who will arrange authorisation.

### Other important information

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#### Personal belongings

Keep your purse or wallet with you safely at all times. We cannot be responsible for any personal items that are lost or stolen. It is highly advisable not to bring with you any valuable items.

#### Dealing with the media/press

You are advised to refer all enquiries from the press or media to your link person or the Press Office. The staff there will be able to offer advice and support.

#### Identity badge

If you are on Sue Ryder Care business we will provide you with an identity badge.

#### Smoking policy

There is no smoking on any of our premises except in designated areas.

#### Health and safety

Please take care of yourself and others by observing all rules and guidance relating to health and safety.

You should not operate any machinery, lift service users or push them in a wheelchair or bed. You are not insured to do so and it is not safe for you or for them if you have not received specific training.

#### Data protection

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When you sign up as a service-user representative we will put your details on our database so we can send you information and keep in touch. We will not share this information with others.

You can request for your name and contact details to be taken off the list at any time by notifying your link person or the Service-User Involvement Lead.

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## Standards for service-user involvement – Shelter

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These standards have been developed in consultation with service users. We want to make sure as many of our service users as possible feel able to get involved if they want to. The standards apply to any service-user involvement event that Shelter organises, and any events organised by external organisations which have asked Shelter to arrange for our service users to attend.

As a Shelter service user you can expect to:

- be welcomed and introduced when you turn up at an event where you don't know everyone
- have information about the event before you go and/or the chance to talk it through with your support worker
- be able to get to and get around the venue easily
- be asked if you have any special requirements to get involved
- be asked about the best times for you to get to an event
- have reasonable travel costs to the venue reimbursed if you so wish
- have your childcare costs reimbursed if you need to pay for childcare to get to an event
- be provided with refreshments and check if you have any special dietary requirements if we provide food
- receive feedback after the event so that you know what has changed or has not changed a result of your involvement.

We will do our best to help you attend service-user involvement events, and this may include being paired with another service user before the event so you have a familiar face at the event, attending the event with a support worker (if it is an event with another organisation) or bringing a friend to an event. The service will discuss with you which option will work best.

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# ***Section 6:*** ***Skills and*** ***knowledge***

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This section helps you to think about how you can support those you involve by providing them with the skills and knowledge to be involved effectively.





This may mean adapting your methods to match the existing skills, knowledge and interests of your service users and stakeholders, but it could also mean providing them with further skills and knowledge or simply helping to boost their confidence.

Some of the most effective and enduring involvement has taken place when organisations have taken seriously a commitment to enable those they involve to build their skills and knowledge and build their capacity to participate more fully.

Capacity building could mean traditional training but this can be costly and a traditional training setting could be an intimidating one for some users.

For many organisations that are just starting their involvement activities, building the skills and knowledge of those they involve is much simpler.

**Tool: Capacity-building activities and goals**

**Time needed: 30 minutes**

Appropriate forum: Staff team or management meeting.

This exercise helps you to think about what simple capacity-building opportunities your service may be able to offer potential involvement participants and what you expect participants to gain from them. Think about activity ideas within the context of the profile of those you wish to involve and of the kind of decisions you require their input on.

- Other simple offers, such as providing a guided tour of your premises and providing information on the history and work of your organisation, can help not only to create a sense of partnership but also to enable those you involve to gain an understanding of your service. This kind of knowledge can be invaluable when contributing to decision-making within your organisation.
- Peer mentoring can also be a really useful tool to enable new participants to build confidence and expertise. If they have never attended a formal meeting before but can attend their first with a peer mentor or friend, the task can seem immediately less daunting.
- Show those you wish to involve your mandate for involvement. This is a simple and clear way to demonstrate the reasons for their involvement.
- It could be as simple as providing those you involve with the parameters within which the decisions that they make must fit. Knowing about funding constraints, for example, and the relative cost of various options or the capacity of your service to deliver change can be powerful knowledge that enables those you involve to make informed, effective decisions that lead to real change.

*(See template on p. 60)*

Capacity-building activity	Activity goals
<p>Provide guided tour of premises and information on the history and work of the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sense of partnership between participants and staff</li> <li>• Participants gain understanding of the way services work and why</li> <li>• Provide context within which decisions concerning advice services need to be made</li> </ul>
<p>Peer mentoring or 'buddying' system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New participants build confidence through working with experienced participants before attending first event and accompanying them to an event</li> <li>• Gain knowledge and expertise from mentor/ buddy that helps them to participate fully, more quickly</li> </ul>
<p>Provide potential participants with the documentation you have produced to support their involvement, such as your mandate for involvement, involvement strategy or involvement charter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows that we are being open and honest about why we are asking for people's involvement</li> <li>• People are made aware of what they can expect from involvement in our organisation</li> <li>• Prior knowledge helps build confidence and expertise among participants. They are able to be involved fully, more quickly</li> </ul>
<p>Provide participants with the parameters within which any decisions must be made. This could include knowledge of funding constraints, the relative cost of various options or the capacity and time frame for delivering change within the service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants attend events already aware of possibilities and limitations</li> <li>• Encourages participants to think about their ideas before an event and to set these within an appropriate context</li> <li>• Participants more able to contribute fully to decision-making</li> </ul>

## Next steps

Through the use of this set of resources you are able to define, develop and embed user and stakeholder involvement within your advice organisation. It is important that the involvement work that you implement does not end here and that you continue to evaluate, adapt and develop the involvement work you have started.

