



Involving people who use social services and carers

Discussion paper

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stakeholders are important for all organisations. Their involvement can make a real difference to our work. We recognise that our stakeholders often have substantial knowledge and understanding of both our work and other matters which we can learn from and which can inform our approach. Our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Framework 2016 sets out how we will all encourage, participate in and promote stakeholder engagement as a driver for improvement.
- 1.2 Our overall purpose is the protection of the public and in particular people who use social services and carers. They and the people who care for them have a direct interest in the effectiveness of our work. It is important that their voices are heard, directly or indirectly.
- 1.3 This discussion paper looks at our current practice for involving people who use social services and carers. It includes examples of practice in other similar bodies as well as the purpose of engaging and involving people who use services and carers. It also gives examples of different models of participation.

2. WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 2.1 Up to now, we have focused our engagement on social service providers, employers and people working in social services as we establish the Register. Because we don't directly provide social services we have focused on these groups as our direct customers. At the moment, we do not have a specific organisational mechanism or framework in place for involving people who use social services and carers. Our involvement to date happens largely on a project basis with the project lead organising the engagement.
- 2.2 Although we don't have a formal structure for involving people who use social services and carers, our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Framework sets out the principles for stakeholder engagement.
- 2.3 Our project work can involve people who use services and carers either as individuals, through relevant representative groups or through our qualification approval processes where we require providers to evidence how people are involved in developing courses. Examples of groups we work with include the Care Inspectorate Involving People group, Enable, Scottish Dementia Working Group. Examples of projects where we involve people using social services both directly and indirectly include:
 - Step into Leadership
 - Promoting Excellence
 - Self Directed Support
 - Equal Partners in Care (EPiC)
 - digital learning (supporting informal carers)
 - quality assurance and approval of qualifications (con't)

- qualifications and National Occupational Standards development
- Codes of Practice review
- the model of regulation review.

3. RESEARCH

Types of engagement

- 3.1 There are a number of ways of engaging with people including questionnaires, focus groups, consultation events and attending at external group meetings. Most organisations, including the SSSC, use some or all of these at some point. Some strengths and weaknesses of common approaches are set out below in Table 1.

Type of engagement	Strengths	Weaknesses
Engagement forum – large event for people who use services and carers	Opportunity for broad input on people's priorities to help guide our work Can involve wide range of people	Expensive People have to travel, which is difficult for some people
Consultation event on specific project	Focused and specific Allows in-depth work	Expensive People have to travel, which is difficult for some people Limited number of people engaged with May tend to be the same people attending
Taking questions to an existing group	Can reach a wider range of people Cheaper Good for asking a small number of questions	Need to work in partnership to arrange Need to negotiate sufficient time
Online questionnaires (NB: this relies on having a well maintained and up to date database)	Quick, easy and cheap Can reach a lot of people	Excludes some people – should not be used as sole means
Focus groups	Focused and specific Allows in-depth work Can select a range of participants eg urban/rural, or specific groups such as LGBT or BME Can tailor approach to each group	Need to rely on partners to help to arrange Limited number of people engaged with Time and capacity to organise

(extract: Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland's Engagement Strategy for individuals and carers 2016-18.)

- 3.2 We carried out research into how other bodies are involving people using services that have an organisational approach to this type of involvement. This included the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and interviews with the Mental Welfare Commission (the Commission) and the Care Inspectorate. Each of these organisations has well established involving people models that are helpful for us to look at when considering our future approach.

Purpose

- 3.3 What is clear from our own experience and from the research is that having a defined purpose for involving people using services and carers is essential. It has to be something that is clear and understandable and where there will be results so that people see they are making a difference. For some organisations, it is about making sure that their services meet the needs of this stakeholder group. For the Care Inspectorate, for example, their Involving People group has direct involvement in developing the business of the Care Inspectorate to meet their outcome of improving care services.

The CI also has a system of lay inspectors who are involved in carrying out care service inspections so people who use services are very much involved. Both groups were also involved in developing the inspection methodology, for example. The Involving People group has about 100 members and is also available to other bodies, including the SSSC.

- 3.3 For the Commission, they wanted to bring the experience of people with lived experience of mental health issues and those who care for people directly into the organisation.
- 3.4 While the NISCC has had a participation and co-production programme that includes people using services and carers since 2001, it is currently reviewing its programme and is about to carry out research into national and international best practice in this field. This is so that they can align this work with their new corporate plan outcomes. Their existing model is a partnership model of committees which provide advice and support to the Council.

