

**CLiNKs**

supporting voluntary organisations that  
work with offenders and their families



# Service user involvement and co-production







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# Foreword



**Anne Fox** Chief Executive Officer, Clinks

**“Clinks is wholly committed to promoting and supporting effective service user involvement to inform criminal justice policy and practice,” says Chief Executive Officer at Clinks, Anne Fox.**

The people and families who have direct experience of the Criminal Justice System are a vital source of intelligence about how to make services work best.

We believe involving service users is key to the difference we can make in the lives of offenders – improving the quality and impact of the services on offer; contributing to wider outcomes, including reducing re-offending; and enabling individual service users to build a new identity which supports their journey to desistance from crime.

The voluntary sector has a long history of pioneering service user involvement in the Criminal Justice System. Clinks’ members, such as Revolving Doors Agency and User Voice, have been at the forefront of the drive to recognise the value of service users’ voices and draw on their experiences to shape the services they use.

Today, the voluntary sector promotes a number of models for involving these ‘experts by experience’ in order to listen to their views, and involve them in service design and the delivery and evaluation of services. These approaches amplify the voices that usually go unheard, to make sure we benefit from their insights.

This revised guide is designed to give you the practical tools you need to develop an

involvement programme and approach which places your service users at the heart of your organisation. Whether you have a well-established programme of service user involvement, or are just getting started, we hope you find it helpful.”

**“We, as a group of individuals who have had experience of multiple services within the criminal justice sector, are delighted to be invited to refresh the Clinks 2010 guide to service user involvement,” say our Editorial Advisors, Lisa Hunter, Richard Tillman and Joe Martin.**

“In 2010 service user involvement in this sector was not well-established; we are pleased to confirm that in 2016 that there has been some significant progress within the system, both statutory and voluntary; and we now know and have had direct experience of a number of service user involvement projects, both in prisons and in the community. We are really happy to see this happening across the country and witness the changes in the people involved and in organisations as a consequence.

“We welcome the view, now much more widely accepted, that service users are experts through their life experiences. We have seen that providers and commissioners now seem to understand in principle the value of involving service users.

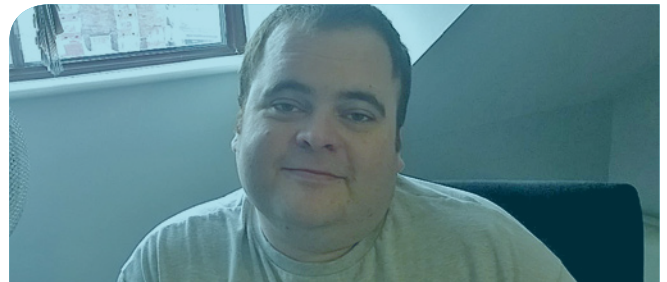
“We have heard ourselves described as service users, as experts by experience, as lived experience teams. Whatever the term used we are pleased to see service users becoming involved in research about gaps in services, working with commissioners to develop and score tenders and bids, and becoming involved in the shaping, delivery and evaluation of services.

“From a service user perspective, being involved has given us opportunities we may not have otherwise had – for example, we have received training, been involved in research, talked to policy makers and developed this guide. And in addition, it has also



**Richard Tillman** Editorial Advisor

*I have had numerous experiences with drug services, Criminal Justice System and the mental health system. I found out about Revolving Doors through a friend and got involved in the peer research project in Wandsworth as I wanted to try and change the system and help others avoid the pitfalls I had experienced. I am also currently volunteering as a support worker to pass on my experience and skills to others. I want to share my experiences and influence services so that other people don't have to go through what I went through.*



**Joe Martin** Editorial Advisor

*Joe is an ex-offender who has successfully faced the challenges of substance misuse and mental health issues in his youth. He is now a valuable member of the Lived Experience Team for the national Liaison and Diversion Programme, supported by Revolving Doors Agency, and is employed in the Talent Match team at YMCA in Wolverhampton, working with excluded young people, supporting them into employment and training. Joe works tirelessly to promote service user involvement, understanding its value in supporting desistance outcomes and developing self-esteem.*

allowed us to develop a vision for ourselves of a new identity that is within reach; a new identity as a contributor and an active citizen. You cannot beat the feeling of being listened to, making things happen and feeling good about yourself.

“This guide outlines many practical tips on how to get involvement work up and running in your organisation or service. It shows how involvement can work – tips on what to do and what not to do! We hope that, through sharing our experiences and examples of good practice from other organisations, we have created a blueprint that you can use to run your own service user involvement projects successfully and meaningfully.

“We have really enjoyed working on this guide and hope that you and your service users will get as much out of being involved as we do.”



**Lisa Hunter** Editorial Advisor

*I am a passionate advocate for service user involvement. After losing my job I found myself in a crisis of debt and this led me to using substances to cope and I also started offending to feed my habit – which spiralled out of control. After seeking help, I started to rebuild my life, engaged with services and stopped offending. I became involved in Revolving Doors because I felt there was room for change in the Criminal Justice System. Being involved in service user involvement activities has given me knowledge, confidence, many skills and it's enjoyable as well. I have met loads of good people and it helps me focus on my recovery.*



# 1 Introduction

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# Introduction

Crossroads Trust, Warwickshire | © Ian Cuthbert / cuthbertdesign.com

## 1.1 About this guide

Voluntary and community organisations, statutory agencies and other groups working with offenders, ex-offenders and their families are constantly looking to improve the services they offer their service users. Service user involvement (SUI) is recognised as an effective tool to achieve this.

There is good evidence across a broad spectrum of service delivery, including health, education, social care and housing, that SUI can make services more effective; and there are many different ways to involve service users. SUI can also have positive benefits for the service users involved, from raising self-esteem to opening the door to paid employment.

Over recent years, there have been efforts in the Criminal Justice System to promote and develop the involvement of offenders in the services with which they engage. Desistance theory supports the view that playing an active role in their community and taking on a measure of responsibility can assist in the offender journey away from crime.

### Meaningful results

But if you work with people in prison, on probation or in other areas of the Criminal Justice System, how do you ensure that your SUI project is not just another box ticking exercise? What should you be doing to prepare both service users and your staff to produce meaningful results? What is the right level of SUI for your organisation? What are the potential problems to look out for – and the possible solutions?

This guide provides a structured and accessible introduction to involving offenders and ex-offenders in your work, including examples of good practice, checklists and signposting to further information and support.

**“Consulting service users means that services meet their needs, organisations develop in the right direction and money is used in the best way. But ultimately, involving, consulting, listening goes to the core of why the voluntary sector exists – to give vulnerable or disadvantaged or disenfranchised people a voice. Excluding beneficiaries from the organisations set up to support and empower them compromises their very raison d’être.”**

nfpSynergy report on service user involvement, May 2010

## 1.2 Who is this guide for?

This guide is for managers, staff, trustees and volunteers of any organisation that wants to involve their service users in the management, design, delivery and evaluation of their services.

It will also support service users in their involvement in an SUI project and will be of interest to commissioners and funders.

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# About service user involvement

Anawim, Birmingham | © Ian Cuthbert / cuthbertdesign.com



“It is good for me to use what I have gone through ... and be able to turn it around ... because I am actually using it to put back into the world and to stop people getting there in the first place. It's like something good has come out of it, where at the time I thought it didn't seem like anything could.”

Ex-offender talking about the benefits of service user involvement

“Women need to take these opportunities to speak and influence, but when women are also supported and developed to speak for themselves – then the results are staggering.”

