



Female Service User Involvement Options

**MEWA Health and
Harm Reduction Unit**

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1.Responsibility for approval of policy	<i>MEWA CEO</i>
2.Responsibility for implementation	<i>Abdalla Badhrus</i>
3.Responsibility for ensuring review	<i>Abdalla Badhrus</i>

Overview:

- 1.1. This resource provides a list of techniques that can be used within a service to involve service users. These ideas can be adapted and changed according to the individual service and needs of the service users. Note that in order to involve the maximum number of service users, organisations will often identify a number of ways to involve and include service users.

2. Options:

No.1	Option: Service User Forum	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff and/or service users
<i>Description:</i> Facilitated discussion group made up of service users of a particular service or local area.		
<i>Purpose:</i> to give service users time and space to voice their opinions on services in general, or the specific service they are attending.		
<i>Frequency:</i> at regular intervals e.g. quarterly / monthly		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Topics are decided by service users and so can be relevant to service users' needs. - Can provide an opportunity to develop service user skills in relation to group work. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to be well-managed/organised - 'Hot topics or emotive issues can take over the meeting. Facilitators should have appropriate training. - Some people are not comfortable speaking in a group. Efforts need to be made to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak. - Boundaries of decision making need to be explained so that service users have an idea as to what they can influence and what is not on the table due to legal requirements, funding stipulations or the values and ethos of the service. - The service needs to ensure that feedback is provided in a timely manner and that the forums do not become tokenistic. This requires regular meaningful communication and open communication channels between decision makers and the forum.

No.2	Option: Peer Group	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Service users with staff support if needed
<i>Description:</i> Service user group with a focus on learning and support around particular issues relevant to service users.		
<i>Purpose:</i> to give service users space to share information and to receive and provide training or education to one another.		
<i>Frequency:</i> at regular intervals e.g. quarterly / monthly / weekly		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service users get practical education and skills. - Service users can learn teaching skills. - Can feed into effective training for staff in services. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service users may need significant additional training/support. - If introducing see Peer Work Policy which may be relevant. - Progression routes should be identified for any service user who wish to pursue peer work

		into the future.
No.3	Option: Newsletter	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Service users with staff support if needed
<i>Description:</i> A newsletter or magazine with content from service users (and the service if needed)		
<i>Purpose:</i> Communicates about issues, events and services that are relevant to service users		
<i>Frequency:</i> At regular intervals e.g. quarterly / monthly		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives service users a chance to learn about computers, word-processing etc. - Gives service users time to look over and think about the issues in their own time - Gives space for service users to be creative with stories, poems etc. - Having a magazine that 'speaks' to service user and deals with their issues. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can exclude service users who have problems with reading or writing. - Can take a lot of time and commitment to do at regular intervals. - Can become biased by issues / opinions of the individual service users involved in the project, i.e. non representative.

No.4	Option: Service User Survey	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff, with service users if appropriate
<i>Description:</i> Questionnaire or interview with services users.		
<i>Purpose:</i> Provides service with a chance to understand service user satisfaction with service, service user satisfaction with level of involvement, or opinions on an issue.		
<i>Frequency:</i> service user satisfaction survey at least annually and issue-based surveys as needed.		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be conducted by an external person to promote independence / honesty in responses. - Can get views of more service users than other forums which are dependent on attendance. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be time consuming. - Questions can limit the responses received i.e. the survey may not ask the right questions to understand service users' main concerns. - Literacy can be an issue if a paper / IT based survey is used.

No.5	Option: Suggestion Box	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff
<i>Description:</i> A box to collect service user suggestions on an ongoing basis.		
<i>Purpose:</i> to facilitate on-going service user ideas or feedback.		
<i>Frequency:</i> on-going		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy to set up. - Can be anonymous. - Open to all kinds of ideas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some people may need reading / writing support to use it. - Can be hard to get ideas down properly on paper: services can keep a notice beside the suggestion box of an issue that had been raised before and

	<p>how it was addressed, as this can give people ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggestions need to be read regularly and feedback provided on all suggestions in an open and consistent manner. - A number of services find that where suggestion boxes are in place, they are not used.
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No.6	Option: Focus Groups	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff, but occasionally service users
<i>Description:</i> Directed discussion to get information from service users around a particular issue.		
<i>Purpose:</i> To get an understanding of service user's opinions or experiences, generally relating to the service itself.		
<i>Frequency:</i> As needed		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good way of learning about what's important around a particular issue. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Needs to be well managed, particularly if the issue is very sensitive or a 'hot topic': trained facilitators should be used. -Some people don't like giving their opinion in a group. - To ensure that the experience is empowering, feedback should be recorded, and the group should be consulted for approval on recorded feedback. The group should be informed of any actions that result from the feedback.

