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Participation Toolkit

Get a different result…
get people participating!

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Welcome

Dear Colleague

Welcome to this new participation toolkit for organisations who provide services for people experiencing inequality, exclusion and homelessness.

This toolkit has been created by people with lived experience of homelessness alongside 10 organisations from across Europe working in the fields of homelessness, social policy, civic participation and education.

We have created this toolkit because, like you, we believe that people have a unique insight into their own situation. Harnessing their views and experiences helps them, and also helps all of us in our work to improve services and influence policies and plans.

Positive participation is about using a wide range of tools and techniques to meet the needs of different people and situations. So this toolkit contains 25 suggested tools to help facilitate participation in your service, presented as easy to use fact-sheets.

We hope you find this toolkit useful.

Kind regards,

FEANTSA Participation Working Group

Coordinator: Mauro Striano	FEANTSA	(Belgium)
Chair: Ian Tilling	Casa Ioana Association	(Romania)
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GRUNDTVIG Participation Project: 'Participation Sans Toi(t)?!'

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How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit is for

- organisations that provide services to homeless and other socially excluded people; *and*
- the people that use those services.

This toolkit will cover 5 areas:

- **What is Participation?**

- **What are the benefits?**

- **What to avoid!**

- **Creating the right environment** (25 Service Standards)

- **How to do it** (25 Tools for Participation)

Read

Use

Choose

Please:

1   **Read |** the first 3 sections; they provide some useful explanations and definitions, which will make the Toolkit easier to use

2   **Use |** the Self Assessment Tool - by using a simple 'traffic light' scoring method, you can rate service standards that relate to service user participation. You can identify what you are doing well and areas that you want to improve. *This should take no longer than 20 minutes.*

3   **Choose |** from the 25 Tools – and let us know about any others that you use!

What is Participation?

Participation: a way of enabling people to participate in all the decisions and actions that affect their lives.

Participation is a way of working that empowers people to participate in decisions and actions that affect their lives. It is based on the conviction that people have the right to have a say in the way that services they use are set up and run, and that people at social or economic disadvantage often face barriers to influencing decision making.

In practice, participation is about:

- Recognising that people affected by homelessness have the right to have their opinions and perspectives heard;

- Creating the structures to allow this perspective to be heard;

- Acting on what is being said; and

- Feeding back to people on the impact that their participation has had.

Participation is a way of ensuring that we value the experiences of people who have a unique insight into the services we run and the policies we make. By taking account of this experience, the quality and effectiveness of services and policies will improve.

Participation can happen independently within an organisation, or can be linked up across a network of organisations (for example to inform and influence wider policies or plans at local, national or European level).

Empowerment: the enabling of individuals to claim their rights and to achieve their potential and aspirations. This is the intended outcome of participation at the personal, social and political levels (although of course, personal empowerment may happen without the involvement of services!).

The participation of excluded and homeless groups makes decision and policy-making more open and democratic, respects human rights and creates an *empowering* environment for people who are marginalised. Empowerment is one of the intended outcomes of participation, because an empowered person is one who can more easily find a sustainable route out of homelessness.

Definitions of empowerment include ideas of challenging assumptions of power, helping people gain control over their own lives and fostering power in people for use in their own lives by acting on issues that they feel are important. Personal empowerment is said to be driven by the individual's belief in their capability to influence events. In addition to personal empowerment, sociological empowerment is said to address members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making processes.

Service User: The people for whom our services were created, and who currently use those services.

Types of Participation

When planning participation activities in your service, remember that all types of participation can be appropriate and empowering in different circumstances – no type is 'better' or necessarily more empowering than others. For example, an organisation providing crisis intervention might find that service users are more interested in being consulted or getting information than sharing power. Or residents of supported accommodation would prefer to share more decision making or take full control of some aspects.
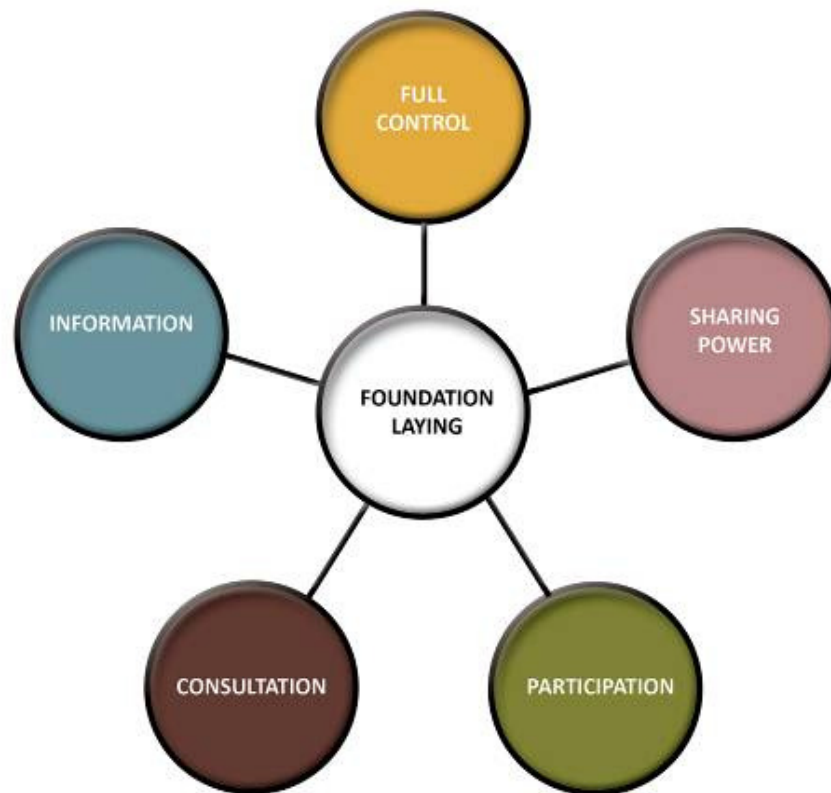
Fig.1: Types of participation

Services that have created empowering environments (25 service standards) provide a good foundation for participation. The other elements represent types of participation which can be used on their own or blended together in different contexts and circumstances. A range of techniques is most likely to increase the representivity of people participating.

Type	Description	Examples
Full control:	Service users control decision making	• Community-run committees, groups or organisations • Specific projects that are fully service user led, but within the stability and structures of a hosting organisation
Sharing Power:	Shared decisions and responsibility, including governance level. Service users can influence and determine outcomes.	• Staff recruitment • Supported volunteering • Governance level
Participation:	Encouraging people to take part in shaping services, policies or perceptions. Service users can make suggestions and influence outcomes.	• Focus groups • Participatory Appraisal • Stakeholder events • Peer research & Peer education
Consultation:	Asking people what they think of a service or policy. Service users have limited influence.	• Questionnaires • Exit interviews • Focus Groups • Suggestion Boxes
Information:	Telling people about a service or policy. Service users have no influence.	• Newsletters • Leaflets • Notice boards • Digital Information

Benefits
of Participation

"...the main effect of putting distance between 'providers' and 'users' and neglecting human capacity is to make people weaker rather than stronger, more isolated and divided from each other, more dependent rather than more resourceful, and more at risk of ill-being and distress".

(Boyle, D., Coote, A., Sherwood, C., & Slay, J. (2010)

There are many good reasons for pursuing participation. The benefits can be far reaching for:

- The person being involved;

- The practices of the organisation;

- Planners and policy makers;

- Communities – raising awareness, improving perceptions of homelessness, correcting images and dispelling myths and stereotypes.

Person: An individual receives personal gain or empowerment from being involved, for example through increased confidence, knowledge, skills or awareness. This is separate from gains that may be made in the longer term, for example from improved policy or practice.

Practice: Participation is most regularly used as a tool by services to consult with their service users to better identify aspirations, and adjust practice in response. This is used most widely as change can be facilitated relatively easily, so both the person and the service can reap immediate rewards.

Policy: Often this is done when expected outcomes of participation are thought to be politically timely or relevant. Unavoidable time lapses between the participation and any resultant change at policy level make it challenging to ensure that participation is empowering and interesting for service users. People should be aware that any changes may not be tangible in the short term.

Perception: There is generally a low awareness of poverty and homeless issues in society, often accompanied by myths, prejudices and stereotypes about its causes and the characteristics of people who experience it. There are many participative projects that can assist in improving perceptions. Key opportunities to make an impact at this level include communities, mainstream services, researchers, academics, politicians and the media including social media. People with direct experience of the issues can also be important and effective ambassadors.

KEY POINT

Participation should always have a positive impact at the PERSON level. In addition, participation should also aim to make an impact at one (or more!) of the other three levels:

- PRACTICE
- POLICY/PLANNING
- PERCEPTION

What to Avoid

Tokenism

We all fear the risk of tokenistic participation! This is usually felt around activities such as when a service user is nominated (or self-nominated) to represent others in groups, meetings, committees or boards. Participation gives those facilitating it evidence that all sides are considered, but makes it possible that only some of those sides benefit. Although this type of participation can be very empowering, if tokenistic, it is more likely to be disempowering.

> ### *KEY POINT*
>
> If you can be sure that the activity has positive benefits at Person level, as well as impacting at one (or more) other level (practice; policy; perception) - then the participation could not be described as tokenistic.

Consultation Fatigue

It isn't necessarily the case that service users object to being consulted regularly or more than once about the same issue. Rather, consultation fatigue can result from people's experience of being asked their opinion about things, then not hearing what the outcome of their participation has been or what arguments were used. Feeding back is very important, even if it seems that people will not like the feedback or that (final) results cannot yet be presented. A service can feedback to a service user who participated in person or in writing using a personal letter or email. Or if a group of service users participated, services could use a report, a wall poster or newsletter.