Jackie Russell, Director of Women's Breakout, speaking about service user involvement within her organisation, 2015

## 2.1 What is service user involvement?

Service user involvement is where an organisation involves service users in the planning, management, delivery or evaluation of the services that it provides.

A useful definition is:

*“A process by which people are able to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them; in making decisions about factors that affect their lives; in formulating and implementing policies; in planning, developing and delivering services, and in taking action to achieve change.”*

*Community Participation in Local Health and Sustainable Development, World Health Organisation, 2002*

### Co-production

Co-production is an extension of service user involvement. It has been defined in a variety of ways, for example: “Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours” (New Economics Foundation) or “the public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency” (Governance International, 2013).

There are some key features that are present in co-production initiatives:

- 1 Define people who use services as assets with skills
- 2 Break down the barriers between people who use services and professionals
- 3 Build on people's existing capabilities
- 4 Include reciprocity (where people get something back for having done something

for others) and mutuality (people working together to achieve their shared interests)

- 5 Work with peer and personal support networks alongside professional networks
- 6 Facilitate services by helping organisations to become agents for change rather than just being service providers

*Co-production in Social Care, SCIE, 2015*

## 2.2 Who are service users?

Service users are the people who use a particular service. They can include offenders, ex-offenders, and their families or carers.

## 2.3 Why should you involve service users?

There are many reasons to create opportunities for service users to play an active role in the services they use.

Firstly, there is widespread recognition and evidence that involving people and families or carers with lived experience of services can help you improve the services you deliver.

Because they have direct experience of services, service users know better than anyone what works – and what does not. Involving them in your work brings unique insights and taps into a valuable resource.

“The greatest success has been the peer research done at the Watford office ... The work that has come out of this has been fed back to our senior management team and changes are starting to happen.”

Probation staff member commenting on a peer research project, 2014

Secondly, there is also a growing body of evidence linked to desistance theory that involvement and participation may act as a positive intervention for offenders, offering them a vision for change and moving on.

**“This process has made me realise I am worth something and given me a unique opportunity to grow and learn again about myself and others.”**

Service user talking about impact of service user involvement on her, 2015

Service user involvement can also have a tangible and positive impact on the individuals involved by boosting their confidence and skills. This can lead to other opportunities such as training or employment.

**“My route to work was through volunteering as a peer support worker initially; if it hadn't have been for the investment in my training and the support, how else would I have made the transition from ex-offender to working in full time employment in probation services? It was such a sign of trust, it actually gave me hope for my own future.”**

Engagement worker, London Community Rehabilitation Company, 2015

For service users, SUI and co-production:

- Offers them a 'voice' if they have felt excluded
- Makes them feel valued and respected
- Gives them ownership of the services provided for them
- Enhances their understanding of services and how they work
- Improves skills and abilities
- Builds confidence
- Furthers the goal of recovery through inclusion, developing life skills, enhancing self-esteem and creating a vision for a more positive future
- Is a way of bringing people together to achieve mutually desirable outcomes in a supportive environment.

**“It's good that they take your views on board. You know if you say something, it will be properly considered so you make the effort.”**

Service user of a women's centre in London, 2015

For organisations, SUI and co-production:

- Can lead to service improvements
- Helps to improve the quality of service provision
- Adds value to service planning, development and delivery
- Breaks down organisational hierarchy
- Achieves effective use of resources
- Improves communication and understanding between staff/volunteers and service users
- Helps staff/volunteers develop their skills
- Creates a sense of service ownership, by ensuring that services reflect the needs and wishes of those who use them
- Models to service users that inclusion is possible and real
- Enables your organisation to draw upon and make effective use of people's skills and capabilities
- Fulfils funding requirements
- Helps your organisation to meet its legal duties (e.g. the public sector 'duty to involve' local people in services).



See Section 6 for further reading and resources

## 2.4 How can you involve service users?

Your organisation can work towards co-production and involving service users in every part of the work that you do. A holistic approach will ensure that service user involvement is not just an 'add on' but an integral part of your systems and services, resulting in more effective service design delivery, and evaluation. However, it is important that you work towards this systematically and robustly and make sure that whatever level of SUI you achieve is good quality and well thought through. For this reason planning and regularly reviewing and evaluating your SUI is incredibly important.

**“Nothing about us without us! is a populist slogan used around the world to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy.”**

wikipedia.org, 2015



## Whole systems approach

Ideally, your organisation should take a 'whole systems' approach to achieving service user involvement. To realise this you will need to think of your organisation as a jigsaw consisting of four pieces.

These are:

- **Culture:** the ethos of an organisation, shared by all staff and service users, which demonstrates a commitment to participation.
- **Practice:** the activities, skills and knowledge, which enable service users to become involved.
- **Structure:** the planning, development and resourcing of participation evident in an organisation's infrastructure.
- **Review:** the monitoring and evaluation systems which enable an organisation to evidence change effected by participation.

## The whole systems approach to participation



Adapted from *Practice Guide: Involving children and young people in developing social care*. Wright, et al., 2006. Social Care Institute for Excellence.

## The SUI journey

Every organisation reading this guide will be at a different stage of its SUI journey. Some will have a long and successful history of involving service users and others will be just starting out.

Use the model below to examine where you are in terms of SUI now and where you want to be in the future. Be honest about what you want to achieve and set yourself realistic goals.

## The ladder of participation




Source: Adapted from *Arnstein's A Ladder of Participation*, Hart & Groundswell

This ladder is a useful tool for assessing where you are as an organisation in terms of existing opportunities for service users and where you want to be. Good practice in service user involvement entails using 'the right rung for the right job' (User Voice, 2010).

Whatever stage of the journey towards SUI your organisation is at, it is vital to think about these questions:

- **What are you trying to achieve through service user involvement?** Is your aim to improve or change your services? Do you want to show that service users' voices are valued within your organisation? Do you need to demonstrate to commissioners or funders that your practices are inclusive?
- **Who are you trying to involve?** Do you want to hear the views of a select group of service users (e.g. women, under-25s) or all those who use your services? Do you want to hear from family members and carers?
- **How are you going to involve service users?** What methods will you use, e.g. forums, as peer researchers, as trainers?
- **How will you manage any risks and safeguarding concerns?**
- **When will you involve them?** Do you want to involve current service users or ex-service users or both? Will you involve them long-term or short-term?
- **How will you know if you have been successful?** How will you record and capture the effectiveness of the SUI approach?

Once you have a clear idea of why you want to involve service users and who you want to involve, you can then start to plan your project, including how and when, and put together the team of people you need to make it happen.

 See Section 4 for a planning matrix that your organisation can use to prepare for service user involvement

 See Section 5 for more on how to recruit and support service users

## 2.5 Involvement ideas


There are many different ways of involving your service users in the work that you do. Every organisation and service user is different. Think about what is appropriate for your service users and consider suitable methods for engaging them.

For example, some people may enjoy speaking in public and sharing their experiences; others might be better suited to 'behind the scenes' work such as organising or collecting information. Identify any skills that service users may already have (e.g. in IT, design or photography) and match those with your involvement opportunities.

It is also important to consider what is appropriate for your organisation. It's no good setting up countless focus groups if you haven't got the resources to analyse and act upon the information generated. Think about your budget, your organisation's capabilities, staff/volunteer skills and key organisational priorities before you choose the most effective ways to involve your service users.

