

Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Service User Involvement Framework

April 2010

Context

This framework has been informed by the views and wishes of service users and service providers as expressed in the findings of research undertaken in late 2009/early 2010.

The main messages from the research were that:

- the overall preference of service users is for one to one informal discussions with people that they trust
- service providers make available a wide range of opportunities for service user involvement and invest a significant amount of time in doing this
- an additional layer of involvement for service users at Supporting People programme level would not be appropriate. This is because service user involvement with support providers is already in place at both project and organisational levels, and service users may also have involvement with their landlord where the landlord is a different organisation from the support provider. It is suggested that it would therefore be unhelpful and confusing to create another, separate level of involvement with Supporting People

Appendix 1 sets out a summary of the findings of the research.

This framework therefore has regard to:

- service user wishes and aspirations
- time constraints
- the resources available to the Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People team

It also acknowledges that there are some tensions and challenges in respect of service user involvement. Because providers are in competition with each other and are chosen by Supporting People partly on how well they manage and deliver their services, including service user involvement, there needs to be an awareness both of the advantages and of the sensitivities of providers sharing information.

The purpose of the framework is to set out a model for working in collaboration between the Supporting People team, housing associations and service providers in relation to service user involvement by the Supporting People team.

Principles

This framework is based on a number of principles:

- enabling organisations to involve service users in ways that suits their needs and take account of diversity
- service users having a choice as to whether to take part in any specific service user involvement activities
- service users who choose not to participate not being disadvantaged as a result
- taking account of service users' preferences for how they wish to be consulted and what issues they are interested in
- ensuring that there is clarity about why information is being asked for and how it will be used
- providing rewards and incentives for involvement as appropriate
- feeding back to service users what has changed as a result of them providing their views, or what cannot be changed and the reasons why
- ensuring that service user involvement by Supporting People fits in with existing service user involvement, rather than adding another layer of involvement
- providing training, guidance and support to officers who seek service user views
- ensuring that the Supporting People Team avoid:
 - cold calling service users by telephone or face to face
 - using lengthy postal questionnaires
 - giving service users long documents with complicated language
 - wherever possible, duplicating consultation with service users that has been undertaken by landlords, support providers and social care providers

The role and remit of the Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Team

The role and remit of the Supporting People Team in relation to service user involvement has four main elements:

- 1 To satisfy themselves that the support providers they commission are consulting service users effectively and are responding to the views of service users. Ways in which Supporting People might do this include:
 - completion of questionnaires face to face at events, or by prior arrangement and agreement with the service user with the opportunity to have someone of their choice present, eg support worker, family member or a friend. As the questions will be about the support service, service users may wish to choose to have someone other than their support worker present

- an annual service user information and networking event with lunch, incentive payments and travel expenses and information stands with freebies attended by the whole Supporting People Team who can then have informal chats with service users structured around a topic schedule. One of the things that could be asked is whether service users want to be involved in other ways
- providing opportunities for further involvement by service users if appropriate
- asking for relevant feedback from providers as part of the annual review process
- using technology as appropriate, eg providing a simple online survey that service users could be asked to complete

Appendices 2 and 3 of this report provide suggested topic areas for discussion with service users receiving support from the Tenant Support Scheme and those living in supported housing. Appendix 4 provides some guidance on conducting effective face to face discussions with service users. Appendix 5 provides some guidance on planning and running service user events.

2 Provide opportunities for service users to give their views about Supporting People within support providers' existing structures for service user involvement. Ways in which Supporting People might do this include:

- where appropriate, by prior agreement with service users and the support provider, attending part of a house meeting or service user involvement event
- where appropriate, by prior agreement with service users and the support provider, attending a service user forum or group
- having an information stand at service user away days, AGMs or other events held by landlords or support providers
- by consultation with service providers perhaps by attending a team meeting with front line staff who are most likely to know the preferences of individual service users in terms of how they would like to be consulted

In order to identify the opportunities for integrating into existing service user involvement activities, Supporting People will map these activities using the information provided in questionnaire responses by support providers as a starting point (see Appendix 6).

