

North Kent Mind

SERVICE-USER INVOLVEMENT POLICY

1. Overview

1.1 Definitions

The term “service-user” within this policy refers to anybody currently using our services, whether otherwise termed tenant, client, group participant or other description

1.2 Rationale for an Involvement Policy

North Kent Mind believes that the organisation should promote the involvement of those who use our services for the following reasons:

- Where people who use services are involved in planning and running of them those services will be more responsive to the needs of the people they should serve, and better quality services will be the result.
- People with mental health issues are in a very real sense the experts on their own mental health experiences
- Participation and empowerment improve mental health because involvement promotes recovery.
- Research show that those involved in their own recovery are more likely to sustain progress
- Our ethos of respect for the individual leads us to respect people’s wish to be involved
- Where beneficiaries can run elements of the service themselves, this frees up time and thus extends the scope of what the organisation as a whole is able to accomplish
- The organisation places value on working in a non-paternalistic and democratic manner

2. Implementation

2.1 The levels of involvement

We recognise different levels on which service-user and beneficiary involvement are manifested:

Involvement in setting up one’s own individual recovery.

Involvement in commenting on services.

Involvement in planning services.

Involvement in the delivery of services.

2.2 Involvement in setting up one’s own individual recovery

Within **Primary Care Psychological Therapies Services**, therapists are required, even though they may be working within short-term and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy models, to apply these with full regard to the autonomy of the client, and avoid mechanistic delivery of these models. These themes are further promulgated in supervision and training of these therapists.

Within Low cost **Counselling Services**, the organisation will work broadly on person-centred or integrative models, and counsellors will be encouraged to consider aspects of power relationships between counsellor and client through the internal supervisory process.

Within **Housing Services**, each tenant will have full involvement in the creation of their own individual plans.

Within **Employment Services** all participants will have full involvement in the creation of their own individual plans

Within **Wellbeing Services**, all individual programmes will follow participative models within Mentoring, service users will be encouraged and supported in defining their own targets for which they seek mentoring help.

All group work within the organisation will encourage individual participants to set their own goals for recovery, and will support them in this. Group workers are tasked with ensuring that the needs of individuals in the group are not lost within the group process.

All Open Sessions are participative and encouraging growth and recovery in activity engagement and delivery

2.3 Involvement in commenting on services

The organisation will strive to attract feedback from those who use its service, through a variety of means. These are defined in more detail in the Quality Assurance Policy. In particular, structures to attract verbal and written feedback shall be:

- Tenants' involvement in Housing Meetings
- Monthly Forums for **Wellbeing Services** in each of the three towns
- A service-user panel for **Wellbeing Services**, formed from elected representatives..
- Feedback forms for low-cost counselling clients
- "Patient Experience Questionnaires" for PCPT clients
- An annual survey of all service-users

It is policy that the outcome from all exercises in gaining service-user and beneficiary feedback shall be submitted to the Quality Sub-Committee.

2.4 Involvement in Planning Services

At Board Level, the organisation welcomes as Trustees current and previous service-users who have been elected by the membership, and have the appropriate skills or knowledge to contribute to effective Board processes. North Kent Mind is committed to appropriately supporting these Trustees, by means to be individually defined after election.

Within Wellbeing Services, the Monthly Forums and the Service User Panel have key roles in planning future service developments through the mechanism of the Options Group.

Where significant changes in services or policy and practice are being considered, this will be signalled to the appropriate service users and beneficiaries within sufficient time to allow them to comment as a consultative process.

2.5 Involvement in Delivering Services

North Kent Mind regards the personal experience of mental health issues as a positive when recruiting staff, and will note this in the list of essential/desirable qualities against which candidates are scored.

As appropriate in the recruitment process for staff, service users will be invited to form a service user interview panel in which they shall meet shortlisted candidates, question them and comment on their suitability as they see it. Each service user interview panel shall be facilitated by a North Kent Mind worker, who shall have the task of:

- Preparing the beneficiaries for their role.
- Ensuring the meeting with each candidate is productive and does not breach Equalities guidelines.
- Reporting back to the interviewing panel on the beneficiaries' perspectives.