Investment and resources

- 3.5 Each of these organisations has committed significant investment in this area of stakeholder engagement. The Care Inspectorate and the Commission have permanent staff and budget. The Care Inspectorate has invested in this work for more than 10 years. It now has four full time staff employed for this area - a senior officer and three coordinators as well as support from a senior manager. They also have a budget of about £30k to support the Involving People group.
- 3.6 The Commission has three staff for this work - one full time executive director and two part time engagement and participation officers with a budget for events.

- 3.7 People who use social services and their carers are a very large and diverse group and engagement can be complex. They may have difficulties with communication and travel and may lack resources to participate in traditional consultation and engagement activities. The staff working in involvement in these organisations have a background that is relevant and have developed specific skills and expertise in this field of engagement. In the Care Inspectorate, at least one of the coordinators, for example, is an experienced social service worker and they have an external support group, Moving On, to support their young people lay inspectors at an additional cost. In the Commission's case, both officers have lived experience of mental health issues, one personally and the other as a carer which has brought considerable insight to the organisation.
- 3.8 Both organisations said that having permanent staff to coordinate the involving people work is also important for the people on the groups and networks so that they have a reliable point of contact and with whom they build relationships and understanding of their needs.
- 3.9 Supporting people to be involved in their work also has a cost which can include translation services, support workers, accommodation and other services to facilitate meaningful participation.
- 3.10 Both organisations have a strategy for involving people who use services and carers agreed at board level.

Benefits and return on investment (RoI)

- 3.11 Both the Care Inspectorate and the Commission reported that involving people using social and mental health services and carers has a positive impact on developing their organisations, the work they do and their reputation. The Care Inspectorate said that this engagement also "helps to change the way we do things". The Commission's strategy states: "it's the right thing to do because people with lived experience and carers have perspectives which come directly from that experience, and it is essential that these perspectives are understood and help shape at every level the care, support, treatment, regulatory, scrutiny and safeguarding systems they use and rely on".
- 3.12 Both organisations reported that their involvement programme gives them access to a number of networks, increasing awareness of their work.
- 3.13 Both organisations emphasised that the commitment to this investment is what makes their people involvement successful, with both reporting a business return on investment.

4. MODELS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 We researched different models for involving people who use services and carers. There are a number of models that we can consider, on their own or a combination. Table 2 includes examples.

Table 2

Options		Pros	Cons
1.	Establish an SSSC involvement panel/forum that meets regularly	<p>Builds up a body of knowledge and understanding of what we do.</p> <p>We can focus on our outcomes.</p> <p>We can involve a range of different people.</p>	<p>Significant investment required to set up and maintain a group eg support systems, travel.</p> <p>Do we have enough relevant business to engage people in a regular forum?</p> <p>Regular members may become too informed so membership would need to be limited.</p>
2.	Establish smaller groups for specific areas of the business, eg FTP and L&D	<p>This would build up a body of knowledge about this side of our work.</p> <p>Improved understanding of our role with the workforce.</p>	<p>We would still need to have access to other individuals and groups for specific projects.</p> <p>It takes time to build up the knowledge required</p> <p>Requires significant investment to coordinate and maintain the groups.</p>
3.	Establish short life groups for specific areas of interest	<p>This means we can bring in individuals and organisations with a fresh perspective each time</p>	<p>Takes time to explain our role</p> <p>The focus tends to be on the specific project rather than on</p>

			the SSSC's business as a whole, particularly for some of our L&D projects.
4.	Apply to work jointly with the CI Involving People group or consider a shared service option.	<p>We can tap into an existing, sustainable and well organised involvement programme.</p> <p>This has worked well when we have accessed the group in the past for specific consultations and projects.</p> <p>Less investment in resources – a part time SSSC post could be an option.</p>	<p>Would it be a challenge to focus the group and would it be asking too much?</p> <p>May not be an option as the CI programme is advanced.</p> <p>We would still need to invest in establishing groups for specific projects to make sure we get enough of the right representation.</p>
5.	Establish a system of service user involvement in our FTP/hearings work	Having service users on our FTP panel would bring a different perspective to the process.	This requires specific support and investment other than what we provide for all panel members.
6.	Establish an involving people committee	This would have a direct impact on the governance of the organisation.	This requires specific support and investment other than what we provide for all committee members.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 We are involving people using social services and carers in our work and there is scope for us to improve and better coordinate the way we do this. As highlighted above in section 3, whatever approach an organisation takes, successful service user involvement happens when there is:

- a clear purpose for the involvement – what is in it for them and for the organisation
- an organisational strategy/approach
- sustainable investment in resources and
- permanent, skilled staff to drive and coordinate the work.

5.2 There are a number of questions for us to consider

- Is what we do at the moment proportionate and relevant?
- Why involve people who use services and carers in our work – what is in it for them and for us?
- What difference could a different approach make?
- Can we commit to a long term, sustainable investment?
- What would be an appropriate model for the SSSC?