'Professional' service users

People can become very committed to participation and when this commitment is matched with a high level of aptitude and competency, a select group of homeless people can become a popular and easy option for participation. This is at the expense of a broader and more representative perspective.

Lack of Appreciation

Service users can on occasion feel unappreciated - more so when participation is ineffectively planned. Ensure that there is an incentive available for participants; service users are volunteering their time and should be rewarded and valued for their effort. Incentives can include cash, vouchers or hospitality. As a minimum, service users should never be 'out of pocket' as a result of participating.

Fear

Staff can feel nervous about participation for lots of reasons. There can be concerns about what the outcome of participation will be, particularly where it is anticipated that homeless people will have views that differ from theirs. Sometimes there will be concerns that people may be angry, 'radical' or particularly vocal. Staff may also have concerns about how best to feedback disappointing outcomes from participation, or no outcome at all.

Self-Assessment:

25 Service Standards *for positive participation*

What this Self-Assessment can do?

- ☑ The 25 Service Standards for positive participation are potential service improvements that can help make the participation of service users easier and more effective.

- ☑ This quick self-assessment will help you to assess which of your service standards are already very good and those that you want to improve.

What this Self-Assessment *cannot* do:

- ⊗ This self-assessment cannot measure how effective or successful each participation activity has been.

How to use this Self-Assessment

1.   **Reflect** on your service in the following areas:

   - Leadership & Commitment
   - Practice & Procedure
   - Approach
   - Training & Resources
   - Evaluation

2.   **Rate** each question with how satisfied you are with the service standard you already have:

   Red | priority area you need to improve

   Amber | satisfied, but room for improvement

   Green | very satisfied, no improvement needed

   Grey | Not Applicable

3.   **Consult** with different colleagues when completing the self-assessment. This could be particularly useful if you do not work directly with service users, or if you do not have full knowledge of organisational plans and policies.
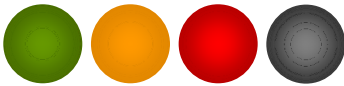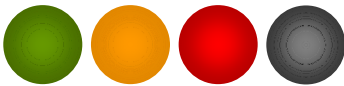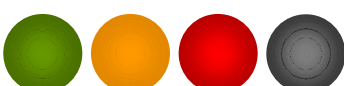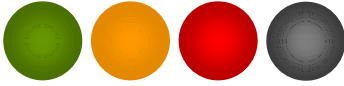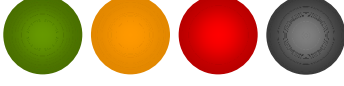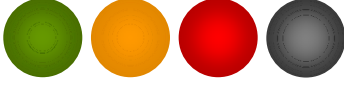
Leadership & Commitment:

This ensures participation is prioritised and responsibility is shared and communicated across your organisation

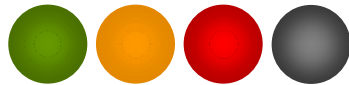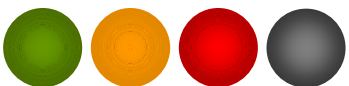| 1	We have one (or more!) people who are responsible for participation	
2	There is an overarching commitment to participation in our service	
3	This commitment is shared across all: • Frontline Staff • Managers • Governance • Volunteers	
4	We have a stated vision and aims for participation	
5	Where relevant, we have staff policies and procedures in place for: • Involving service users • Lone working • Risk Assessment • Codes of conduct • Confidentiality	
6	We are already meeting the participation requirements we *need* to (i.e. those made by funders or regulators).	

Practice & Procedure
Consistently following agreed practices and procedures for participation can encourage and motivate service users to become involved and increases the impact of participation

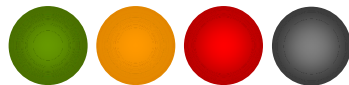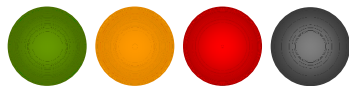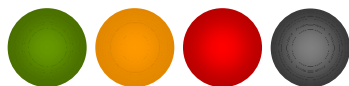| 7	Our service users are familiar with our vision and aims for participation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
8	We act upon information we receive: • To improve our own service or practice • To feedback to policy makers or other partners	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
9	We actively feedback to service users on the impact that their participation had on: • Our practice • External policies or plans • External perceptions or prejudices	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
10	We actively feedback to service users the reasons if no impact or progress has been made as a result of their participation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
11	We encourage and create an interest in participation (e.g. included in induction meetings; assessments; residents meetings etc)	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
12	We ensure that participation opportunities do not hold people in our service beyond their need for our service. (i.e. we help people to find other opportunities)	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Practice & Procedure		
Consistently following agreed practices and procedures for participation can encourage and motivate service users to become involved and increases the impact of participation		
13	We ensure that service users engaging other service users (e.g. peer research or mentoring) are background-checked for any risk	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
14	We start every participation activity with consideration given to: • Health & Safety (e.g. fire alarms, fire escapes, comfort breaks) • Shared ground rules (generated with service users)	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Approach		
person-centred practice will help to ensure that participation is appropriate and accessible for all different types of people who use your service		
15	If we need a specific group for the particular activity (e.g. young people; women), we ensure transparency and clarity around how and why people have been selected to take part	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
16	We routinely ensure that service users are valued, acknowledged and recognised for their participation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
17	We ensure considerations in relation to: • Age • Literacies or language needs • Religion or belief • Race and culture • Mobility and accessibility • Sex and sexual orientation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Approach

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
18	We adopt a person-centred and flexible approach that reaches people facing the biggest barriers to participation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
19	We have expected timescales associated with each of our participation activities	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
20	We ensure that all participation activities have positive benefits for the participant (e.g. personal development; social networks; empowerment)	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
21	We ensure that the reason for participation is clear to service users from the beginning of every activity	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Training and Resources

It is important to consider the range and level of skills required by both staff and service users to allow them to facilitate or participate effectively, along with the need for materials, resources and expense

22	We make available sufficient resources for any involvement activity including: • Staff time • Travel expenses • Crèche • Hospitality • Incentives	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
23	We provide adequate support and training for our service users to participate	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
24	We provide adequate support and training for staff to support participation	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Evaluation
Important to review the impact of participation and measure changes that were brought about

25	We evaluate the effectiveness of all our participation activities	🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Other: _____

Use this space if you have identified any other service standards that you want to include

26		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
27		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
28		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
29		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
30		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
31		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫
32		🟢 🟠 🔴 ⚫

Participation Tools

1. Exit Interviews

2. Forums & Meetings

3. Suggestion & Comments Boxes

4. Talking Walls

5. Notice Boards & Whiteboards

6. Posters & Leaflets

7. Focus Groups

8. Surveys & Questionnaires

9. Creative Arts

10. Film Making

11. Service User Newsletters

12. Open Space

13. Peer Research

14. Peer Education

15. Peer Mentoring

16. Peer Advocacy

17. Partner Events (Workshops, Seminars & Conferences)

18. NGO Governance (Boards & Management Committees)

19. Supported Volunteering

20. Media Opportunities

21. Recruitment of Staff

22. Service User Led Projects/Organisations

23. Care Planning & Review

24. Involvement through Technology and Social Media

25. Leading your own Recovery

1. Exit Interviews

Exit interviews provide an opportunity for the service user to feedback their views on a service they have just used and to review how effectively their needs were met. It is usually facilitated by staff from the service.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☐

How to do it

- The most important thing to remember is that participation in the interview must be voluntary and have a service user focus; the service user feeding back their views and suggestions and staff facilitating their reflection.

- Be flexible around when the interview takes place; make it as easy as possible for the service user to attend, for example by giving lots of notice or by attaching it to their last day with the organisation. Also be flexible about where the interview takes place – holding it in a 'neutral' place, away from the service, can also be very beneficial for your service user.

- It would be beneficial for service users and staff to work together to draw up a structured exit questionnaire. Check with a wider representation of service users that the questionnaire makes sense and is accessible to all.

- If the service user is comfortable, offer them the opportunity to speak with a member of staff who did not directly provide support, or alternatively with an external representative or another trained service user. This allows the service user to speak freely about all aspects of their experience and support in the organisation.

- Use active listening techniques to gather views and be sure to avoid closed questions (for example, questions that gather yes or no only answers). Make sure that there is plenty of time and space for them to reflect and explore their ideas.

- Encourage the service user to initiate discussion topics; it may be useful to prepare open questions if necessary.

- Don't be defensive about your service, this process is an opportunity to develop and improve.

- When appropriate, it is good practice to accompany an exit interview with advice and information about further learning, volunteering, employment or other opportunities

- If possible, you can also offer the choice of using a Dictaphone (so the interview can flow more freely).

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Exit interviews provide an opportunity for the service user to reflect on their time using a service; to review what worked for them, what did not work so well, and why.
-
- The self-reflective nature of exit interviews can have a positive impact on the service user by allowing them to reflect on the progress they have made since first accessing the service.
- A useful tool for identifying past, existing and future needs and helping to process transition.
- Exit interviews can be a driver for organisational improvement – they can help an organisation assess and improve quality of service/s, as well as develop new strands of work.
- The exit interview process is flexible. It can be as formal or as informal as the organisation and the service user have agreed.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Exit interviews can sometimes be viewed as tokenistic by both staff and service users. To avoid this it is important to make sure that exit interviews remain as person-centered as possible. Ensure the focus is on the benefits to the service user as this is an opportunity to reflect and for the organisation to continuously improve their practice.

- Exit interviews can also sometimes be viewed quite cynically, for example 'it's too late to make changes'. The best way to counter this is to ensure that the exit interview is simply one stage of an overall process of participation.

Resources needed – Low

- Interview facilitator.
- A quiet space where you will not be interrupted.
- Pre-prepared interview survey.
- Developing resource library for signposting to other services.