Here are some examples of involvement methods:

- **Peer research, quality assurance and monitoring:** service user reviewers are trained to help the organisation improve services through research/evaluation, mystery shopping, focus groups, telephone/face-to-face surveys, attending team meetings, commenting on draft reports etc.
- **Forums or panels:** a group of service users come together to discuss a specific topic or policy. Can be used as part of your organisation's consultation process.
- **Attending meetings or events:** service users can speak or help to facilitate workshops at your organisation's events or at external conferences.
- **Training and support:** service users can deliver training to staff and to their peers and offer support to other service users through mentoring or buddy schemes.
- **Recruitment:** you can involve your service users in the selection and recruitment of staff and trustees.
- **Governance:** service users can sit on your organisation's trustee board or management committee.
- **Co-delivery:** service users can be integrated into the delivery of service as volunteers, or as peer supporters working alongside staff.


 See Section 4 for more involvement ideas and information about project planning and delivery



## Getting it right

With the right planning and delivery, an SUI project can be extremely effective and rewarding for your organisation. Be aware, however, that involving service users can be a complex task for all involved and can take some time to get up and running smoothly. Think about any potential problems

and use your expertise to plan how to address them. We would always encourage you to think big but don't be afraid to start small and build up your level of service user involvement gradually.

 Use the troubleshooting guides in Section 3.2 for potential problems and how to solve them

## Case study

### Voices for change: Revolving Doors Agency (RDA)

RDA's national service user forum brings together people from different areas of the country who have experienced mental health and other problems and have had contact with the Criminal Justice System.

Forum members get involved in activities such as research, policy consultations, delivering training, contributing to conferences and raising awareness of the issues they face. Their views feed into policymaking as well as service design and improvement.

RDA provides opportunities for forum members to participate in training courses including 'train the trainer', research skills, questionnaires, media skills and others. These support their personal development and effective involvement in the forum.

Recently members of the forum have:

- Helped to develop police guidance on working with people with mental health issues in custody suites
- Taken part in workshops to shape the strategic priorities of the health and justice directorate in NHS England

- Been involved in the lived experience team which sits at the heart of the liaison and diversion programme at NHS England
- Participated in the work of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition to influence policy and services for adults with multiple needs and exclusions.

Pat Kenny, a member of RDA's National Service User Forum, on speaking about the importance of compassion at an NHS Health and Justice Conference:

**“It was really empowering and I felt genuinely listened to ... I felt that the stories I told were a wake-up call for the audience members, who genuinely wanted to make change. I'm confident that people will take on board what I said and hopefully the theme of compassion is on the agenda now. Co-production and evolving the whole system through expertise by experience is the way forward.”**

 [www.revolving-doors.org.uk](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk)

## Case study

### Women’s Breakout

In 2014 Women’s Breakout, the umbrella organisation which represents women’s centres nationally working with women involved or at risk of involvement in the Criminal Justice System, launched an Experts by Experience project to develop and showcase service user involvement in women’s services. This year-long project brought together the voice of 100 women drawn from ten member organisations and projects.

**“It was a fantastic experience, helped me see myself as a worthwhile person and the support meant that I managed all my anxiety and was able to contribute about how brilliant some of the programmes are; I told everyone who would listen what worked well for me and why.”**

Service user, Women’s Breakout Experts by Experience project, 2014

 [www.womensbreakout.org.uk/about-us/experts-by-experience](http://www.womensbreakout.org.uk/about-us/experts-by-experience)

#### What service user involvement *should* be...



#### What service user involvement *shouldn't* be...





### 3 Getting started

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# Getting started

Crossroads Trust, Warwickshire | © Ian Cuthbert / cuthbertdesign.com

*"[This project] has given me a lot of confidence, increased my self-esteem and sense of belonging. It has given me the focus and determination to keep working on my recovery and I look forward to how it moves forward in the future."*

Member of the Commissioning Together project in Wandsworth, 2015

## 3.1 Developing a strategy

Ideally, your organisation should have a service user involvement strategy in place before you embark on a service user involvement project. This will help you to map out what you want to do with SUI and how you want to do it. Think of it as a blueprint for your SUI work: something that will show your entire organisation – including management, staff, volunteers, service users, trustees and external stakeholders – that you are serious.

In reality, you may not have an SUI strategy in place before starting your project. However, the process of developing a strategy will help you to manage your SUI projects further down the line. A strategy will also help you to demonstrate to commissioners and funders that you recognise the benefits of involving service users.

Appointing an SUI 'champion' (for example, a member of the senior management team) whose job it is to promote your strategy will help your organisation to 'sell' the concept of service user involvement more widely and effectively.

It is important to involve your service users in developing your SUI strategy. You could consider making it the first project that you and your service users work on together.

Your SUI strategy should include:

- Background information on SUI, including references to local and government requirements
- A review of your organisation's current SUI activities (if any)
- A summary of planned SUI activities, including methods, aims and how they link to organisational strategy
- Details of how you will communicate project activities and outcomes
- Information about monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to your SUI strategy, the following may also be useful:

- A SUI policy or list of principles (see section 3.5)
- A service user role description and/or group terms of reference (see section 5.2)
- A reward and recognition policy (see section 5.5).



A sample SUI strategy is available to download from [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

## 3.2 Common problems and solutions

For many organisations working with offenders, ex-offenders and their families, service user involvement is an integral part of their work. For others, the practice is still relatively new. The aim of this section is to help you in your work towards achieving SUI by identifying some barriers you might have met already or that you might meet, and suggesting some solutions you could try.

As Section 2 shows, there are many advantages of SUI to both the organisation and individual. But whatever stage of the journey your organisation is at, it is also important to consider the potential barriers to SUI and identify ways of overcoming them. This will help your project to run more smoothly and get the best contribution from everyone involved.

*"One of the most difficult obstacles to developing service user involvement in the criminal justice sector is that of organisational resistance based on notions of risk and vulnerability. Some services are nervous about involving service users because they are unsure how to work round the safeguarding risks involved, or how to overcome staff fears about boundaries being breached; it's important to address these concerns head on and not ignore them."*

Paula Harriott, Head of Involvement, Revolving Doors Agency, 2015





Tempus Novo, Yorkshire | © Rebecca McPhillips / allyouneedislovephotography.co.uk



## Good practice

### Supporting involvement

Clinks recommends that organisations should work towards producing:

- A strategy for the involvement of people and families with experience of using their services. This should include consultations, participation and a support mechanism.
- A review of arrangements for the employment or involvement of those with criminal convictions and the process for assessing any risks to the organisation, its service users and to the individual applicant, as well as any implications for safeguarding frameworks and any associated policies.
- Clear guidance and support as to how volunteering in SUI projects and any payments attached may impact on benefit eligibility for service users.
- A minimum level of support, such as a briefing on the role they are about to undertake and what will be expected of them, public speaking practice or training where relevant, payment of all expenses and a debrief after the event.
- Linking up with other service user forums and/or capacity building organisations such as Clinks, who can offer additional training and support on attending conferences, meetings, being a member of a forum, etc.
- Allocating a senior member of staff to be an internal and external (former) offender advocate to promote and manage the strategy.

*Revised from [Engaging the Perspectives of Offenders and Former Offenders: a code of practice](#). Clinks, 2009*



## Troubleshooting guide

Here are some of the most common problems encountered with service user involvement and some practical solutions...