Where a service provider does not have house or scheme meetings, service user involvement events, away days etc, Supporting People will make sure that these service users, along with their support workers, are invited to the annual Supporting People service user information and networking event.

3 Provide opportunities for sharing of practice between service providers. Ways in which Supporting People might do this include:

- putting service user involvement on the agenda of the Supporting People liaison group

- holding sharing good practice, problem solving and networking events for front line staff
- 4 Ensure information about the Supporting People programme is communicated effectively to managers, front line staff and service users. Ways in which Supporting People might do this include:
- circulating the leaflet about Supporting People to all providers so that front line staff are aware of its contents
 - providing a regular newsletter in plain language for support providers and service users, containing information about the Supporting People programme, the Supporting People Team at the Vale of Glamorgan, new developments at national and local level etc
 - having a presence at relevant service user events, including the annual Supporting People service user information and networking event
 - providing opportunities for front line staff to talk directly to the Supporting People Team, eg through events, attending part of a team meeting etc

Things on which Supporting People might want to consult service users

- The quality of the support service they receive
- The design of new services
- Involving service users in tenders for new services, with appropriate training and support and providing a reference afterwards

Implementing this framework

In order to implement this framework, members of the Supporting People Team need to be:

- well informed
- clear about the boundaries of their decision making and responsibility and what to do with issues that are outside of their remit
- prepared to listen actively and respond to service users so that they know what will happen

Appendix 1 Summary findings of the research

The work to develop a service user participation strategy/policy for Supporting People in the Vale of Glamorgan involved:

- seeking Supporting People service provider views
- seeking Supporting People service user views
- learning from approaches in place elsewhere

Service providers

Questionnaires were sent to the 22 organisations that provide Supporting People services in the Vale of Glamorgan and 18 responses were received. 17 of these organisations provide opportunities for service user involvement at a day to day level and 14 at organisational level.

The survey responses indicated that:

- a wide range of ways of involving service users are provided by Supporting People service providers in the Vale at both local/project and organisational level
- the involvement can be divided into:
 - activities that are formal such as meetings, forums, staff recruitment and involvement in boards/committees
 - those that are more informal such as surveys, socials, trips, contributions to newsletters and conversations with individual service users

A range of challenges to involving service users were identified, but providers were also able to point to a number of examples of where involving service users had made a difference both to the service provided and to the service users themselves. These included:

- influencing policies
- influencing services
- influencing service user involvement
- influencing the allocation of resources

Service users

34 service users were consulted through drop in sessions at The Hub and visiting schemes/events. The key messages from the consultation were that:

- all service users want to have a say in the service they receive at scheme level

People prefer to have their say:

- one to one with staff they know and trust
- at house/scheme meetings
- at informal tenant away days/events with other service users

- most service users are not interested in having a say at organisational level
- none of the service users consulted as part of the research were interested in joining any formal group, forum or committee

The most important things for service users are that:

- their views are listened to and taken seriously
- their views are taken notice of and produce results
- they are told what has been done as a result of giving their views

Practice elsewhere

A range of examples of involving service users in Supporting People were identified from Wales and England. These included examples that:

- set out an overall approach to service user involvement in Supporting People such as a strategy or plan (Hartlepool, Redbridge and Tameside)
- focused on the development of a specific initiative or document such as a Support Charter (Liverpool)
- supported service users to play a role in monitoring and improving services (Birmingham)
- involved the development of a framework with a number of components (Swansea)
- focused around an active and well-supported service user group (Torbay)

A number of Welsh authorities (in addition to Swansea) are doing work on service user involvement in Supporting People, but we were unable to access any relevant documents such as strategies, plans or frameworks.

A number of the examples were reliant on resources within the Supporting People team such as a dedicated officer or securing resources externally, eg through the English Regional Champions initiative.