2. Forums & Meetings

Regular forums and meetings, whether 'open forum' or thematic, can be relatively easy to facilitate and an effective means of participation. For example, they might be residents meetings, or they might be weekly or monthly meetings on issues or themes raised by service users. They are cost-effective, and can offer the opportunity for service users develop new skills or improve existing ones (for example, facilitation, minute taking).

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Agendas should be set jointly with service users and should be checked for accessibility (no acronyms etc) and ensure that their items have enough time for discussion. Meetings should be facilitated by a skilled and confident chairperson and a note/minute taker.

- Agendas should follow normal standards: **Welcome and Introduction** (and apologies), **Matters Arising** and no more than 3 discussion points raised per meeting. There should also be ample time made for **Any Other Business** and service user feedback and comment. Next meeting dates should be advertised at the end of the agenda.

- Forums and meetings should ideally begin with an icebreaker and the group agreeing ground rules that ensure everyone feels safe and comfortable within the meeting.

- Introductions should also begin with outlining agenda items so people know in advance when there are opportunities to discuss various issues and when comfort breaks or lunch will be. The introduction should also state clearly what the intended outcome of the meeting is and when people will receive feedback. If possible, ensure that people are aware of what the meeting will potentially influence.

- Jargon free notes should be sent out as soon as possible after the meeting in whatever format is easiest for the participant to receive them (i.e. delivered by staff member, email, by post).

- An agenda book could be made available between meetings so service users can access and suggest agenda items.

- Service users should be offered the opportunity for training in order to fulfill skills associated with running meetings, for example, note taking, public presentation, chairing.

- If service users are attending other meetings on behalf of a service user group, they should receive training about representation to ensure they are clear when they are putting their own point of view or the group's point of view across.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Forums or meetings often generate more feedback as members opinions can be triggered by discussion points raised by others.
- Forums or meetings can give service providers an opportunity to invite external agencies to the table for discussion.
- Meetings can also be linked to training.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Meetings/forums may only uncover a small sample of service user feelings as attendance to these groups is nearly always self selecting. Organisations should be aware of this and try to use other methods to gather other service users' opinions.
- There should be a 1:1 option for people not comfortable speaking in groups or in front of other people.
- The group format, particularly as staff are present, may prevent service users from speaking as candidly as they would like.
- Forums and meetings may not be accessible for people who speak other languages.
  Often membership is staff heavy; ensure a minimal staff presence which will lead to a service user focus.

Resources needed – Low

- Comfortable, accessible meeting room.
- Agendas.
- Minutes of previous meetings.
- Staff time for meeting and carrying out relevant actions.
- Hospitality and expenses.

3. Suggestions & Comments Boxes

Suggestion boxes are a great and easy way to gain feedback about a service. Although they may also be used for complaints we suggest that they are not named complaints box in order to ensure that improvements and suggestions are also encouraged. It is important that service users receive feedback from their suggestions.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☐

How to do it:

- Suggestion boxes should be set up somewhere where it is easy for service users to put comments in without being seen.

- A pen or two should be nearby. Paper should also be provided. These need to be checked and maintained on an ongoing basis.

- A sign should be nearby, highlighting how often and when the box will be emptied and in what way and when comments will be responded to.

- All comments should receive a reply and responses should also let people know when and what changes may or may not happen.

- Different options for the service to respond to suggestions include (i) in person; (ii) at a meeting; (iii) typed response sheets on the wall or (iv) in newsletters.

- Care should be taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality is protected.

- Some services create a very simple questionnaire to be filled out, this can allow service users to say how they would like feedback, and provide their own details if they wish to.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Suggestion boxes offer service users an opportunity to make suggestions for improvements to the service
- Service users can make suggestions anonymously without fear of being identified
- Some services have used comments boxes to inform agendas at meetings or focus groups
- Some services ensure a definite time to open the box and the manager of the service reads out the comments to all (if service users are happy to share their comments in this situation)

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Staff must have responsibility for suggestion boxes, to ensure comments are read, directed, feedback is provided and changes are advertised.
- People with literacy issues or who speak other languages may not find this technique accessible.

Resources needed – Low

- Sturdy and clearly identifiable box.
- Attached paper, pens.
- Staff time to feedback to service users.
- Time to consult service users/staff about how best to develop and advertise comments box and policies on feedback.

4. Talking Walls

A talking wall is simply a large piece of paper put up in a prominent position in a public space. It's a method most often used in conjunction with other participation techniques (for example meetings, focus groups and partner events). However, they offer an excellent opportunity as permanent fixtures in services as well. They can also be used effectively as an evaluation tool, for example providing people with an opportunity to comment on how they felt on the day.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Simply put up a large piece of paper on the wall. Write the question you want to ask people at the top in brightly coloured markers, or simply write 'Comments Welcome'.

- Make sure you leave lots of markers around the wall so people can comment at their leisure.

- In order for talking walls to be effective they need to be put in a 'high traffic' area where people will notice them.

- If used in a meeting/conference/event, facilitators should also make a point of encouraging people to write (or draw) on the wall throughout the day; otherwise they may not be utilised.

- People should be offered post-it notes as this may add an extra element of confidence and privacy.

- Ensure someone is responsible for taking down the talking wall, writing up the comments and feeding back to all relevant partners.

- Can be used in well used areas of projects as a permanent fixture, perhaps consulting on different issues each week.

- Ensure a form of feedback and advertise it clearly.

- May need some agreed rules, for example no personal information, offensive comments or swearing.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- People can take as much time as they need to write.
- People can draw pictures instead of writing.
- Can create an interesting visual that can be displayed in the future.
- Offers an alternative way for people to express their opinions without having to speak up in a meeting.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Other people can see you writing – not an anonymous or private method, one possible way around this is to provide post-it notes.
- People with literacy issues or who speak other languages may not find this technique accessible.

Resources needed – **Low**

- Frieze or wallpaper.
- Coloured Pens/Markers.
- Post-it Notes.
- Time to follow through and feedback results.

5. Notice Boards & Whiteboards

Most organisations have notice boards or white boards. They are a great way to advertise participation activities and to feed back within your organisation. They should be displayed in a prominent position, with the majority of information (and the most important information) at eye level. Notice boards should be maintained and the information they hold reviewed regularly to ensure they are kept up to date, with outdated materials removed.

A notice board is a great place to display an organisational chart so people know who's who and who does what. They can also be used to invite people to consultations and to thank people.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☐

How to do it:

- Ensure that all information is as accessible as possible, and in all relevant languages.

- Use pictures where possible.

- Sometimes it helps to have clear headings and divisions separating the different types of information advertised. Consideration should be given to the exact purpose of the notice board.

- Assign responsibility for maintaining and reviewing the notice board information on a regular basis. This can also be an opportunity for service users to have responsibility for maintaining and updating information.

- Discard or update old material to prevent your notice boards from becoming overcrowded.

- Inform and remind service users about the whereabouts and purpose of notice boards.

- Do not rely on notice boards as a sole method of communication, but rather as an extra prompt.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Information easily accessed.
- Low cost.
- All partners are able to use them to communicate if they wish.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- People with literacy issues or who speak other languages may not find this technique accessible.
- People can take things off them or alter information.
- Not always fully utilised.
- Often overloaded with information.

Resources needed – **Low**

- Resources should be minimal.
- Staff time to keep up to date.
- Markers, blu tac, drawing pins.

6. Posters & Leaflets

Your own posters and leaflets offer a means of communicating with current and potential service users. They can also be used to encourage participation in consultations and feedback activities. As the consumers of these materials it is ideal that service users test them for interest and accessibility, and be involved in their design and development.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☐

How to do it:

- Involve service users from the beginning.

- Planning communication through posters and leaflets is crucial as mistakes cannot be cheaply corrected once multiple copies have been printed.

- All materials have a 'shelf-life' but do minimise this by not using references which will date quickly. For example, including the name of a staff member will mean that the leaflet is no longer current if that staff member leaves the organisation.

- The design and layout of leaflets and posters should take account of potential audiences as some design decisions can exclude people. The use of certain graphics and layout can disadvantage people who are visually impaired or who have literacy issues.

- Fonts should be 'clean', clear and of a suitable size. Densely printed areas should be avoided.

- Pay close attention to the use of text with background images, which could make information less accessible.

- The more complex the language (including jargon and slang) the more people will be excluded or will exclude themselves from your potential audience.

- As a general rule - keep it simple. Question and answer formats, clear spacing, and breaking complex processes into smaller steps can all help. Think of your audience and keep it as straightforward as possible.

- Involve service users in checking accessibility and content and ensure that it is clearly understood and attractive. Try and get a range of service users to give you feedback.

- Seek advice from service users on where leaflets and information on the service should be made available (e.g. communal areas)

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Leaflets and posters are a common method of promoting a service, engaging with potential service users, and communicating with referrers of service users and others. It is now commonly expected that a project will have such materials.

- A good leaflet not only communicates the information it contains but carries a larger message about the professionalism and values that your organisation wants to communicate to its partners and others.

- This type of involvement means that service users are involved in how your organisation communicates to its own service users, potential service users and other partners.

- Leaflets are an excellent method of feeding back results from participation activities.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Be sure to develop posters and leaflets to a high standard. Unprofessionally produced promotional materials will send a poor message regarding competence and quality.

- May need to be updated regularly.

Resources needed – Low

- Print costs (internal or external)
- Service user/staff consultations
- Possibly software - there are very sophisticated free packages available online for graphics and desktop publishing. For some materials, word processing packages will be adequate

7. Focus Groups

A focus group is a research method in which a specifically selected group of people can be asked about their opinion on a particular topic. Questions and specific discussion points are raised in an interactive group setting, and members of the group are encouraged to talk freely. Ideally a focus group works best with a minimum of 4 people and a maximum of 12 and will last 1-2 hours.