Common problems	Actions
<p><b>Lack of management buy in for service user involvement</b></p> <p>Senior managers or trustees may not have involved service users before so may need a push to get started.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key champions who can promote the SUI message</li> <li>• Develop a SUI statement or policy for your organisation</li> <li>• Identify benefits of SUI to your organisation's work</li> <li>• Highlight examples of other organisations using SUI to improve services</li> <li>• Develop training materials for managers and trustees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff apprehension</b></p> <p>Staff can sometimes be wary of SUI because they haven't been consulted themselves, or fear participants will be negative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold open discussions about what SUI can offer and potential activities</li> <li>• Be clear from the outset about the limits of SUI – what is and is not up for discussion or change</li> <li>• Have ongoing communication with staff about project aims and outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff feel unprepared or unsupported</b></p> <p>SUI projects require a time commitment and specialist skills that staff may not have, or know how to access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that your staff members have access to training if needed to facilitate SUI</li> <li>• Discuss a staff member's SUI role during appraisals and supervision; and identify where further support might be needed</li> <li>• Develop appropriate policies and guidance to support implementing and sustaining SUI.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Role adjustment issues</b></p> <p>Staff may feel uncomfortable, or even threatened, by service users voicing their opinions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate clearly across your organisation why you are doing your SUI project and what you hope to achieve</li> <li>• Draw up a job description for the service user, which provides clear guidance on what the role does and does not cover</li> <li>• Ensure any staff member involved in a SUI project knows who to contact if they need advice or help</li> <li>• Encourage staff to have a positive attitude to service users' comments. Emphasise the link between their input and service improvement</li> <li>• Remind staff that SUI can be a positive intervention in itself with a clear link to desistance and recovery pathways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concerns over inclusion of 'difficult voices'</b></p> <p>Some service users may not want to participate in your project if 'difficult voices' such as sex offenders or perpetrators of domestic violence are also involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear from the start that your project aims to attract a broad range of voices</li> <li>• Develop clear policies and guidance frameworks to assess any risks posed by inclusion of service users, and clear routes of decision making in cases of concern</li> <li>• Consider how your SUI strategy links with the organisation's wider safeguarding framework</li> <li>• Let all participants know who to speak to if they want to discuss their concerns</li> <li>• If there are concerns about participants, consider holding a separate event so more voices can be heard</li> <li>• Ensure that forum or event facilitators are briefed on the potential problems that can arise from having a wide range of offences represented on a panel or within a room, and trained in appropriate responses.</li> </ul>

 See Section 4.6 for more troubleshooting tips

### 3.3 Resources

Like any project, service user involvement will require resources to support it. Don't assume that you can cover the costs from existing funds: you will need to prepare a proper budget for your project and identify funding for any SUI activities.

The more successful that SUI becomes, the more costly it can get. If you're asking your service users to perform more complicated tasks, you will have to reward these higher-level skills with a higher fee. Your costs will also increase as you involve more service users or expand your SUI activities. So your budget may need to increase to reflect this.

As a general guide, SUI projects will require some or all of the following resources:

#### Time

- Staff/volunteer time for project planning, delivery and monitoring
- Management time for supervision, writing policies and evaluation.


#### Money

- Remuneration and full reimbursement of expenses and travel
- Training for staff, volunteers and service users
- Event costs e.g. venue hire, catering, publicity
- Communication costs e.g. newsletters, reports.

#### Other resources

- Internet access for service users
- Mobile phones and credit
- IT support for collecting and analysing project or research data.

 See Section 4.3 for more on project costs

 A sample budget planner is available to download from [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

### 3.4 Ethics and principles of SUI

It is important that your service users – whether they are offenders, ex-offenders, family members or carers – know that they will be treated in an ethical manner.

You need to be clear that participants in SUI activities are not obliged to divulge anything that they don't want to. Staff should be given clear guidance about sharing data about service users who are involved in SUI activities.

The individual service user should have a good understanding of:

- How their views and other input could be used
- When their views will be used
- How it could be presented, including possible misrepresentation
- The role profile, the terms of reference and the scope of the SUI activity
- The code of conduct that governs the SUI activity
- Informed consent for use of photos and film images
- Safeguarding and its implications for service users involved in SUI activity.

#### Good practice

#### A service user involvement policy

Use these basic guidelines to formulate your own SUI policy – basically a statement of principles that will govern how service users engage in your project. The policy might cover areas such as:

- Recruitment and exit strategy
- Training and support
- Reward and remuneration
- Equality and respect.



## Case study

### Service user involvement principles: Shelter

Shelter's service user involvement principles state:

As a Shelter service user you can expect to:

- Be involved at a level you feel is appropriate to you and your circumstances at the time
- Choose not to be involved and to change your mind if things change for you
- Receive appropriate support to become involved and sustain, develop or withdraw your participation, as you choose
- Be respected for your contribution
- Be welcomed and introduced when turning up at an event where you may not know everyone. Have information about the event before arrival and/or the chance to talk it through with a Support Worker
- Be able to get to and get around the venue easily
- Be asked about any special requirements to get involved

- Be asked about the best times to get to an event
- Have reasonable travel costs to the venue reimbursed
- Have reasonable childcare costs reimbursed if childcare is required to get to an event
- Be provided with refreshments and check for any special dietary requirements
- Receive feedback after the event so that service users know what has changed or has not changed a result of 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 as to have a familiar face at the event, and attending the event with a Support Worker (if it is an event with another organisation) if possible.

Shelter/Changing Homelessness in Practice 2015

 See Section 4.6 for more troubleshooting tips

## 3.5 Equality and diversity

Effective service user involvement means involving service users on a level playing field with staff and volunteers. If participants feel that they are being patronised or their views are being sidelined, they are unlikely to remain involved in your project.

Make sure that staff and volunteers are briefed on how best to involve service users and bring out their experiences. Some may feel uncomfortable that the 'client-advisor' relationship is changing; they will need to be reassured of their role within the process. Having a clear role description for service users and an SUI plan that covers staff training and supervision can help to tackle these issues.

Finally, ensure that all service users are able to have a say in your project. This means targeting seldom

heard groups; matching SUI opportunities to abilities; supplying information in different formats; offering a range of involvement methods; providing facilities such as childcare to make sure individuals aren't excluded.

Monitor and regularly review equality and diversity to ensure you are involving a wide range of service users, and can take action if this is not the case.

 See Section 4 for more on accessibility and communication

***"The staff in the project really listened to us, our ideas, which was great. It meant they actually cared about what we thought. It's funny because we're all trying to achieve the same outcomes. I think the project has helped staff and probation realise that they need to consult with service users more as they can learn a lot from us."***

Probation service user, 2014

## 4 Project planning and delivery

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# Project planning and delivery

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## 4.1 Choosing your methods

As discussed in Section 2, there are a variety of ways to involve service users in your work. Some methods are tried and tested, others are more innovative.

Individual service users will get involved for a range of reasons and in a range of different ways. It is therefore important if possible to use a variety of methods and offer a choice of involvement opportunities.

Use the table below to identify the methods that might work best for your organisation.

