



Shared Values for Participation

Principles, planning and evaluation for participation of people who are homeless

These shared values are intended to be a reference and evaluation tool for homelessness services that are developing participation of people who are homeless. They can help organisations to evaluate whether they are truly engaging with participation and facilitating service users to be meaningfully involved in decision-making affecting the services that they use.

These four principles should underpin all participation and involvement and should be used to keep involvement effective and meaningful. The examples and indicators in each section will help organisations to plan and evaluate their engagement with participation. It is useful that each organisation should develop its own indicators over time

In developing this document, FEANTSA drew on the shared values developed as part of “Hear by Right”¹, which is a set of standards for the implementation and evaluation of participation in the youth sector.

¹ The standards and tools called « Hear by Right » were developed by the National Youth Agency in the UK as framework to improve practice and policy on participation of children and young people. You can find out more about it here: <http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright/home.asp?cid=180&cats=215>

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1) Participation of people who are homeless is a visible commitment that is properly resourced

There is visible commitment to the principle and practice of participation of people who are homeless from senior managers and leaders in the homeless service sector.

- Some indicators of this could be:
 - Training is made available to senior managers;
 - Participation figures in the job descriptions;
 - Participation is a standard agenda item at meetings.

Participation is built into the organisational structure and is reflected in its strategic planning, services, resources (staff time and money) and communication.

- Some indicators of this could be:
 - Relevant training available for service users and staff;
 - There are plans in place to allow service users and former service users become staff members and work in services;
 - Participation is reflected in the house rules;
 - Participation is in the organisation's strategic planning;
 - Participation is reflected in publications like magazines or leaflets from the organisation;
 - Participation is part of the advocacy and awareness raising strategies of the organisation;
 - There is a dedicated budget for participation;
 - There is a provision for covering costs incurred for participation (Covering of travel or food, and necessary facilities such as crèche facilities and incentive payments) and that these are handled in a sensitive way;
 - There are opportunities for learning and discussion and development of participation in an ongoing way.

2) People's involvement in participation is valued

People's involvement in participation is acknowledged.

- Some indicators of that could be:
 - Staff who have responsibility on participation have time and resources to do this work and that the division of tasks reflects this;
 - Providing support and resources (mentoring, supervision, etc.) for service users to really participate.

Feedback to people who are homeless about the effects of their involvement is prompt and clear.

- Some indicators of that could be:
 - There is a time limit to provide responses to queries and requests coming from service users;
 - Where organisations do not use the advice and input coming from service users, the reasons must be given and made clear.

The participation of people who are homeless is recognised and promoted.

- Some indicators of this would be:
 - That the participation of people is publicised and made visible, within the organisation and in its external communication.

3) All people who are homeless have the opportunity to get involved

People are not discriminated against or prevented from participating effectively on grounds of ethnic origin, language, religion, culture, disability, age, gender or sexuality. Care and time is taken to go the extra mile to ensure that people facing greatest barriers can be involved if they wish to be.

- Some indicators might be:
 - Facilities such as childcare are available where necessary;
 - There is a possibility to have group working for sharing similar experiences and meeting specific needs;
 - There is access for people with disability;
 - There is information in different languages and translation available;
 - Opportunities for participation are made available in a continuous and ongoing way and people can engage if and when they choose.

Relevant training and support are provided to people who are homeless so that they can participate effectively.

- Some indicators might be:
 - Training options are discussed with service users in order that they can decide on training that might be relevant for themselves;
 - Training on how the organisation works – structures, planning, budgeting finances - so that they can better engage with the framework.

Information is available to everybody involved in participation in good time and is accessible, jargon free and appropriate.

- Some indicators might be:
 - Documents should be in a form, or written in a language, that is accessible and can be understood by everyone;
 - Information that is being provided for service users and information that concerns their situation, is proofed by service users to see the content is useful and accessible.

4) Policies and standards for the participation of homeless people are in place, evaluated and improved

What the organisation is trying to achieve and the intended benefits are clear from the start.

- An indicator might be:
 - There is a written statement or action plan containing the aims and benefits from the outset and these are clearly communicated to all involved.

People who are homeless evaluate the process and changes that result from their point of view and help apply lessons learned.

- Some indicators might be:
 - Service users are involved in ongoing auditing of opportunities for participation;
 - Staff and clients work together to put together an action plan that takes account of the audit.

There are agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with people who are homeless to ensure their participation is safe, effective and evaluated.

- Some indicators might be:
 - Being involved in participation will not have a negative effect on a person's use of and access to services;
 - The adoption and use of a document like the present one in order to proof the process of participation.