Benefits: **Person** ☑ **Practice** ☑ **Policy** ☑ **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Organisers should decide what information they want to gather and who to conduct a focus group with to get required information. Participants of a focus group should have some kind of experience or opinion relating to the subject of the focus group.

- Organisers should find a neutral and comfortable meeting place for the focus group.

- The date and time of the meeting should be considered in order to suit the needs of the participants. Participants should be given advance notice and reminders.

- Try to ensure that participants are representative and have relevant experience required to make up the desired target group. When advertising, organisers should clearly state what the subject of the focus group is and who would be suitable to take part.

- Facilitators should be confident and knowledgeable on the theme. They should ensure confidentiality and make no false promises. Facilitators should also offer a 1:1 should people wish to put forward a point privately.

- At the beginning of the focus group facilitators should ensure that agreed rules are generated and that an agenda for the session is outlined (including comfort breaks).

- Note takers should write clearly on flip charts (checking with participants for clarity) and ensure that everyone's comments are recorded. The focus group should finish with the note taker going over all the key points raised during the meeting, ensuring that all participants are aware of feedback mechanisms.

- Outline what the results will be used for before the focus group begins and also at the end of the focus group. If the results published will be compiled in a report ensure that each participant will receive a copy of the report if they leave a contact address.

☺ Advantages using this tool

- Can trigger a wider and more thorough discussion than one to one interviews.
- Can allow a large amount of information to be generated in a short amount of time.
- At service level, focus group numbers often allow for a representative sample of a project's population.
- Provides a wealth of information about what people think and also why they think the way they do.
- A relatively inexpensive and easy way to get feedback.

☹ Disadvantages using this tool

- Participants may feel a pressure to conform to other members' views.
- Participants may feel that they have to express positive views if staff members are present.
- Information gathered during the focus group may be difficult to interpret and record.
- Needs to have a 1:1 option for people not comfortable speaking in groups or in front of other people.
- People who speak other languages may not find this technique accessible.

Resources needed – Medium

- Facilitator and Note taker.
- Flip Chart/Pens.
- Staff time for printing agenda, ground rules and feedback.
- Incentives & Refreshments.

8. Surveys & Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are excellent methods of gathering information around specific areas of a service or organisation. They enable organisations to collect information from or about people and help to describe, compare or explain their knowledge, attitudes or behaviour.

By adopting this method any organisation can gain a rich source of data which can be used to improve service and policy delivery. The process has several key stages: selecting objectives for the survey, designing the survey, carrying out the survey, managing and analysing the data and reporting the results.

They can also be used across a number of organisations for wider policy or perception consultations. Careful consideration has to be given to expertise around designing the survey. The process of developing appropriate questions is often most successful when service users and staff work together.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

Identify survey objectives: The objectives of a survey can come from a defined need to gather information around service provision. This stage can be carried out by staff or in partnership with service users.

Design the survey: Including service users in this stage can be an empowering process for those who take part, although you will have to consider the increased time and resources. When designing a survey, accessibility and plain language should be consistent throughout the design. Questions can take two forms:

(i) *Open questions* which allow people to speak in their own words, for instance 'how, what, why' help people to express their opinions. Although this may provide useful quotations, themes that arise and information gathered may be difficult to interpret and careful consideration is needed so that misinterpretation does not occur.

(ii) *Closed questions* allow respondents to give specific answers, for example, yes or no. These questions may be more difficult to frame but can lead to easier statistical analysis and interpretation.

Carrying out the survey: An interviewer must be able to communicate effectively and actively listen to pick up meaning when interviewing a participant. If service users are to be involved at this stage adequate training should be provided to ensure that the interviewer achieves a rich source of data. Ensure language or literacy considerations.

Managing and analysing the data: This process begins when the surveys or questionnaires are returned. Issues that should be considered include; checking all the questions have been answered, are worded correctly, check service users have demonstrated an understanding of the questions, identify and be skilled in recognising common themes that have been given in answers.

Reporting the results: After analysis the results can be disseminated by written reports or orally. Again this can be carried out solely by service users, in partnership with staff and service users, or solely by staff. Communication and report writing skills are needed, as well as the ability to present tables and figures if necessary. It also helps to have a staff member outwith the survey team to critique the initial draft to give an objective view on any report.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Surveys can gather information relating to a specific aspect of a service within an organisation or an organisation as a whole.
- Involving service users in the process can lead to a shared understanding between different partner groups, and can be a very empowering process for service users.
- Surveys can give an evidence base for changes to service provision, or make wider policy or perception impacts.
- Questionnaires and surveys can be used in 1:1 interviews, left out with comments boxes, delivered to people's doors, and in telephone interviews.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Careful thought has to be given to the survey questions. It is so important that the correct questions are asked otherwise the information needed may not be gathered.
- Organisations should provide adequate resources for carrying out surveys. It may be resource intensive if service users are to be fully involved in the process.
- People with language or literacy barriers may not find this technique accessible.

Resources needed – **Medium**

- Significant time allocation for preparation, printing, consultation and design.

9. Creative Arts

The creative arts can be used in conjunction with other tools or individually. They are particularly useful when working with language or literacy barriers and can be used individually or with groups.

They can address sensitive issues that are difficult to talk about and help to engage 'harder to reach' groups. There are many different ways of using the creative arts to involve people; this toolkit provides some ideas to get you started.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

DRAMA Can bring a complex issue to life, making it emotionally powerful, more interesting, easy to understand and relevant to people's lives. In many cases, a play is more likely to be noticed and is more memorable than a written piece of work. It can be a useful way to involve a wide range of people with very different levels of analytical skills and experience at local and national levels. Drama by itself can be a powerful way to convey messages and persuade people of our points of view. Its impact can be increased by adding activities that involve the audience.

POETRY & CREATIVE WRITING can help people express emotions, talk about issues or find a voice they would not necessarily express verbally. There are many ways of beginning a writing activity; examples include providing a series of words or phrases that can be rearranged into a story or poem; a bag of objects that can be used as a prompt for storytelling or a series of songs or film clips that can prompt writing reviews or fiction:

- Participants with language or literacy barriers can use a digital voice recorder to record poetry, or be partnered with someone who can translate;
- Using computers can also be a good way to write as people have the benefit of spell checking, cutting and pasting, and can experiment with colour, fonts and text size.

ARTS & CRAFTS sessions can offer therapeutic benefits while helping people develop creative skills. They can also simply be used as a tool for conversation, where service users and staff can sit down and do an activity together and discuss any relevant issues. This way of engaging can seem much less threatening than a more formal meeting. Sessions could include, poster making, glass painting or simple mosaic.

- Be sure you have enough materials for everyone as well as some in reserve. This is to cover for 'mistakes' and for those who may finish early and want to do more.

MUSIC is universal and most people respond to music in some way regardless of other issues in their lives. Music has an ability to generate an emotional response in the listener. It can promote relaxation and reduce stress. Simply listening to music can be a good way to help develop group cohesion
for example in an icebreaking session where each member chooses their favourite music and discusses what it means to them. Learning to play or make music can also be a useful engagement activity but this will usually require a specialist tutor.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- These activities can be relatively inexpensive and easy to organise. Many activities can be organised without the requirement for specialist skills or equipment.
- Creative arts can provide a group with a focus and a way to reduce the awkwardness associated with service users meeting for the first time.
- If the group knows each other well, participants can be encouraged to help others who may need assistance with their task and provide peer support in the activity.
- These techniques can also be used as icebreakers or warm-ups for other activities.
- Many people who would not necessarily engage in participation or employability activities can be encouraged to attend through the use of creative arts.
- Sessions can build confidence, increase skills and are excellent in addressing age and language barriers.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- People can feel the activities are not focused enough.
- If delivery is not clear and respectful, some may feel these activities are patronising or too reminiscent of school based activities.
- Consideration should also be given to the possibility that some service users may not initially be comfortable with particularly extroverted group activities.

Resources needed – Varying

- Some sessions may require a specialist tutor.
- All sessions will require specific materials and/or equipment.

10. Film Making

The production of a film as a participation technique can be an excellent method of sharing control of a project. Both the organisation and service users involved can agree on the message that they want to convey through film. Service users can express their own, or others', opinions and experiences. A film can be used to present these opinions and experiences to a wide variety of people. Adaptations of filming can include: interviews, documentaries, video diaries, dramatisations and role playing. Service users can be involved either in front of the camera or gain skills and experience by taking a role behind the camera.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Ensure that everyone involved is aware of the reasons for creating the film and to whom and why it will be shown. Each person who appears on film must give written consent for the distribution and use of the recording.

- Ensure that there is clarity on whether people being filmed are representing the wider service user population or solely their own views.

- Decide how many copies will be made, and who will receive them, including those who are involved in the production and filming.

- Ensure all are aware of the possible repercussions. For example, although you may guarantee that your organisation will only show the film on certain occasions, once you have given the film to other organisations, or service users, monitoring becomes difficult.

- Make sure you provide training to ensure that people have a chance to practice what they are going to say and to ensure no one discloses anything they may not want recorded in the future (this can also be pulled out during the editing process).

- If a professional production company is recruited to record and edit the film, try and ensure they are a socially-responsible film maker.

- Actual filming time should be kept to a minimum as much as possible as editing can be hugely time consuming. Ensure sound quality is good, especially if going to be shown to large audiences.

- Make sure you allow time for further meetings to show the DVD throughout the various stages of the editing process. This allows those who have been filmed to have a chance to ensure that the editing process has adequately reflected what they wanted to say.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- The message portrayed is often more powerful and interesting than conventional presentations.
- Service users who are involved in the production of the film will increase in confidence and gain skills through their involvement.
- Well edited and produced, a film can portray a strong and coherent message.
- A film is more likely to be accessible.
- Excellent for capturing people's stories.
- Can be used to record processes of work, i.e. a peer research project can be filmed throughout with the results at the end.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Requires a lot of careful advanced planning.
- Can be costly.
- May need lots of time to get each 'take' right.
- Serious risks to the service user around misrepresentation.