The full research report is available from the Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Team [add contact]

Appendix 2 Vale of Glamorgan Council Supporting People Team Suggested topic schedule for Tenant Support Scheme (TESS) service users

1 YOUR SUPPORT

Do you have a Support Plan?

If you have a Support Plan, how much of a say did you have about what is in it?

How often do you talk to your support worker about how your Support Plan is going?

Prompts

Every month

Every 3 months

Another time (how long?)

How happy are you with the support you get?

Prompts

If you ARE happy, what support is most useful to you?

If you ARE NOT happy, please tell us why
What would you like to change?

Is there any other support you would like?

Prompt

If YES, what other support would you like?

How often does your support worker visit you?

Prompts

Once a week

Twice a week

More than twice a week

Do you know who to talk to if you want to change your support worker?

Prompt

If YES, who would you talk to?

How happy are you with the organisation that supports you?

Prompts

If you ARE happy, what is the best thing about them?

If you ARE NOT happy, please tell us why
What would you like to change?

2 HAVING YOUR SAY

Do you have your say about your support service?

Prompts

If you DO have a say, how do you best like to have your say?

Does what you say get listened to and produce results?

If you DO NOT have a say, would you like to?

If you would, how would you best like to have your say?

3 FEELING SAFE

Do you feel safe where you live?

Prompts

Do you feel safe in the community?

Has the service assessed any risks you are experiencing?

4 MAKING A COMPLAINT

If you were not happy about the support you get, do you know who you could complain to?

Prompts

If you said YES, who could you complain to?

How would you do this?

5 ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Would you like to say anything else about the support you get to live in your home?

Appendix 3 Vale of Glamorgan Council Supporting People Team Suggested topic schedule for supported housing service users

1 YOUR HOME

Are you happy with the home you live in?

Prompt

If NO, what are you not happy about?

Is your home kept in good repair?

Prompt

If NO, what is wrong with it?

Do you know who you can contact in an emergency?

Prompts

On weekdays in the daytime

At night

At weekends or bank holidays

2 YOUR SUPPORT

Do you have a Support Plan?

If you do have a Support Plan, how much of a say did you have about what is in it?

How often do you talk to your support worker about how your Support Plan is going?

Prompts

Every month

Every 3 months

Another time (how long?)

How happy are you with the support you get?

Prompts

If you ARE happy, what support is most useful to you

If you ARE NOT happy, please tell us why
What would you like to change?

Is there any other support you would like?

Prompts

If YES, what other support would you like?

Do you know who to talk to if you want to change your support worker?

Prompt

If YES, who would you talk to?

How happy are you with the organisation that supports you?

Prompts

If you ARE happy, what is the best thing about them?

If you ARE NOT happy, please tell us why
What would you like to change?

3 HAVING YOUR SAY

Do you have your say about your support service and what goes on in your home?

Prompts

If you DO have a say, how do you best like to have your say?
Does what you say get listened to and produce results?

If you DO NOT have a say, would you like to have your say?
If you would, how would you best like to have your say?

4 FEELING SAFE

How safe do you feel in your home?

Prompt

If you DO NOT feel safe, what makes you feel unsafe?

How safe do you feel in the community?

Prompt

If you DO NOT feel safe, what makes you feel unsafe?

Has the service assessed any risks you are experiencing?

5 MAKING A COMPLAINT

If you were not happy about the support you get or the home you live in, do you know who you could complain to?

Prompts

If you said YES, who could you complain to?
How would you do this?

6 ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Would you like to say anything else about the support you get and the home you live in?

Appendix 4 Face to face discussions with service users: some tips for effective listening and responding

The following notes are provided for the Supporting People Team to help them in their work as support providers and landlords will already have policies and guidance on effectively involving their service users.