**“It’s not going to really work if you don’t have access to the key decision-makers, is it? If it’s about changing things, then service user reps need access to the decision-makers in an organisation and full support of all staff.”**

Service user on importance of staff support and access to decision-makers to have real influence, 2015

**“I think that the biggest weakness is that they have set up a forum but they hadn’t realised how it would develop. We have grown lots; we now need IT [to support us].”**

Service user on need for adequate resourcing



### Which method?

Service user activity	Examples	Key benefits
<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to questionnaires, surveys</li> <li>• Participating in focus groups/workshops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates opportunities for service users to give views on service delivery and strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer reviewing</li> <li>• Questionnaires</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• ‘Mystery shopping’ exercises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings different perspectives and questions to review process</li> <li>• More honest and open feedback from service users when they are asked by peer reviewers.</li> </ul>
<b>Co-production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum membership</li> <li>• Council membership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an arena for service users to voice concerns, views and ideas and shape decisions</li> <li>• Opportunity for service users to build relationships with others in a similar situation</li> <li>• Keeps service users informed, particularly those without access to email or telephone.</li> </ul>
<b>Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking to commissioning bodies or service review panels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts across service user issues and concerns in their own words</li> <li>• Demonstrates to service users that their views are valued and respected at the highest level.</li> </ul>
<b>Delivering training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading or co-leading workshops</li> <li>• Running ‘train the trainer’ events</li> <li>• Training staff</li> <li>• Sharing experiences e.g. media skills, writing questionnaires.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages other service users to get involved because they see their peers involved</li> <li>• Fosters an environment of trust</li> <li>• Offers unique insights into service users’ perspectives on good practice.</li> </ul>



Service user activity	Examples	Key benefits
<b>Selection and recruitment of staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting on interview panels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates to service users that their views are truly respected</li> <li>• Improves relationships within your organisation</li> <li>• Gives a powerful message to candidates about the importance of SUI to the organisation</li> <li>• Increases the likelihood of employing staff with the values and interpersonal skills that service users appreciate.</li> </ul>
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving as a committee or board member.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps service users to gain a better understanding of your organisation</li> <li>• Brings a unique perspective to board-level discussions</li> <li>• Ensures SUI at a strategic level</li> <li>• Demonstrates inclusion and equality within your organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Service design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing views through consultation activities or project team membership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harnesses direct experiences of service users to improve services</li> <li>• Offers opportunities for service users to develop specific skills, enhancing self-esteem and employability.</li> </ul>
<b>Service delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer mentoring</li> <li>• Developing good practice guides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers a more personal way for service users to get involved</li> <li>• Provides your organisation with unique first hand knowledge and experience</li> <li>• Helps to break down barriers through the service user acting as a trusted link between peers and your organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Media and publicity work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending or addressing events and conferences</li> <li>• Speaking to the press</li> <li>• Featuring in your organisation's magazine or on the website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights real life stories and helps external audiences to better understand issues</li> <li>• Offers service users the chance to develop skills e.g. public speaking.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Preparing a project plan

The key to a successful service user involvement project is good planning. You should have a clear idea of what you want from the project, what the aims are and a list of specific outcomes.

Your organisation should choose an approach that suits both your service users and recognises the capacity (and culture) of your organisation.

Ideally, you should involve existing service users in any project planning. Of course, if your organisation has never involved service users before, it is acceptable to plan without their input in the first instance. It is good practice, however, to introduce service user voice into the planning process as early as possible.



A simple planning matrix is available to download from [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

Using a planning matrix can help your organisation develop a clear project plan.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do you want to involve service users in?
- Why do you want to involve service users?
- Who do you want to involve?
- When do you want to do it?
- Where do you want to do it?
- How are you going to do it?

### Specific tasks

Next, you need to think about the specific tasks that you want service users to do.

This will enable you to:

- Ask service users which specific task they would be interested in
- Identify what is required of your staff
- Match your project needs to the skills, abilities and experience of all those involved.

For example, if you want to run a focus group to find out what service users think about one of your services, then the tasks might include:

- Speaking to peers to tell them about the group
- Designing a poster to publicise the activity
- Booking a venue
- Arranging refreshments
- Organising transport
- Acting as a buddy to a new service user
- Facilitating group discussion
- Note taking
- Writing up discussion points, collecting and collating feedback.


Breaking down your plan into tasks may seem like a lot of effort. But putting the work in at the start of your project will save you time and other resources in the long term.

 A sample project plan is available to download from [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

## 4.3 Costs

It is vital to prepare a realistic budget for your SUI project. This should take into account:

- Training for staff, volunteers and service users
- Event costs e.g. venue hire, catering, publicity, facilitation
- Childcare or facilities
- Remuneration and full reimbursement of expenses for service users
- Publications and publicity costs.

 See Section 5.5 for more on payment and reimbursement

## 4.4 Accessibility

To get service users involved, you need to make sure that they find your activities accessible. Discuss access needs at the start of your project. Ask service users whether they need anything else to enable them to participate fully. Remind them what facilities are in place and reassure them that it is perfectly fine to use them.

**“Think about timing of transport you book for service users. Booking a cheap train ticket might mean that the service user gets back to their hostel too late at night – most have a 10pm-11pm curfew – by the time they’ve taken buses etc. They might not want to take part again because this puts them off.”**

Service user on need for consideration of restrictions on service users

## 4.5 Communication

Good communication is essential to the planning process. If everyone understands what they are expected to do, your project will run much more smoothly.

Don't assume that service users or staff will know what is needed of them. Set up and maintain good channels of communication so that everyone involved knows where to go for advice, additional support or information.

See our communications good practice tips on page 26.



## Good practice

### Accessibility tips

Here are some ideas for making your event or activity accessible:

- Check that the timing and length of your event is appropriate to the needs and lifestyle of the service users you want to reach
- Choose a venue that offers the service user easy access, so that they don't have to rely on someone else letting them in or out
- Pick a location that is neutral, safe and not in a 'trigger' spot e.g. close to a dealer's patch
- Ensure that your venue is served by good public transport
- Have regular refreshment/rest breaks at consultation events (every hour is good practice)
- Think about whether there is somewhere to smoke and whether your activity can accommodate breaks for smokers
- Invite the service user to bring someone with them if they feel anxious about participating for the first time or about travelling
- Offer training e.g. IT skills to make tasks more accessible to service users
- Offer special seating or lighting at meetings or events
- Offer to provide documents in large print or Easy Read format
- Provide a British Sign Language interpreter or induction loop facility for service users with a hearing impairment
- Offer childcare facilities.

Remember:

- Use plain language for your communications
- Avoid unnecessary jargon
- Explain clearly any jargon where unavoidable.



## Good practice

### Welcome pack

Consider putting together a SUI 'welcome pack' for service users who are joining a new or existing project. This could include:

- Background information about your organisation and project partners
- Briefing on policy area or topic related to your project
- Project summary, including aims and timescale
- Role description
- SUI group terms of reference and code of conduct
- Glossary of terms
- Who else will be involved, e.g. staff members
- Key contacts
- Arrangements for booking travel or reimbursement of expenses
- Arrangements for payment if offered
- Complaints and concerns process
- Safeguarding policy statement.





## Good practice

### Communication tips

- Make and maintain direct contact with service users. A telephone call from a key worker or chat with another service user is a good way of breaking the ice about service user involvement. This direct approach can also be used to follow up participation at events or forums.
- Give service users a named contact who is responsible for the project, with a telephone number and/or email address.
- Provide a choice of communication methods to ensure that your communication methods suit your service user. Some might prefer a telephone call. Others might be more comfortable with a text message or email. Some may prefer to be contacted by post.
- Send out board meeting or consultation event papers at least two weeks in advance so that service users have sufficient time to read and digest the content. Include a glossary of terms and acronyms.
- Offer pre-meetings so that new or difficult issues can be explained and discussed informally, in advance of a more formal meeting.
- For meetings or consultation events, provide a pre-meeting pack including a topic or policy briefing; agenda and timings; date and venue (directions and map); dress code; travel and expenses information, and contact details for special requests. If you plan to photograph the event or use quotes for publication, make sure your service users know how to opt in or out.
- Schedule in enough meeting time so service users have sufficient time to respond to activities and take breaks when necessary. What you might discuss at a two-hour staff meeting may require double the time if you want to fully consult your service users.
- Establish some ground rules for meetings and remind service users of these at the beginning of each meeting.
- Make sure you know any health needs of service users and are equipped to respond to them.