Resources needed – **Medium/High**

- Community-based media companies are often reasonably priced and may lower their cost for a socially useful commission.
- In-house production is possible with the use of emerging digital technologies; but requires skilled use to deliver a professional product.
- Staff time in working with service users to discuss the content and edit the film.
- Waiver form.
- Venue for filming.
- Hospitality and expenses.

11. Service User Newsletters

A service user newsletter produced by staff to communicate to service users is not a tool for participation. However, a service user newsletter that involves service users in its production and editorial decisions, may well be. With careful planning and adequate resources, service user newsletters can be an empowering means to involve service users and improve services.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Can be used to record people's stories, advertise participation opportunities and activities, update on current and general news (both internal and external to the service), communicate new developments, feedback on service user consultations and meetings and provide opportunities for issues, personal experiences and opinions to be voiced.

- Involve service users from the start so that they understand and are involved in the boundaries, considerations and decisions to be made.

- It is worth considering and establishing editorial control early in the process. For example, can service users write about any issue and can they express any opinion? Ensure boundaries are clear and established.

- Remember that as a participation tool, you should be deciding what level of impact you want this activity to have. For example, do you just want to provide an opportunity for the service users to volunteer or are you hoping to use the information to influence practice within your service, or wider?

- If there is a lot of service user interest, rotate roles; if people move on the service will still be to be able to produce a regular newsletter.

☺ Advantages using this tool

- Service user newsletters create an opportunity for service users themselves to produce their own newsletter and express their opinions, creativity and experiences.
- Allows an opportunity for participation activity to be celebrated and for service users who have volunteered their time to be thanked.
- Newsletters also offer volunteering opportunities for service users to learn about IT skills, budgeting, working to deadlines and working in teams.
- Newsletters can be produced on small budgets but can become more expensive as budgets allow – more sophisticated production, colour printing and larger print runs make communication beyond your own service possible.
- Newsletters can allow service users in multi-site projects to communicate with each other and to participate in positive activity and share good practice with each other.

☹ Disadvantages using this tool

- Newsletters involve more work and time than many people initially anticipate.
- Keeping ideas fresh and service users involved in regular production can be a challenge.
- Can be time consuming for service users and staff with regular meetings.
- Could be costly to produce.

Resources needed - Medium

- Budgeting for external or in house printing.
- Dependent on size of distribution, type of paper, colours used,
- You should not have to buy software – there are fairly sophisticated free packages available online for desktop publishing and for many people, word processing packages are perfectly adequate.

12. Open Space

Open Space is an innovative approach which can be incorporated into a wide range of involvement activities, from meetings to events. The idea is that participants in meetings or delegates at events determine agenda items or discussion groups. A central theme may be set, however the focus or main issue must be of a genuine concern to all partners involved. Open Space enables a 'bottom up', democratic, equality based approach which can determine the focus of meetings, workshops, discussion groups and future planning.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Open space conferences are not the traditional manner of standard conferences with pre-determined agendas, but instead provide delegates with space to discuss the issues particularly relevant to them. The aim of Open Space is to enable delegates to customise the standard conference to meet their specific interests and needs.

- Open Space meetings can take place over an hour or even week long events. A condition of Open Space is that participation is voluntary and discussions are always determined by participants and should therefore seek to address their concerns.

- Various methods can be used to determine the areas for discussion, including small discussion groups, questionnaires, post it notes on talking walls etc. These can be voted on by the wider group to determine the priority areas of focus.

- The principles of Open Space can be adapted and implemented in many ways; however there are trained facilitators who can be hired with expertise in this area.

- Book an accessible venue and advertise your Open Space event as widely as possible.

- Generally the day is very structured but the issues are not. The delegates democratically vote on issues that are put forward by participants early on in the day and these are discussed in small working groups/spaces.

- You may wish to have your staff or a service user trained in Open Space facilitation, but with careful planning it is possible to do it yourself.

- Speak to service users in advance about the format of Open Space and be sure to stress that this is an opportunity for them to set the agenda. Following the event, feed back to participants on any changes made as a result of their participation.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Allows very large and often very diverse groups of people to get together.
- No speakers are required, just a facilitator.
- Open Space is very effective if a quick resolution is sought from a large number of people.
- Service users 'vote' to prioritise the areas important to them.
- Can allow for sharing ideas, pooling knowledge, discussing issues, networking and developing plans for collaborative action.
- Can be adapted to include all partners not just service users, in order to share perspectives and expertise across all levels of work.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Can be costly for venue size and hospitality.
- Facilitator(s) require a very good understanding of policy, practice and perception aspects of issues being discussed to ensure effectiveness.

Resources needed - **Varied**

- An accessible venue.
- A facilitator.
- Advertising materials/costs (these can be simple posters or flyers), right through to major advertising.
- Service user travel costs and hospitality.
- Staff input.

13. Peer Research

Peer research is a method of accumulating information that works on the basis that a peer is more likely to share information with someone who has experienced similar circumstances.

Peer researchers are trained appropriately and conduct the research (sometimes with support from staff). It is a 'bottom up' approach that should be developed in partnership with, or led by, service users.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Peers should be involved at every stage of peer research development including the method of research, for example, focus groups, designing and delivering questionnaires or discussion groups.

- A comprehensive training package should be considered, and should cover areas such as confidentiality, boundaries, equal opportunities and research development.

- Staff should have a facilitative role as opposed to leadership role in the process, allowing all work to take a bottom up approach (including data analysis and write up).

- Research can take the form of one or a combination of many of the tools outlined. For example, questionnaires and focus groups. Service users and staff should consider which tool or technique is most appropriate.

- Service users should be involved in writing reports and in dissemination of the research.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Service users are more likely to share information with someone they can identify as a peer rather than by someone with whom they can make no such identification. This offers added value to the research.
- Empowering for all involved.
- More likely to be supportive and relaxed interviewing for the interviewee.
- Positive effects of personal insight from service user researchers.
- People are given an opportunity to research an issue that particularly interests them
- Ensures participation is real and not tokenistic.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- As peer researchers may have little or no experience of conducting research, training may be time consuming and expensive.
- Time constraints with part time volunteers may pose a greater challenge.
- As researchers may share similar experiences with the participants, there may be more of a chance of stimulating emotions and so support considerations are needed.
- People with literacy issues or who speak other languages may not find this technique accessible.
- As with many types of research, subjectivity on behalf of the researcher may affect the objectivity of the research report. Therefore training should consider this.
- Organisations should be aware that peer researchers can get caught in an 'identity crisis' when the issue that makes them a peer is no longer a suitable or helpful identity. After a period of time this identity may not only seem less relevant but seem to be 'holding them back' from moving on in their lives.
- Peer research often requires reliability and commitment over a long period of time (i.e. only service users who have completed all training can conduct interviews). In some cases it can be beneficial to train up many more interviewers than you will actually need.

⧉ *Resources needed -* High

- Time to develop training.
- Training venue.
- Hospitality & Expenses.
- Time to develop staff/peer timetable for activity.
- Time to conduct training.

14. Peer Education

Peer Education works on the basis that shared experience will provide an added value and expertise. By removing the usual hierarchy of 'teacher-student' relationships, learners are more likely to relate to educators and the relevant information they have to impart.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Peer Education needs adequate time for thorough preparation at each stage of the process.

- Peer education materials should be designed and developed in partnership with service users.

- Service users and staff should work together to agree the specific types of peer education techniques to be used.

- Peer educators should be identified and recruited, then trained in peer education techniques.

- Advertising to reach peer learners should be considered and then peer educators should make contact.

- Supervision and support, including peer support, should be ongoing for peer educators.

- Several organisations have developed peer educator programmes; it is often helpful to learn from past models. Consider work done in other fields which could be applicable.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Peer education is based on the premise that a service user or potential service user will be more effectively informed by someone they can identify as a peer rather than by someone with whom they can make no such identification.
- A well-managed peer education project offers a significant volunteering or employment opportunity to service users and their peers.
- There are significant personal development opportunities for peer educators in terms of self-esteem, confidence, knowledge base and self-awareness.
- Those who are being educated benefit from having expert advice and information provided in a language and context which they view as credible and reliable.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Peer education involves a start-up cost to train a group of peer educators.

- As a new activity, peer education may need new policy and procedures to be considered by some organisations.
- Organisations should be aware that peer educators can get caught in an 'identity crisis' when the issue that makes them a peer is no longer a suitable or helpful identity. For example an ex-drug user may feel comfortable identifying themselves as a peer of someone who is using drug services. However, after a period of time this identity may not only seem less relevant but seem to be 'holding them back' in moving on in their lives.

Resources needed - High

- Planning time.
- Adequate time for development and delivery of training.
- Staff time for supporting peer educators.
- Marketing material costs.
- Hospitality and expenses.

15. Peer Mentoring

Peer Mentoring is a 1:1 non-judgmental relationship between a mentor and a participant. The mentor's role is to help the participant with some aspect of their life. They will listen to the participant, discuss solutions and set goals. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to the participant which is more likely to ensure a greater understanding of their issues. The participant will have the chance to share issues with someone who has experienced similar situations.

This will encourage sharing, communication and support with future direction and opportunity. A mentor should help the participant to believe in themselves and boost their confidence. A mentor should ask questions and challenge, while providing guidance and encouragement. Mentoring allows the participant to explore new ideas with confidence. The participant has a chance to explore issues, aspirations, opportunities and goals, which can lead to greater self confidence and self awareness.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- For peer mentoring to be meaningful, the programme should ideally be planned with adequate funding in place including capacity for a staff member to coordinate the programme, and cover service user expenses, training & resource materials for mentors.