- Allow people the time they need
- Try and talk to people in a quiet place, sitting down, without any interruptions
- Put all questions in plain simple language
- Keep sentences short
- Talk slowly and clearly
- Don't confuse people by asking two questions in one (eg '*do you have a say and how do you best like to have it?*')
- Take time to listen to the person's response without interrupting
- Explore and clarify any issues raised, giving the person time to discuss
- Summarise and feedback to people on what you think they have said to you, to check you've got it right
- Discuss possible options (if there are any), and find out which the service user would prefer
- Respond clearly, explaining what you will do and when the service user can expect a response
- Be clear if you cannot deliver on the request/issue yourself, and explain what will happen (eg you may have to discuss with a manager and get back to the service user etc.)
- Say no straightaway if you know that that is the only response, and explain why this is
- If you are signposting people on to another person/organisation, write down the contact details for them
- Check that people understand your response

Appendix 5 Things to consider when planning service user events

The following notes are provided for the Supporting People Team to help them in their work as support providers and landlords will already have policies and guidance on effectively involving their service users.

Venue

Choose a venue that:

- is in a convenient location for people
- is near public transport
- has easy parking
- is on neutral ground
- is informal and friendly
- is warm enough
- is accessible for disabled people

Have a separate small room available if people want to chill out or talk privately

Times

Hold events:

- in the day time
- don't start too early
- don't hold sessions after lunchtime
- ideally mid morning to lunchtime (say about 10.30-1.30)
- not over half terms or in the school holidays

Refreshments

Provide:

- tea, coffee, water, soft drinks and biscuits offered on arrival
- a nice lunch

Incentives

Pay travel, childcare and carers' costs on the day

Provide a free raffle with vouchers as prizes

Provide a small expenses payment for attending (say £10.00)

Practicalities

Ask in advance if crèche facilities are required and provide them if needed

Avoid formal seating in rows with a top table

If possible arrange chairs cabaret style, round tables in groups of about 8 or 10 people

Make sure all the lights work

Make sure the heating works and can be turned up or down

Make sure windows can be opened if it gets too hot

Make sure there is a loop system for those who have hearing impairment

Avoid having flipcharts and overhead projectors as they are often intimidating

Format of day

Keep it informal, relaxed and friendly

Explain:

- the purpose of the day
- what is going to happen during the day including breaks and finish time
- what will happen as a result of the day
- where the toilets are
- where the chill out room is
- that people are welcome to wander off and take a break/have a smoke if they need to

Avoid lots of time where people have to sit down and listen to speakers

Make all sessions interactive and optional

For discussions, keep to 3 or 4 very clear questions

Allow breaks of about 10 minutes about every three quarters of an hour

Provide information stands with displays and leaflets

Provide free stuff, eg pens, mugs, magazines, information leaflets etc. etc. and a bag to put things in

Allow lots of time for people to visit the stands and chat

Appendix 6 Opportunities for service user involvement provided by support providers as indicated in survey responses

<i>Service provider</i>	<i>Opportunities for service user involvement</i>				
	<i>House meetings</i>	<i>Informal get togethers</i>	<i>Service user group</i>	<i>Service user away days</i>	<i>Involvement in recruitment of staff</i>
Foundation					√
Gofal Cymru		√	√		
Gwalia Care & Support	√	√	√	√	√
Gwalia Care & Support substance misuse		√			√
Hafan Cymru		√	√	√	√
Hafod	√	√	√	√	
Innovate Trust	√	√	√		√
Lifeways	√	√			
Llamau	√	√		√	√
Newydd	√	√	√	√	√
Opportunity Housing Trust	√				√

	<i>Opportunities for service user involvement</i>				
<i>Service provider</i>	<i>House meetings</i>	<i>Informal get togethers</i>	<i>Service user group</i>	<i>Service user away days</i>	<i>Involvement in recruitment of staff</i>
Pam Huish		√			
Reach	√	√	√		√
Taff		√	√	√	√
Vale of Glamorgan Council (adult placement)		√			
Vale of Glamorgan Council (emergency alarm)					
Vale of Glamorgan Council (sheltered housing and homeless hostel)		√	√	√	
Wales & West Housing Association		√	√	√	