



Advocacy Action

Developing Advocacy in Wakefield District

DRAFT Policy and approach to the involvement of people in our services

INTRODUCTION

We believe that we need to involve people as much as possible in our work if we want to be sure of providing a consistently good service.

This policy will explain:

- what we mean by involvement;
- who needs to be involved;
- what we involve people with;
- and how we can go about it.

We have tried to make this policy as simple and open as possible - because people usually need simple and open communication methods to help them feel comfortable about getting involved.

Involving people is an ongoing process, and we hope that involving people in our work and in Advocacy Action more widely will be a natural part of what we do.

WHAT IS INVOLVEMENT?

There are no hard and fast definitions of involvement but we have found this one useful.

- *“Involvement means finding ways that people feel that they are an essential part of the decision making process...*
- *... and that their involvement makes a real difference to what is decided.*
- *It is a continuous process.”*
(A Strategy and Guide for Consultation and Involvement in Community Care Services in Rochdale)

You can see from this why advocacy is so closely related to user-involvement work. Advocates often find themselves supporting people who want to have some input into decisions that are being made about them – people who are being left out of decision making processes. We have seen how services who don't involve their users properly can be ineffective and can even cause extra problems.



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WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

The short answer to this is EVERYONE. Involvement is a two way process (or multi-way): if you want someone to get involved it helps if they see that *you* are involved, as well as anyone else with a stake in the decision.

Involvement is in many ways about inclusion, people working together. Not everyone can work together at the same time, but it's good to involve each of the following groups of people in different ways and in different combinations.

- service users
- staff, including admin, part time, and associate staff
- volunteers
- management committee members
- family members and carers
- people service users identify as friends
- commissioners and service staff
- and any others relevant to the decisions being made

WHAT ARE WE INVOLVING PEOPLE IN?

We want to involve people in decision making processes that affect them.

Sometimes people just want to get involved in small decisions, but some people like to make big budget decisions on partnership boards or management committees: we shouldn't make any judgements about this as these life choices are very individual.

We underline our commitment to user involvement by reserving six places on our Committee for people who have used services.

Some examples of things people can get involved with include:

- evaluating services
- being on a management committee
- planning future services or projects
- deciding how budgets are spent
- person-centred planning processes
- having your say in CPA meetings
- many others



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HOW DO WE GET PEOPLE MORE INVOLVED?

First of all we must believe in and feel positive about what we are doing and why we are doing it. If we believe that user involvement is important and that people will benefit from getting involved, then it will be easier to get them to share our enthusiasm.

In practical terms, there are two broad areas to think about getting people more involved:

1) Involvement Approaches are about linking our belief in involvement into our day-to-day work. This should benefit most of the people we work with, most of the time.

2) Involvement Activities are generally more specific and planned and include things like arranging meetings, consultation events, visits to other projects, surveys, focus groups, etc.

Another useful tool is the ladder of involvement, which helps us to think about the different levels of involvement:

	Level of involvement	Typical Process	Typical Methods	Stance of Organisation
5	Individual control	Capacity building	Advice Support Funding	'We can help you achieve what you want within these guidelines'
4	Acting together	Partnership building	Partnership bodies	'We want to carry out joint decisions together'
3	Deciding together	Consensus building together	Workshops Planning for real	'We want to develop options and decide actions'
2	Consultation	Communication and feedback	Surveys Meetings	'Here are our options, what do you think?'
1	Information	Presentation and promotion	Leaflets Newsletters Displays	'Here's what we are going to do'

Table adapted from www.Health-Activist.net, Key Terms and Resources

The key here is to find the level of involvement that is appropriate for the individuals and the decisions being made: sometimes the best thing to do is simply to give information to people, even if they are at the individual control level for other things.

* If we don't believe in a particular piece of work then there is probably some problem which we should try to address – if necessary by constructively challenging the people responsible.



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CONCLUSION

The approaches and activities mentioned in this policy and practice guidance are by no means exhaustive. They should be considered as a useful aid in beginning to think about the many approaches and activities which people are involved in, sometimes without realising these would be considered to be involvement.