- The coordinator's role should be to fully support the mentors and participants throughout the entire mentoring process.

- It is useful to research other organisations that currently run or have in the past run a peer mentoring programme. Meeting with key members of staff who coordinated this work is hugely advantageous and might help to flag up any potential pitfalls to avoid.

- Recruit mentors. When recruiting mentors, create and follow a list of criteria for the role, for example dedication, reliability, commitment and non-judgmental attitudes.

Training for mentors must be delivered and designed to address varying skill levels and abilities. This training should cover the following topics:

- The background and purpose of the project.
- Specific information relating to the client group.
- The nature of the mentoring relationship.
- The roles and responsibilities of both parties.
- Vulnerable adult protection and equal opportunities.
- Boundaries and confidentiality.
- Personal safety.
- Boundaries and confidentiality.
- Dealing with challenging behaviour.
- Listening and communication skills.

- Participants should identify goals they wish to achieve initially with the coordinator, and then explore in depth with their mentor.
- Match up mentors with participants with a ratio preferably on a 1:1 (after a mentor has considerable experience this could be increased to a 1:2 ratio). Introduce relevant mentor paperwork in relation to supporting and developing their mentee.
- Ensure move on options through signposting and providing information and advice.
- Mentors may have shared barriers/experiences and so emotional support may be required.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Encourages people to support each other.
- Participants build confidence, self awareness and learn new skills.
- The process can be empowering for all involved.
- Participants are given extensive training which can be accredited.
- Can increase individuals' social networks.
- Participants will learn more about opportunities in their local areas.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Resource intensive in terms of staff time and planning.
- Can be difficult to access suitable training programmes both internally and externally.
- Continuous staff support for mentors and mentees should be provided.
- Sufficient literacy skills required for completing necessary documentation.
- Mentors may have shared barriers/experiences and so emotional support may be required.
- Resource intensive staff time in promoting programme/recruiting

Resources needed - **Medium/High**

- An individual responsible for developing and supporting the programme.
- Development of training, advertising and recruitment materials.
- Supporting documentation for both mentors and mentees.
- Access to phones.
- Disclosure Scotland costs.
- Out of pocket expenses.

16. Peer Advocacy

Advocacy is the process of standing alongside another, speaking on behalf of another and encouraging the person to speak up for themselves. Advocacy can help address the imbalance of power in society and stand up to injustice.

Peer Advocacy is when individuals share significant life experiences. The advocate and their partner may share age, gender, ethnicity, diagnosis or issues. Peer advocates use their own experiences to understand and empathise with their advocacy partner. Peer Advocacy works to increase confidence, self awareness and assertiveness so that the individual can speak out for themselves, lessening the imbalance of power between the advocate and their advocacy partner.

Benefits: Person ☑   Practice ☑   Policy ☑   Perception ☑

How to do it:

- There are 4 recognised principles for independent advocacy: (i) put the people who use it first (ii) be accountable (iii) be accessible and (iv) be as free as can be from conflicts of interest.

- Have rigorous recruitment policy for advocates including references and disclosure. Ongoing clear routes of prioritising requests for advocacy and where possible choices of advocates.

- Establish clear policies and procedures on induction, training, on going support, advocacy agreements, breaches of policy, grievance and disciplinary, referral policies, health and safety, conflicts of interest, boundaries, financial procedures, ongoing participation, independence from the influence of supporting organisations and funders.

- Make sure peer advocates are fully trained, ensure that there are clear ways of starting and ending advocacy relationships. Training should incorporate clear understanding of the role of an advocate, practical tips and techniques, internal and external policy and legislation (where relevant).

- Ensure goal plans are clear, recorded and stored confidentially.

- Ensure clear route to gathering advocacy partners views on impact of advocacy, including checking whether advocacy helps to protect rights and complaints routes.

- Work where possible with other organisations working with vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Information sharing.
- Increased Confidence and well being and social networks.
- Balance of Power.
- Improvements in circumstances.
- Secures preferences and rights.
- Empowering for both the advocate and the service user.
- Reduces demand on services.
- Informal, peers more likely to engage.
- Can increase ability to track change and outcomes.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Can be threatening to staff if not implemented with awareness raising.
- High resource, requires high level of training to be successful.
- Boundaries may take some time to establish.
- Expenses.
- Staff development, coordination and providing ongoing support.

📄 R*esources needed* – High

- Venues for meetings, training and ongoing support.
- Training costs, catering, travel etc.

17. Partner Events (Workshops, Seminars & Conferences)

Partner events offer an excellent opportunity for all relevant parties to discuss current themes and issues. These events can be specific to one project or across several projects. The purpose is to involve service users and other partners and provide the opportunity for communication and understanding. These events recognise that all partners (front-line staff, service users, planners, decision makers) have expertise and perspectives to share and aim to ensure that each has an equal opportunity to put forward their opinion.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Discussion groups, question and answer panels, Open Space techniques, focus groups and meetings can be used to structure a Partner event. These can also be interspersed with drama, poetry, art and music workshops. This can ensure that delegates are engaged throughout the day and these are also a fun way to get the work done.

- Planning must incorporate considerations around reaching all partners and aiming for equal numbers of each group (those who use services, those who provide services and the policy and decision makers).

- Service users should be involved in the planning of the event from the beginning.

- Organisers must ensure that events provide a genuine forum of equality and that everyone present is able to speak freely.

- Consider what incentives to provide service users to attend and ensure they are advertised.

- Facilitators should ensure that there are a number of mediums through which people can put forward points of view. For example, discussion groups, talking walls, questionnaires.

- Ideally, discussion groups should contain low numbers making it is easier for people to speak up and to allow lots of time to get points across.

- The event should be evaluated by organisers and delegates.

- A report should be developed which will not only record the event, but also as a call for ongoing dialogue, further discussion and action.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Stakeholder events provide opportunities for service users to discuss issues with decision makers and make their views widely known.
- Stakeholder events also give planners and decision makers a chance to hear directly what using services are like for those who use them.
- Can help to build social networks.
- Offer a variety of methods to involve and engage people.
- Offer an opportunity to showcase services and provide advice and information.
- Offer volunteer opportunities in planning and developing events.
- Offer an excellent opportunity for understanding and collaboration to develop due to discussions uncovering barriers and gaps that may have been missed if all parties were not present.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Can be threatening to staff if not implemented with awareness raising.
- High resource, requires high level of training to be successful.
- Boundaries may take some time to establish .

Resources needed - **Medium/High**

- Venues for meetings, training and ongoing support
- Training costs, catering, travel etc.
- Expenses
- Staff development, coordination and providing ongoing support

18. NGO Governance (Boards & Management Committees)

Boards and Management Committees are ultimately accountable for the activities of non-governmental organisations. They ensure that money is properly spent, that actions are legal and in accordance with regional regulators. They also ensure that the aims and objectives of an organisation are met, and that staff and volunteers carry out their stated duties. Therefore, participation on Boards or Management Committees, if planned carefully, can be a great way to achieve high levels of shared service user control.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Avoiding tokenism or perceptions of tokenism is crucial. For it to be meaningful, this process must be planned and carried out carefully. This means that service users must fit the criteria for 'job descriptions' on management committees and not be there for tokenistic purposes.

- The organisation and the service user must be clear about the role and legal responsibility of participation at governance level. Service users must be clear of their accountability as a Board or Management Committee member.

- If it is not expected that a service user will take on these responsibilities, consider how else service users may become involved. For example, through a service user sub-group to discuss developments, consult more widely and report back to the board.

- Service users must be offered training, both formal (as regards the process of meetings, papers etc. as well as legal responsibilities) and informally (to support them where necessary) in order to be able to contribute.

- Service users must be trained in governance issues including the organisation's vision, aims and purpose, ethical principles and values and strategic direction.

- Clear roles and purpose must be established and a full induction process implemented. Training offered will obviously be dependent on roles identified but could for example include understanding financial balance sheets, governance papers and committee reports.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- A very real and genuine opportunity to share power and top level decision making experiences.
- Service users build a range of skills and experience – communication, assertion, negotiation, reflection.
- Can send a strong message about an organisation's commitment to service users and participation.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- If service users take on governance roles without adequate training or skills it could be a negative experience, and could reduce the effective management of the organisation and its ability to achieve its objectives.
- May be resource intensive in terms of training service users.
- May be tokenistic if service users' views are not genuinely and equally considered.
- People with language or literacy barriers may not find this approach accessible.

Resources needed - High

- Initial and ongoing training costs.
- Support costs.
- Expenses.
- Hospitality.

19. Supported Volunteering

Supported volunteering is about involving service users in more formal volunteering activities in a supported environment. It can help to promote independence and can provide structure and continuity for someone who might be experiencing change or difficulty in their life. It can also help service users build up their confidence and self-esteem, improve social networks, acquire new skills and build pathways into employment. If a good supported volunteering programme is implemented, then the value to the organisation will outweigh the set up and ongoing development time and cost.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Volunteering opportunities present themselves in many ways; for example a service user attending a meeting may wish to get more involved (chairing, note taking, notes write-up, or feeding back). Supported volunteering is all about creating empowering conditions for people to volunteer in ways that meet their needs and aspirations.

- Ensure that your organisation, at every level, is committed to the idea and principles of supported volunteering. It is useful, for example, to draw up a policy on supported volunteering that will apply throughout the organisation.

- A list of potential volunteering activities that fit with organisational objectives should be developed in partnership with service users.

- Match the potential volunteer's needs and interests to a volunteering opportunity within the organisation, if possible. If there is no match, discuss with the volunteer what opportunities they might like to engage in, determine if the organisation can accommodate this. If not, signpost to another organisation that can meet the volunteers' needs.