No.7	Option: Involvement in Appraisals	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Management
<i>Description:</i> Inclusion of service user assessment on staff appraisals.		
<i>Purpose:</i> To provide service user input into staff appraisals.		
<i>Frequency:</i> On-going		
<i>Benefits</i>		<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service users have direct input into staff assessment. - Staff may appreciate having specific service user feedback as a helpful resource for professional development. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should be exercised with care. Boundaries and safety of staff would need to be carefully managed. For example, staff that are appropriately challenging to service users should not be penalised for this. - Service users may need training and support to participate

No.8	Option: Service User Representation	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff, management, external stakeholders
<i>Description:</i> Inclusion of service user representative on any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project meetings such as staff meetings or meetings about special issues. - Local service user forums. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local issue-based meetings, steering groups or task forces. - Board meetings. - Any other meeting where the views of service users of the particular group are requested. 	
<i>Purpose:</i> To have representation of service user view in various fora	
<i>Frequency:</i> On-going	
<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges / solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Genuine representation of individual or collective service user view (depending on model used). -Service user voice is heard directly in a variety of spaces / groups. - Supports service user empowerment and skills development. - Can promote consultation between service users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Should be exercised with care as without appropriate supports it can be tokenistic or can potentially be a negative experience. -Supports to consider include shadowing prior to taking on role, de-briefing / preparation sessions following meetings. - Where possible should also include training (protocols for meetings, public speaking, policy making, assertiveness), thorough induction to the group, mentor system with experienced group/board member. - Where relevant (e.g. board of management representation) support should also include ensuring positive relationship between chair of board and service user rep, handbook with jargon broken down and work to be done with full committee to ensure plain English is used. -Takes commitment from the service user. -Difficult for reps to represent the views of many; a model should be agreed, generally either: 1) the member is representing their unique viewpoint as a service user, or 2) points are clearly agreed at group meetings / forums and feedback is given in the same forum, the rep is then tasked with representing these views. Option 2 may require staff administration supports. - High turnover can mean lack of consistency; role descriptions should be in place.

No.8b	Option: Service User Elections	<i>Facilitated by:</i> Staff and service users
<i>Description:</i> Elections to appoint service user representatives. Candidates may be self-nominated or nominated by others.		
<i>Purpose:</i> To facilitate democratic process of service user representation.		
<i>Frequency:</i> At regular intervals e.g. six monthly / annually.		
<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges / Solutions</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Democratic way of getting service user representation. - Service users learn more about voting system- can encourage future voting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can take some work to organise. - When well managed, services have found that the voting system does not discourage future nominations. 	

Other ideas:

- **Creative consultation:** Not every service user will communicate through verbal or written mediums such as those mentioned above. Services may consider other, creative forms of consultation, such as through drama, art, new media etc.
- **Stand alone events:** For example, client conferences can be very useful if well managed.
- **Listening Lunches:** A listening lunch is a way to share new information, but also to have staff and management listen to the issues and concerns being raised by service users.
- **Help with Research:** Service users can be involved in identifying issues for research or participating in the research itself.

Appendix 1: Sample Terms of Reference for Service User Groups

1.1. Aims

- 1.1.1. To help *MEWA Health Board* hear from people using the service in regard to what they would like improved, changes they would to see happen, or aspects of the service they like.
- 1.1.2. To give service users to have an opportunity to influence the way the service works.

1.2. Roles and responsibilities

- 1.2.1. Staff:
 - 1.2.1.1. To ensure that as many people as possible are encouraged to participate in the service user forum.
 - 1.2.1.2. To provide clear information on the way things are done, how it's done, what can and can't be done with service user participation, and what the possibilities for the future are.
- 1.2.2. Service users:
 - 1.2.2.1. To be as honest as possible when discussing the service.
 - 1.2.2.2. To be respectful and fair when discussing any individuals.
 - 1.2.2.3. To allow other people to express their opinions.

1.3. Process and Communications

- 1.3.1. Meetings will be held monthly.
- 1.3.2. Services users will be informed verbally and by notices in the building.
- 1.3.3. An agenda or plan will be agreed at the beginning of the meeting.
- 1.3.4. The meeting will be facilitated by a member of staff / manager / peer facilitator
- 1.3.5. Everyone will be given a chance to express their views.
- 1.3.6. What happens at the meeting and agreements made will be recorded as minutes.
- 1.3.7. Issues and suggestions from the meeting will be taken to the staff meeting, the management meeting and if necessary, the board of management meeting so that there will be a clear response, and any suggested service changes can go ahead.
- 1.3.8. Service responses will be brought to the next service user meeting. Where suggestions cannot happen, it will be explained why. Where service users' suggestions affect the way, the service is run this will also be explained.

1.4. Limitations

- 1.4.1. *The management of MEWA Health and Harm Reduction Unit* will strive to listen to and take account of the views of service users. However, it is important to note that this needs to be done according to certain rules of the organisation, and certain laws, which includes the organisation having to:
 - 1.4.2. Protect the health and safety of staff and service users.
 - 1.4.3. Work in way outlined in the 'mission statement', 'objectives' and 'values'.
 - 1.4.4. Keep within its budget.
 - 1.4.5. Ensure that services are accessible and inclusive to all.
 - 1.4.6. In addition to the above there are some topics that are not appropriate for discussion at the service user forum, including staff issues and issues regarding other service users.

1.5. Complaints

If a service user wishes to complain or has any issues with the process or decisions, they are welcome to make a formal complaint to *MEWA Management*.