## 4.6 Evaluation and reporting

When drawing up your project plan, think about what you want to measure and how this can be done. It is much easier to set up regular monitoring from the start of your project, so factor this into your list of tasks to do throughout the project.

Think about whether involvement has:

- Made a difference to the service user, e.g. has it helped them to move into training or more secure accommodation? Has it boosted confidence or skills?
- Made a difference to the organisation, e.g. have services been improved?
- Made a difference to staff, e.g. do they have a better understanding of service users' needs? Has it improved skills?
- Impressed commissioners, e.g. has your evidence of SUI helped your organisation to win a contract?
- Influenced policymakers?
- Helped to secure funding for services?


### Evaluation methods

There are a number of ways to evaluate your service user involvement project. These include:

- A brief questionnaire to service users and/or staff
- Focus groups
- Feedback forms
- Attitudinal surveys (before and after)
- Measuring changes to policy or operational delivery resulting from service user input
- Informal conversations.



Tempus Novo, Yorkshire | © Rebecca McPhillips / allyouneedislovephotography.co.uk

 For more information and resources on how to evaluate your work, see [www.clinks.org/evaluation](http://www.clinks.org/evaluation)

## Reporting

Always report back to service users. There are a number of other stakeholders that you might need to report to, including:

- Senior management team in your organisation
- Trustees
- Project partners
- Funders.

## Be creative!

Think about innovative ways of reporting your SUI activities. You could get SUI project participants to make a short film; design a newsletter or web page; organise an exhibition or give a presentation.

## 4.7 Common problems and solutions

Even the best-planned projects can experience the occasional setback. Use the troubleshooting guide on page 28 to identify potential problems and solutions.



## Troubleshooting guide

Common problems	Actions
<p><b>Low or slow level of recruitment</b></p> <p>See section 5.3 for more about recruitment methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have realistic expectations – not everyone wants to get involved</li> <li>• Ask staff to chat to service users they work with (e.g. during key worker sessions) about involvement and encourage them to participate</li> <li>• Incentivise service users with rewards and progression opportunities for taking part</li> <li>• Offer training opportunities</li> <li>• Involve peers with SUI experience in your recruitment process</li> <li>• Advertise opportunities widely in appropriate settings e.g. at a hostel, in your offices, etc.</li> <li>• Designate a named member of staff or volunteer to your SUI project and make sure potential recruits know how to contact them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personality clashes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all service users understand the importance of context, and how their individual experience and views may not be representative of the entire service user experience</li> <li>• Choose staff with the appropriate skills – or train them – to manage different service user voices in a group</li> <li>• Designate a member of the project team who service users know they can express their concerns to without fear of repercussions</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive complaints and concerns policy so that service users have a formal mechanism to escalate concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Service users not adequately prepared for involvement</b></p> <p>Service users may feel that they lack the skills or support needed to participate in a SUI project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish good communication with keyworker(s) about what is expected of service users</li> <li>• Develop a clear role description – explaining skills required, time commitments and specific tasks</li> <li>• Offer training to service users and ensure that they know who to speak to for support or advice</li> <li>• Establish feedback mechanisms e.g. mentoring, an anonymous suggestions box</li> <li>• Have a code of conduct which sets out expectations and guidance as to how to resolve any issues</li> <li>• Provide a menu of participation opportunities with varying levels of demand, with progression opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Service users feel they don't have ownership of the SUI project</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve service users in all aspects of project planning, delivery and evaluation</li> <li>• Maintain clear and regular communication with service users to show how their contributions are being used.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project fatigue</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set clear targets for what you want to achieve and by when</li> <li>• Regularly review meeting frequency and effectiveness against your targets</li> <li>• Assess whether your SUI project needs 'new blood' and bring in different staff or service users as appropriate</li> <li>• Support service users to 'move on' from your project to suitable opportunities, such as volunteering or paid work</li> <li>• Assess performance of staff involved in project and seek service user feedback as part of the process.</li> </ul>



## 5 Recruitment, reward and support

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# Recruitment, reward and support

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**“Don't give service users false hope. There's nothing worse than a tick-box exercise or feeling like you're just making up the numbers. Involvement has got to have 'teeth' – so you know you can make a difference.”**

Service user on making involvement meaningful

**“Service user involvement is a proven success in terms of cost-effectiveness, service users' use of services, and success rates. But it's only a good idea if the service user involvement isn't tokenistic. We need direct and indirect access to the commissioners.”**

Service user on the benefits of co-production

## 5.1 Service user motivation

In general, people do not get involved in the services they use. For example, few people go to their local NHS Trust annual public meeting or their annual parent governor meetings. Your service users are no more likely to get involved than anyone else. Those who do get involved often do so to address a negative experience.

Do not be disheartened if the majority of your service users do not participate in your project: quality is more important than quantity. Those who do come forward out of frustration with poor services may have difficulty articulating solutions straight away or may at first be negative. This will change as they begin to believe that their participation can make a difference.

Each individual is different, therefore his or her motivation will be different. Think about:

### What might prompt them to get involved in your project?

- Chance to have a say or share their experiences
- To give something back
- To change/improve things
- Opportunity to develop new skills
- Gaining experience to put on their CV
- Good preparation for future employment
- Potential to meet new people or network
- Possibility of voluntary or paid work
- Involvement of friends or family members
- Influenced by other service users who have been involved
- Encouragement by staff who they have a good relationship with

### What might put them off?

- Peer pressure not to get involved
- Negative experiences of involvement

- Not having enough information
- Concerns that they are being 'used'
- Poor feedback about the outcome of their previous involvement
- Uninspiring activities or facilitators
- Domineering behaviour from other service users involved in SUI
- Barriers such as dyslexia, poor literacy, and other learning/educational barriers to participation

### What can you offer them in return?

- Direct opportunity to shape services
- Peer support in an enabling environment
- Access to training
- Skills development
- Qualifications or awards
- Payment/incentives/rewards

Think about how your organisation can enhance the SUI experience. For example, could you offer alternative therapies or leisure activities alongside focus group meetings? Could you hold an event in an outdoor or seaside setting, to offer service users a change of scene?

### Match making

When you are considering involving service users, it is important to get the right fit for your project. Consider their skills and abilities carefully and think about how to match these with your SUI activities.

Remember: timing is everything. Not every service user wants to or is ready to become involved. Some may need encouragement before dipping a toe in the water. Talk to them to assess their own readiness and make sure they know what support is available throughout their involvement.

 See Section 2, page 11 for 'Ladder of participation' outlining different levels of involvement

## Case study

### Revolving Doors Agency: Get Creative!

Revolving Doors Agency arranged creative workshops on what a good life for service users would be.

**“***Around ten of us took part in the first session. We spent the day creating a collage each, entitled ‘what makes a good life’. The group facilitators provided a mixture of magazines and other art materials and explained the basics of the project. It was quite daunting at first staring at a blank bit of paper with a huge choice of what to put on it. ... Using pictures definitely made it easier to talk about certain issues rather than filling out questionnaires or talking in groups – which is usually how we are asked to talk about services.***”**

Service user, Revolving Doors Agency, 2015

## Key personal qualities

GLADA (Greater London Drug and Alcohol Alliance) identified specific personal qualities that are essential to successful user involvement initiatives. These included:

- **Energy:** people with high levels of energy are likely to last the distance in developing projects
- **Belief in common good:** project participants showed a strong sense of not only being interested in making things better for themselves but for other users as well
- **Clear focus on solutions:** relating to solving problems rather than just being aware of them
- **Sense of personal responsibility:** seeing themselves as part of the solution.