- Develop a step by step 'Volunteer Pathway' which details movement from recruitment through to registration, induction, goal planning, carrying out tasks, ongoing support, feedback and signposting.

- Ensure the volunteer is matched with a specific person who they can go to and who will support them through their volunteering experience. In addition, consider peer support buddies.

- Carry out an induction with the new volunteer, with the process being similar to that of a staff induction. The volunteer and staff member should co-create a goal plan for their volunteering, which should take account what the volunteer wants to get from their volunteering role; future aspirations and support.

- Make sure you plan and carry out volunteer review meetings on an agreed periodic basis to ensure that support requirements are being met throughout the volunteering placement.

- Ensure that you have an appropriate volunteer exit strategy, and that staff conducting the exit strategy have up to date knowledge of opportunities that they can signpost the volunteer to. Encourage volunteers to collate a portfolio evidencing their volunteer activities. This could work toward accreditation at a later date.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Provides opportunities for developing skills (gaining new ones or brushing up on old ones).
- Provides work experience and routes into employment. Enables the volunteer to play an active part in an organisation and feel a sense of achievement.
- Provides an opportunity to become the provider of a service rather than the recipient.
- Increases self-esteem, confidence and sense of self-worth.
- Develops social networks and opportunities to enjoy new experiences.
- Provides structure and continuity.
- Brings a service user angle to activities, as well as new perspectives and ideas.
- Improves volunteering practice, and general practice within an organisation, by ensuring inclusiveness, diversity and accessibility.
- Provides extra capacity for the organisation.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Could risk being used to serve the needs of the service instead of being centred on the needs of the service user.
- Project funding coming to an end in projects can cause volunteering placements to end earlier and more abruptly than planned. Make sure you have considered how you would deal with this situation and how you would discuss this with supported volunteers.

Resources needed - **High**

- A volunteer coordinator or individual/s responsible for supported volunteering.
- Clear policy and procedures on volunteering within the organisation.

20. Media Opportunities

From time to time, service users may be asked to represent themselves or their service in media opportunities. This could be, for example, radio and television or newspaper journalism. In some cases they will be interviewed alone, in others with staff or with other services users. It may be in-house or external to the service.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- *It is very important in all cases that service users are made aware of the possibility of misrepresentation and any other negative repercussions as a result of media work.*

- The organisation should develop a waiver if they are asking the service user to do this work.

- Consideration should be given to the planning, preparation and briefing for service users in order to minimise the potential for a service user to feel misrepresented in any resulting media output.

- It is vital that service users are supported throughout this entire process and that organisations are fully aware of their important role as mediators between the service user and the media.

- Investigate the journalist as much as possible to ensure they are socially responsible.

- Ensure that time for both pre and de-briefs is put aside, taking into account realistic deadlines.

- The service user must be made aware of the fact that they have the right to refuse and to stipulate their own conditions.

- Organisations should provide written literature about themselves in order to ensure correct details are included.

- Practice role playing with the service user in advance and ensure they have a plan about what they want to say. Ensure that questions don't stray from the topic.

- Have an agreement laid out in advance with the journalist that before print or viewing, the service user is able to verify that it is correctly representative of their opinion.

- Try to ensure that 'volunteers' are compensated with incentives provided either by your service or the journalists (this can be vouchers, cash incentive, hospitality, etc).

- If possible, try to establish an agreement on behalf of the journalist to supply a 'copy' of the material produced for the service user (for example, DVD or newspaper).

- The service user should be informed of the degree of anonymity offered by, for example, pixilation, silhouette, voice distortion. If a service user agrees to this compromise to the terms of agreement, it must be witnessed by a representative of the organisation.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Improved perception of service users and possible reduction of stigma of certain groups being represented.
- Experience and skills building for service users.
- Awareness raising and exposure of projects and services.
- Can be an empowering experience for service users.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Potential for misrepresentation by the media: not only can there be misquotes, but addresses or photographs or names printed that the service user may not wish to be made public.
- Could be disempowering if best practice is not taken into account.
- Service users may regret the decision to 'go public' in the future.

Resources needed - **Medium**

- Staff support time and in meeting with media representatives.
- Volunteer expenses.
- Waiver development.

21. Recruitment of Staff

If facilitated correctly, this is a very meaningful and important area for service users to participate. Involvement in the recruitment of staff offers a significant means of involving service users at shared control levels within the organisation. Involvement should be considered throughout the entire recruitment process, from advertising the post right through to selection and induction.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Participation opportunities are available at every level of the recruitment process from advertising, through to short listing, interviewing and induction.

- However, someone involved in one aspect of the process does not need to be involved in another. For example, a group of service users may determine the questions to be asked on the day, but not be involved in the interview process itself.

- For involvement to be meaningful it may take more than just having a service user on the interview panel. For example, questions should be representative of a wider group of service users, not just the person on the interview panel asking the question.

- Service users need to feel that their contribution at every stage has been valuable and that the outcome has been a team effort.

- Knowledge of the organisation's recruitment process is fundamental to the whole process – service users should be informed throughout. Policies on the selection process need to be familiarised (for example, scoring, a tie situation, reserve candidates, collective decision making and confidentiality).

- A pre-interview briefing is very important on the day of interview in order to familiarise staff and service users with the questions and help create a comfortable environment. A comprehensive outline and discussion on the job role being advertised is also important.

- Preparation of the room is also important, service users should be involved in deciding room layout, so as both they and the candidate feel comfortable. Drinking water, relevant equipment in workable order, and any paperwork should be made available.

- On the day, it is helpful to divide up tasks and set out who is going to, for example, do the introductions, talk about the job and the organisation, ask which questions and exit candidates in a friendly manner.

- Be aware of possible discomfort service users may feel with the responsibilities associated with making decisions and choosing candidates.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Empowering experience and greater understanding and experience of the recruitment process.
- Service users feel valued.
- Service users build a wide variety of skills.
- Great addition for a service user's CV.
- Enhances interview skills / good listening skills.
- A greater understanding of employer best practice recruitment guidelines.
- New staff members get early insight into the importance of a participation ethos.
- A great opportunity for staff and service users to work together

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Training needs to be developed and delivered which can be time consuming.
- Service user expenses need to be covered.
- Literacy barriers can pose problems.
- Adequate staff time to support process.
- Lengthy preparation time.
- Difficult if staff positions need to be filled quickly.

Resources needed - **High**

- Training time for staff.
- Training, preparation, practice and role play time for service users.
- Travel expenses.
- Hospitality.
- Preparation time for staff.
- Space/venue.

22. Service User Led Projects/Organisations

This tool provides information and considerations on both entirely service user led organisations and on specific service user led projects within organisations. **A service user led project** is a stand-alone work project which is designed, developed and run by service users. They are unlikely to be developed within organisations that have not had considerable experience of participation or with service users who have not themselves been previously involved in participation activities. These projects can form 'organically' at the instigation of service users and could include any of the tools that are outlined in this toolkit.

Service user led organisations are less common however they do exist and some are very successful. Success is often dependent on a host organisation supporting service user groups toward full organisational independence. A service user led organisation is likely to have a service user majority on the management committee and service user responsibility for the recruitment, retention and support of staff.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

Service user led projects

- The role of the host organisation is simply to support the project and, when asked, assist as service users require.

- Training should be provided in order for service users to ensure good practice.

- Considerations should include identification of when a service user is no longer a service user.

Service user led organisations

- It may be that a host organisation will support a service user organisation until they are able to stand independently. In order to do this as successfully as possible it is vital that communication routes are open at all times.

- Distinctions between service user run and service user led organisations should be considered by all involved. For example, there is no reason why a service user led organisation should not have paid staff who are not service users.

- Service users may approach an organisation to seek funding on their behalf. As long as the line of management for the funding is agreed and the service user led nature of the project is understood and agreed by all parties, this need not compromise the project.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

- Are very empowering for service users, who are using their own talents and wisdom to take control of their own life, often influence structural or policy change for other people.
- Service users have ownership over a service or organization which they have instigated and generally such projects are enthusiastically delivered and received.
- Service user led projects and organisations gain extra credibility because they are user-led; they are seen as bottom up and offering a unique insight.
- Projects provide a wide range of volunteering opportunities for service users. Tasks can be widely varied and can help service users gain new skills and increase their confidence.
- Organisations benefit from service user experiences.
- Service user led projects have proven to be very cost effective

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- Such projects can be unstable as they are often entirely dependent on volunteers for their management and delivery.
- Often poorly funded or completely unfunded.
- Service user led projects can suffer if funders, organisations and individual professionals are unwilling to support them.
- Can be tokenistic, if services users are in positions on management committees and managerial posts without the necessary skills and experience to fulfill the requirements of these posts.

Resources needed - **High**

- Work space.
- Administration support.
- Expenses.
- Hospitality.

23. Care Planning & Review

Person centred care planning and review is integral to what many services do on a day to day basis to support their service users. Care planning allows the service user and the service to identify goals, aspirations, and desired outcomes of their engagement with the service. This information is mainly used by the service provider to plan a programme of treatment and care appropriate to the needs of the service user. Review meetings are held at regular intervals during a service user's engagement with the service to revisit the care plan, review progress and set new goals. A care plan can be an effective involvement tool, providing it is fully co-developed and participation questions and areas for discussion are built in.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☐   **Perception** ☐

How to do it:

- Consider the care planning and review tools that you use. Consider how much scope there is within the tools to discuss and note service users' desired outcomes, aspirations and reasons for engagement with the service.

- Where possible, seek input from your service users on what should be covered in the care planning and review tools and meetings.

- The meeting can be used to explain your service's approach to participation – any written participation policies or statements could be given to the service user and discussed during the meeting.