Some of the involvement methods contained in this resource can help you to evaluate what you have already achieved. It is also useful to keep yourself up to date with developments in involvement work by continuing to talk about it with other organisations with whom you have contact. There are useful message boards, discussion forums and 'ask the expert' features on a number of websites and you could even join a more formal network of involvement practitioners, such as the 'User Involvement in the Voluntary Sector Shared Learning Group'. Groups like this organise training and network events as well as sharing expertise and experience.

You can also contact your national membership organisation through the following contacts:



### Age UK

Matthew Pilkington, [adviceunit@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:adviceunit@ageuk.org.uk)



### Youth Access

Pamela Verma, [admin@youthaccess.org.uk](mailto:admin@youthaccess.org.uk)



### Citizens Advice

Tom Clark, [tom.clark@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:tom.clark@citizensadvice.org.uk)



Law Centres Federation

### Law Centres Federation

Jennifer Ball, [jennifer@lawcentres.org.uk](mailto:jennifer@lawcentres.org.uk)



### Advice UK

Chilli Reid, [chilli.reid@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:chilli.reid@adviceuk.org.uk)

If you have any comments or questions regarding this set of resources, please contact [matthew.pilkington@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:matthew.pilkington@ageuk.org.uk)



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# *Appendix: Templates*

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## A ladder involvement – template

(See page 10 for example)

### Rung 1 – consent and inform

Decisions are made by staff in your organisation with little input from service users or stakeholders.

Your service users and stakeholders probably assume that there is no opportunity for involvement in these decisions.

Service users and stakeholders are informed of the decisions that are made that may affect them.

### Rung 2 – consult

You routinely ask for feedback on the services you provide.

Your service users and stakeholders are aware of the ways in which they can give their views and opinions.

You feed back to users and stakeholders on the decisions that you made and how their opinions and views were taken into account.

### Rung 3 – participate

You actively seek the opinions and views of your service users and stakeholders and take them into account before making decisions.

You share some of the decision-making on service planning and management with your users and stakeholders.

Service users and stakeholders have opportunities to get involved in related aspects of the service, such as fundraising and campaigning.

### Rung 4 – partnership

Staff work as equals with users and stakeholders in planning and managing services.

Service users and stakeholders have the opportunity to initiate and follow through activities themselves.

Users and stakeholders are involved as a general rule in all aspects of your services rather than as a one-off or by special arrangement.

### Rung 5 – control

Service users and stakeholders are able to make strategic decisions about your services.

Service users and stakeholders are able to allocate resources for your services.

Planning and managing services are majority controlled by ex-service users and stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> Some organisations may feel uncomfortable involving current service users on decision-making boards or committees. Indeed, some organisations have developed policies which prevent board members from becoming users of services. There can be a risk of creating an impression of favouritism and the situation can be made more difficult if the outcome of the advice provided is not favourable for the service user. We suggest that you check The Charity Commission



website for guidance (CC24-'Users on Board'). At the time of writing, this guidance could be found at [www.charity-commission.gov.uk/library/guidance/cc24text.pdf](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/library/guidance/cc24text.pdf). Where appropriate, agencies should also check the requirements of any relevant regulatory bodies, e.g., Solicitors Regulation Authority. These issues do not arise with ex-service users who are often able to make a positive and significant contribution.

Recent decision mapping – template

(See page 13 for example)

Nature of decision	Decision made by	Involvement?	Potential for further involvement

**Barriers and action – template**

*(See page 16 for example)*

User/stakeholder	Barrier	Potential course of action

**A mandate for involvement – template**

*(See page 21 for example)*

	Example
<p>(1) <b>Identity</b> Who are you, in the context of this piece of work? A whole organisation, a sub-committee or department, a single officer etc?</p>	
<p>(2) <b>Target(s) for involvement</b> Who do you want to involve? Any local citizen, people from particular sections of the community, stakeholders representing community groups etc?</p>	
<p>(3) <b>The issue</b> What do you want to ask those you involve? Is it a broad issue concerning your whole organisation? Is it about a specific project or service? Are you trying to gain knowledge to help you influence another organisation?</p>	
<p>(4) <b>The actor(s)</b> Who is responsible for carrying out or implementing what you decide? This may be the same as the ‘identity’ but not necessarily.</p>	
<p>(5) <b>Action</b> What will the actor have to do to implement what is decided? This will not be clear until after decisions are made, but you can plan in terms of the time and resources the actor may need and you can plan for reporting, feeding back and evaluation etc.</p>	
<p>(6) <b>Dates</b> When does the actor need to take action by? The work associated with what comes out of your involvement activities may be ongoing but building in deadlines can be useful to ensure that action is taken in good time. Those you involve will also be keen to see when they can expect action or feedback.</p>	
<p>(7) <b>Overall objective</b> What is it that you would like to accomplish through this particular piece of involvement work?</p>	

**Fear of involvement – template**

*(See page 23 for example)*

Fear of involvement	Response to this fear

**Capacity-building activities and goals – template**

*(See page 49 for example)*

Capacity-building activity	Activity goals





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