*Lessons Learned: some approaches, tools and good practice for improving drug user involvement (GLADA, 2005)*

## 5.2 Role descriptions

It is useful to have a role description that sets out what the service user is expected to do and what skills are needed. Your role description should cover:

- What skills are needed
- What abilities or interests are required
- What tasks are involved
- Who else is involved, e.g. if staff are involved, give their role/title
- Frequency of involvement or meetings
- Duration of project
- Remuneration policy.

## 5.3 Recruitment methods

Service users can be recruited in a variety of ways. Common ways include:

- Via key workers

- Through word-of-mouth recommendation by other service users
- Posters in hostel or your offices
- Via outreach workshops
- Through large-scale events
- Via social media and your organisation website.

Service users, like most of us, want to know what it is all about before agreeing to something. Always give service users the chance to find out what is required before asking them to commit to being involved. For example, you could invite them to an information workshop where they can find out more about SUI without feeling obliged to get involved if they decide it's not for them.

It is also important to let service users know that they can opt out or in again at any point when their lives change. This is particularly important for those people in the Criminal Justice System who sometimes have unsettled lives, or for those people who are trying to move on.



## 5.4 Training and support

It is important that service users *and* staff have appropriate training and support to achieve effective SUI. Ask people what they need to enable them to participate fully.

### For service users

Don't make assumptions about what support, if any, is needed. Ask service users what they need. Examples could include:

#### Support

- Mentoring
- External supervision
- Peer support
- SUI team support page on Facebook or similar social networking sites
- Access to a password-protected page on your website.

#### Training

- Facilitation skills
- Committee skills
- Team working skills
- How to be a representative
- Research skills for specific roles or projects
- Proposal writing
- IT training
- Confidence building and assertiveness
- Interviewing
- Media training.

### For staff

Don't assume that staff or volunteers will have the skills needed to facilitate service user involvement. Think about:

#### Support

- Regular meetings to get staff feedback
- Discussion of SUI role at supervision and appraisal.

#### Training

- SUI awareness for key personnel  
e.g. project steering group
- Group facilitation skills.

Don't forget! Continuously assess training and support needs for both staff and service users.

**“It's good to be part of the forum, it's given me support and positive friendships.”**

*Service user on the need for support, 2015*

## 5.5 Reward & recognition

To achieve meaningful service user involvement, you need to make sure people feel that they, their expertise and their time are recognised and valued. You must always reimburse service users with any expenses incurred because of their involvement. It is also good practice to pay service users for their time. This is particularly important when you are asking them to contribute in situations where other participants are paid staff, or where there is a high level of responsibility or skill required.

### Payments

Each organisation needs to decide whether it is going to pay service users for their involvement. If you are going to pay service users, your payment and reimbursement policy needs to take into account that many of them will be in receipt of various benefits. You should signpost them to where they can get independent advice about how receiving payment might affect their benefits and give them time to make an informed decision.

The amount you pay will depend on the type of activity, the skills and experience, the complexity and responsibility that the activity demands. For example someone chairing a meeting may get paid more than someone who is attending the meeting without any special responsibility; a service user delivering training may get paid as much as any other trainer. The pay can be set as hourly, per session, per day or per activity rates; or a mixture according to what is most appropriate.

It is useful for service users on benefits to know in advance the total amount, so an hourly rate may be unhelpful. However, you should bear in mind that you must pay at least the minimum wage hourly rate when you are deciding how much to pay for a session or day. Rates of pay should not be based on the assumption that service users are receiving benefits.

Some organisations choose to reward service users with a voucher rather than cash. This is sometimes

because they believe for benefit purposes this will be seen as a gift rather than a payment. If service users are regularly receiving vouchers for involvement activities, they will be considered as payment in the same way as cash. Other organisations pay with vouchers because they do not want to give cash to service users who have substance use problems.

Paying by voucher or cash is acceptable for a one-off payment or activity. However, regular payments to service users should be auditable and if possible, by BACS transfer. If a service user does not have a bank account then the organisation should actively support the opening of a basic bank account.

## Expenses

You should always reimburse service users for out-of-pocket expenses – i.e. the monies they have spent in the course of carrying out their role. This could include:

- Travel expenses
- Meals or refreshments
- Childcare costs
- Other costs related to their role e.g. stamps, stationery etc.

There should be a receipt for the expense and the exact amount only must be reimbursed so that service users' benefits or tax are not affected. If an amount is given in lieu of expenses, or more is given than the exact expense incurred, this constitutes a payment rather than reimbursement and could affect benefits and tax.



A sample payment policy is available to download from [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

## Good practice

### Payment tips

- Give service users the right information from the start so they can make an informed choice about how and on what terms they want to be involved.
  - Discuss and agree with service users the terms of involvement before they commit to it.
  - Book and pay for service users' travel in advance whenever possible.
  - Always reimburse expenses as soon as possible; do not leave service users out of pocket or at risk of being financially worse off because of their involvement.
  - If you decide to pay service users, pay them according to open and consistent criteria that take into account the level of involvement, the type of work and the skills and expertise required.
  - Make payments promptly so you do not needlessly create barriers that deter people from being involved.
  - Signpost those involved who are in receipt of benefits to information and independent support/advice to help prevent them from breaching the benefit rules.
  - Regularly monitor and evaluate your payment and reimbursement policy and practice.
  - Make staff aware of the payment and reimbursement policy and ensure that they follow it in practice.
  - Where events are held jointly with other organisations, make sure that payment and reimbursement are equal for all participants/contributors.
- Make sure that each service user:
- Understands and agrees to the terms and conditions upon which they get involved
  - Is aware of what is expected of them and what support they are entitled to
  - Uses the most cost-effective travel available
  - Is responsible for seeking advice and keeping to the benefit conditions required by Jobcentre Plus and where relevant, declaring earnings to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

*Adapted from Engaging the perspectives of offenders and former offenders: a code of practice, Clinks, 2009*



## 5.6 Exit strategy

There are advantages to having service users involved in SUI projects over a period of time. They can assess progress on activities; help recruit other service users; act as representatives for your organisation, and become more skilled in the roles.

Bear in mind that circumstances change and a service user might want – or need – to move on from your service. For some service users their involvement could be part of their support plan and be included as a means to achieve their goals, e.g. to leave the service or get employment. Your organisation should provide support, when the time is right, for service users to exit from their involvement or from the service, for example:

- Provide a testimonial about the service user's contribution
- Help to explain involvement on their CV
- Signpost them to other volunteering opportunities (see Clinks' Directory of Offender Services for organisations that have volunteers)
- Identify opportunities within your own organisation for different roles, including paid employment.

**“Employing service users is a recognition of their talents and their skills in getting a job done well. It is a recognition that employing ex-service users brings skills to an organisation that enhances the organisational capacity to deliver its work; but also it brings that experience into the very fabric of the organisation and permits us to be responsive and sensitive to the experience of the people who use our services; we bring the 'other' into our organisation and approach problems from the perspective of 'we'.”**

Michelle Nicholson, Director, Key Changes Sheffield

### Case study

## Employing engagement workers

The London Community Rehabilitation Company, and previously the London Probation Trust, have been directly employing ex-service users as Engagement Workers in probation offices across the capital since 2011.