- Questions specifically seeking feedback from the service user on their experience of using the service can be added to the care planning and review forms.

- Provide an opportunity during planned review meetings to highlight, discuss and record any participation activity that the service user has participated in – this can be a good indication of growth in self-confidence and self-esteem.

- If notes are taken during the meeting these should be read back to the service user to confirm accuracy of recording. Ensure that service users see a final copy of care planning and review paperwork once all discussions and comments have been typed up.

- Care plans and review documents should be signed by both the worker and the service user to evidence agreement. Service users should be provided with their own copies of their care plan and review forms for their own records.

- Consent should be sought from service users before any comments or views expressed during a care planning or review session can be shown to or discussed with anyone else.

☺ Advantages using this tool

- Builds participation into the service from very early engagement.
- Provides one to one opportunity to discuss service users' views of the service that other involvement methods may not.
- Can be useful in supporting service users to recognise the progress that they've made.
- Provides evidence to funders and commissioners of person-centred practice and participation.

☹ Disadvantages using this tool

- Care planning often takes place during the very early stages of engagement in a service therefore service users may be uncomfortable or nervous which may distort responses to questions.
- Participation information gathered during care planning can only be used with the consent of the service user and must be anonymous.

Resources needed - High

- Interview facilitator.
- A quiet space where you will not be interrupted.
- Time to carry out a review of current care planning/review paperwork.

24. Involvement Through Technology

Technology has been increasingly used to supplement participation work; some examples of current methods include:

- Texting: Short typed messages from phones and computers.

- On-line Surveys: A number of questions to be answered on-line. Links can be posted on websites, a forum, social networking sites or in an email.

- On-line Discussion Groups/Blogs: An interactive website that can feature video, pictures and information, where comments can be easily left.

- Social Networking: Connects groups of people through a website. When you join you can create your own or a group profile/identity.

- Ratings & Voting: Works in a number of ways (such as feedback ratings on Amazon or EBay) and can be attached to websites.

- Electronic Voting: Typically used at large events (for example, 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire') to collate views, or perhaps check understanding.

- Other methods that could be considered are RSS feeds (updates to email), Wikis, Video on demand, Digital interactive T.V. touch screens and internet phone (for example, Skype) or telephone.

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

- Recognise that there will only be a certain amount of people who will be able or want to access involvement opportunities through ICT.

- Check what's already out there. For example, joining an already established on-line forum as opposed to setting up an on-line discussion forum.

- Ensure feedback mechanisms are planned from the beginning.

- Ensure general agreement and permission from service users with these methods of communication (where appropriate).

- Consider legal issues relating to confidentiality, data protection and privacy.

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

ICT tends to provide faster and more abundant information and can be more convenient as service users can participate when it suits them:

- **Texting:** instant communication as most people keep their phones with them (more have phones than internet access), wide ranging, many are comfortable and familiar with it, can provide routine information inexpensively, people with uncertain addresses are more contactable.

- **On-line surveys:** quick and easy to fill in, avoids printing and postage costs, less time to administer, can easily be made more visibly appealing, people may feel more confident about anonymity, environmentally friendly, easy to analyse returns.

- **On-line discussion groups/blogs:** can be contributed to by one or many individuals, quick and easy to set up (in comparison to a website), useful method of feedback, transparent, great for people who are busy.

- **Social Networking:** sharing info and organising meetings made easier, a number of people are familiar with the process already, can communicate with other groups as well as individuals more easily, very popular with young people. Can be adapted to a small or large piece of work.

- **Ratings and Voting:** easy way to get a snapshot of people's views or feedback, very quick, great if already using website or blog.

- **Electronic Voting:** Many people are familiar with approach from television, very transparent, instant, can be used in a fun manner (even with serious issues), accessible to those who find it difficult to speak or write in public, anonymous.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

ICT can never substitute traditional face to face methods of communication, and is only successful if used to compliment other tools. The risk is that although these methods can be quick and easy, they will only reach those who find ICT methods accessible (this figure can be very low when working with multiple exclusion issues, including literacy or language).

- **Texting:** only short messages can be conveyed.

- **On-line surveys:** they are easily ignored, only likely to be seen by those who use emails regularly, no opportunity to clarify meaning, often have low response rate, may require technical expertise to create and devise analysis.

- **On-line discussion groups/blogs:** needs monitored, needs guidelines for good practice.

- **Social Networking:** needs close monitoring, administration rights and restricted information through privacy settings, may have to have advertising on site.

- **Ratings and Voting:** yields very small amount of information. Needs consideration around transparency (if others can see previous votes they may be influenced by them).

- **Electronic Voting:** not necessarily representative as dependent on ability to participate, interest levels and only people attending conference will be involved. Does not offer clarity if question not understood, or answer not black and white, requires technical expertise and can be expensive.

Resources needed - **High**

- Varying resources dependent on ICT tool used.
- Technical expertise.
- Technical equipment.
- Staff time for design, analysis, consultation, feedback etc.
- Time to plan with service users to test accessibility.

25. Leading Your Own Recovery

People participating in their own recovery (from, for example, mental ill-health or addictions) can be helped with a number of tools in this Toolkit. These can be used at different stages, spanning treatment phase to long-term recovery. Each is aimed at ensuring a person is in control of their own recovery journey.

This tool cross-references some other tools in this Toolkit and external resources that could be useful at different stages of recovery:

1. Participation in treatment planning
2. Participation in own recovery
3. Peer support - of others in the recovery community
4. Participation in recovery practices and policies

Benefits: **Person** ☑   **Practice** ☑   **Policy** ☑   **Perception** ☑

How to do it:

1. Participation in treatment planning:

Treatment planning ensures that the service user and the service both input to identifying goals, aspirations and desired outcomes of treatment. This information is mainly used by the service provider to co-plan a programme of treatment appropriate to service users identified needs. Review meetings are held at regular intervals during a service user's engagement with the service to revisit the treatment plan, review progress and set new goals. A person centred treatment plan can be an effective participation tool, if it is fully co-developed between the service provider and the user of the service *(For more info, see 'Care Planning and Review' tool #23)*

2. Participation in own recovery
Recovery is one's own process. There are a number of methods available to assist this, which can be further aided by an experience worker or counsellor. One that is recognised and respected worldwide is WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan). It is underpinned by a number of core principles:

- That recovery is possible ('hope').

- That individuals should take personal responsibility for their own lives and well being ('personal responsibility').

- That it is important to know yourself, to be self aware ('education').

- That it is important to believe in and advocate for oneself ('self advocacy')

- That the support of others is vital ('support').

Recovery orientated goals are not all treatment focused, but cover all aspects of the journey to recovery. A wider focus ensures that community belonging, family and social networks are also built in to the process:

- Consider participation and partnership working with wider social networks in recovery planning, e.g. family, friends, support services, relevant community members.

- Address self perception and perceptions held by others, through becoming an active citizen, representing the recovery community and those in recovery and through supported volunteering and peer work. *(For more information, see 'Supported Volunteering' tool #19).*

- Consider the role of 'storytelling', which can help people to gain confidence and to share their individual experiences of recovery and transformation. For example, see: http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=In_Our_Own_Voice

3. Peer support of others in recovery

Many people in recovery have reported that supporting others in similar situations has been beneficial for both participants. By sharing similar lived experiences, peers can mentor, advocate on behalf of and educate others. Peer support is an essential component of specific recovery journeys, such as 12 Steps and SMART Recovery. Peer support may also happen informally or formally within a service. *(For more information, see tools: 'Peer Education' #14) 'Peer Mentoring' #15 and 'Peer Advocacy' #16.*

4. Developing practice and policies

The participation of service users should be embedded in the culture of recovery services, to ensure service delivery and policies meet need. Services delivered in partnership with people in recovery also have benefits to challenging negative perceptions that can exist in society. Many recovery communities are an example of shared or full control, service user led projects.

Peer research can also create useful information as people may share more with people who have had similar experiences. This can meaningfully feed into both practice and policies *(for more information, see 'Peer Research' tool #13).*

☺ *Advantages using this tool*

For Peers:
- Active citizenship.
- Share life experiences and expertise;
- Raise issues and communicate ideas;
- Develop new skills and improve or strengthen existing ones;
- Increase well being and build social networks;
- Give something back and make a difference to the lives of others.
- Acquiring meaningful and paid work.

For People in Recovery:

- Focus on possibilities and what is going well rather than limitations and problems
- Better understanding of services and processes if discussed with someone who has gone through it;
- A more equal relationship than it is possible to have with a professional;
- Trust builds easier;
- Support to develop and communicate own opinions and preferences;
- Be understood;
- Exercise rights;
- Raise issues and communicate ideas;
- Develop new skills and improve or strengthen existing ones;
- Rediscover and strengthen self-image and self-confidence;
- Increase well being and (re-)build social networks;
- Be informal and comfortable;
- Improve circumstances and quality of life.

For practice/policy:

- Added service capacity;
- Ensuring service gaps are identified;
- Demonstrating an open and democratic process;
- Better take up of the service;
- Added value to the quality and effectiveness of the service;
- Service designed to meet need;
- Enhancing local policies and strategies;
- More sustainable outcomes.

☹ *Disadvantages using this tool*

- High resources in terms of training and ongoing support.
- Relapse of peer volunteers is possible
- Peer volunteers being held back from other opportunities because they perform a vital role to the recovery community

Resources needed- High

- Recruitment of peer volunteers or (paid) peer workers
- Training and coaching
- Staff to offer ongoing support for peer volunteers
- Staff trained to 'sit-on-their-hands'
- Inter- or supervision (preferably by trained peer workers)

Further Reading

www.smartrecovery.org.uk
http://www.mentalhealthrecovery.com/
http://copelandcenter.com/wellness-recovery-action-plan-wrap

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