**“I was a peer supporter in prison, and now, after a long journey as a service user rep and volunteer, I am now fully employed working in probation; back then I wouldn't have imagined it, but here I am.”**

Engagement worker, London Community Rehabilitation Company, 2015



[www.probation-institute.org/a-day-in-the-life-of-an-engagement-worker](http://www.probation-institute.org/a-day-in-the-life-of-an-engagement-worker)





## 6.1 Organisations

### Clinks

📍 Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square,  
London WC1H 9NA

☎ 020 7383 0966

✉ info@clinks.org

🌐 www.clinks.org

Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders, ex-offenders and their families. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities.

For information and support on service user involvement, please go to:

🌐 [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)

### Revolving Doors Agency

📍 134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB

☎ 020 7407 0747

✉ admin@revolving-doors.org.uk

🌐 www.revolving-doors.org.uk

Revolving Doors Agency is a charity working across England to change systems and improve services for people with multiple problems, including poor mental health, who are in repeat contact with the Criminal Justice System. Revolving Doors has a national service user forum that brings together people from across the country who have personal experience of multiple and complex problems and who have had contact with the Criminal Justice System. Forum members work to influence policy and improve services locally and nationally.

### Centre for Mental Health (formerly Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health)

📍 134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB

☎ 020 7827 8300

✉ contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk

🌐 www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk

The Centre carries out research, policy work and analysis to improve practice and influence policy in mental health and in public services.

### Groundswell

📍 55 Bondway, Vauxhall, London SW8 1SJ

☎ 03000 039 600

✉ info@groundswell.org.uk

🌐 www.groundswell.org.uk

Groundswell is a registered charity, which exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and to play a full role in our community. They specialise in peer-led work – involving people with experience of homelessness in finding real solutions to homelessness. They do this through peer research, peer advocacy and peer education.

### Key Changes

📍 1-11a Elm Lane, Sheffield S5 7RT

☎ 0114 245 9508

✉ l.mitchell@keychangesuwp.org.uk

🌐 www.keychangesuwp.org.uk

Key Changes is a gender specific organisation designed to support and tackle social barriers for women who have experienced the Criminal Justice System and those at risk of offending. Our vision is to both support the women and to create equal opportunities for them.

### MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter

☎ 07810 867190

✉ talk2us@meam.org.uk

🌐 www.meam.org.uk

A coalition of three national charities – Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind – formed to influence policy and services for adults with multiple needs and exclusions.

### Rethink

📍 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP

☎ 0845 4560455

✉ info@rethink.org

www.rethink.org

Mental health charity whose service user involvement initiatives include the Lived Experience Advisory Panel, set up with Revolving Doors Agency to discuss and advise on the implementation of the government's strategy on mental health in the Criminal Justice System.

### Thames Reach

📍 The Employment Academy, 29 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UA

☎ 020 7702 4260

✉ enquiries@thamesreach.org.uk

🌐 www.thamesreach.org.uk

London-based charity behind the GROW (Giving Real Opportunities for Work) project, which supports the employment of former service users.

### Together

📍 Together for Mental Wellbeing, 12 Old Street, London EC1V 9BE

☎ 020 7780 7300

✉ contact-us@together-uk.org

🌐 www.together-uk.org

A national charity working alongside people with mental health issues on their journey to lead an independent life. Initiatives include a service user directorate to give people with experience of using mental health services a voice at local, regional and national level.

### Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance

📍 Barrow Cadbury Trust, Kean House, 6 Kean Street, London WC2B 4AS

☎ 020 7632 9060

✉ info@t2a.org.uk

🌐 www.t2a.org.uk

The Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals working to improve the life chances of young people who are at risk of committing crime and falling into the Criminal Justice System.

### User Voice

📍 20 Newburn Street, London SE11 5PJ

☎ 020 3137 7471

✉ info@uservoice.org

🌐 www.uservoice.org

Established by ex-offenders this charity seeks to engage those with past experiences of the Criminal Justice System at the heart of new policy and new practices that affect offenders and their families.

### Women's Breakout

✉ info@womensbreakout.org.uk

🌐 www.womensbreakout.org.uk

Women's Breakout is the representative body for a national network of women-centered services offering effective gender specific community alternatives to custody.

## 6.2 Publications

Big Lottery Fund *Good Practice Guide: User involvement*

📄 [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er\\_res\\_good\\_practice\\_guide\\_user\\_involvement.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_res_good_practice_guide_user_involvement.pdf)

Clinks (2013) *Introducing Desistance: a guide for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations*

📄 [www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/null/Introducing%20Desistance%20-%20August%202013.pdf](http://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/null/Introducing%20Desistance%20-%20August%202013.pdf)

Clinks (2011) *A review of service user involvement in prisons and probation trusts*

📄 [www.clinks.org/assets/files/Service%20User%20Findings%20Sept%202011.pdf](http://www.clinks.org/assets/files/Service%20User%20Findings%20Sept%202011.pdf)

Clinks (2009) *A code of practice: Engaging the perspectives of offenders and former offenders*

📄 [www.clinks.org/code\\_practice](http://www.clinks.org/code_practice)

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (2012) *Shaping the Criminal Justice System: the role of those supported by criminal justice services*

📄 [www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/iriss-insight-13.pdf](http://www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/iriss-insight-13.pdf)

Making Every Adult Matter (2016) *Voices from the Frontline policy influencing guide part two: Involving Experts by Experience*

📄 [www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Influencing-guide-Part-2-FINAL-WEB.pdf](http://www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Influencing-guide-Part-2-FINAL-WEB.pdf)

Maruna, S. (2001) *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives* London: American Psychological Association, Washington DC, American Psychological Association



McNeill and Weaver (2010) *Changing lives? Desistance research and offender management*  
[www.sccjr.ac.uk/pubs/Changing-Lives-Desistance-Research-and-Offender-Management/255](http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/pubs/Changing-Lives-Desistance-Research-and-Offender-Management/255)

McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C. and Maruna, S. (2012) *How and why people stop offending: discovering desistance*  
[www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/iriss-insight-15.pdf](http://www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/iriss-insight-15.pdf)

New Economics Foundation (2015) *The Challenge of Co-production*  
[www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-challenge-of-co-production](http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-challenge-of-co-production)

Public Health England (2015) *Guide to service user involvement*  
[www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/service-user-involvement-a-guide-for-drug-and-alcohol-commissioners-providers-and-service-users.pdf](http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/service-user-involvement-a-guide-for-drug-and-alcohol-commissioners-providers-and-service-users.pdf)

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2007) *The participation of adult service users, including older people, in developing social care*  
[www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide17/](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide17/)

Shelter (2005) *Involving users in supported housing: A good practice guide*  
[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/40082/Involving\\_users\\_in\\_supported\\_housing.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/40082/Involving_users_in_supported_housing.pdf)

Together (2014) *Service User Involvement in the delivery of mental health services*  
[www.together-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/06/Service-User-Involvement-briefing.pdf](http://www.together-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/06/Service-User-Involvement-briefing.pdf)

User Voice (2010) *The Power Inside: the role of prison councils*  
Outlining how effective Prison Councils can be with an elected and democratic process  
[www.uservoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/User-Voice-The-Power-Inside.pdf](http://www.uservoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/User-Voice-The-Power-Inside.pdf)









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