The interviewing panel is charged with considering the service user's' perspective alongside the other information they have gathered on the candidates, before making their final decision to appoint. This process shall only be overridden where, due to the nature of the post being recruited, (it is impractical to expect relevant service users to give their time to the process.

North Kent Mind is committed to taking on service users as volunteers within the running of the organisation, via the peer support system, as long as they otherwise pass the screening and selection processes, and fulfil criteria, filling identified volunteering vacancies.

North Kent Mind is keen to promote systems in which service users run services themselves. Service-users will be encouraged, supported and where appropriate given training to run peer-led services in the form of self-help groups, activities, mentoring, social events and other forms of peer-led work which will develop in the future.

North Kent Mind values greatly the contribution that can be given to the delivery of its training programmes by people who have or are experiencing mental health issues, and shall structure its internal and external training programmes to include sessions delivered by service users as experts by experience.

3. Training and Selection of Volunteers and Staff

To underpin this policy, we recognise that the attitude of paid and un-paid workers to service users and beneficiaries is of the utmost importance to ensuring that the ethos of involvement and empowerment permeates the whole organisation. We therefore expressly check out staff and volunteer candidates' attitudes to beneficiary involvement as part of the selection process, include this as an item in Job Descriptions and Volunteer Role Descriptions, and provide training on these issues.

The organisation has a statement of values which include commitment to service-user participation

A statement on the organisation's approach to empowerment, which has strong links with the issues of involvement, and which is used for internal training purposes, is given as an annex to this policy, as is a statement on positive risk taking.

North Kent Mind

TENANT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

1. Overview

1.1 Definitions

Tenant participation has been described as ‘the real involvement of tenants in the decision making progress of the Landlord’, and North Kent Mind subscribe to this.

1.2 Purpose of Policy

This policy serves as an appendix to the broader organisational aspirations set out in the “Service User Involvement Policy”, and focuses on our commitment to tenants’ involvement. acknowledging that they have varying levels of interest, establishing various ways to involve tenants and ensuring that mechanisms are in place to encourage and support tenants to play an active role in the decision making progress.

2. Five Key Areas

The five key areas of tenant involvement are:

Representation

Consultation

Information

Communication

Community

2.1 Representation

North Kent Mind believes there should be an opportunity for tenants to hold two distinct roles within the Tenants’ Meetings:

1. As a true Tenants’ Representative with a clearly defined role with clear responsibilities to the tenants and to the Meeting. This person should be able to present a fairly comprehensive picture of tenants’ views, and needs mechanisms to be in place to enable them to collect tenants’ views and opinions and feed back information to and from the committee.
2. As a participant in their own right, with no expectations to express any opinions other than their own.

2.2 Consultation

North Kent Mind wish to consult with their tenants and obtain feedback in an effective and structured way about issues that affect the way the housing service is managed. Tenants need to know their views are listened to and acted upon wherever possible.

In order to consult and obtain feedback about current service delivery, tenants need to feel comfortable about putting their views forward. The role of the housing officer is to build a culture of trust to facilitate this feedback and give tenants the opportunity to have a say in the running of the service they receive. To facilitate this process, a minimum of four meetings per year will be held at each scheme for tenants to put their views forward, and tenants will be encouraged to make use of the other initiatives at which they can have their views heard, at whatever level they wish to be involved. These include: coffee mornings, tenants reps meetings, and choices given to all Tenants when their flats are being redecorated or new furniture needs to be purchased.

Tenants are included in the annual service user questionnaire survey, and their responses can be analysed separately

2.3 Information

Tenants will be provided with full and clear information about their tenancy and their rights as tenants. Additionally tenants have access to all operational policies and procedures regarding the management of the Housing Service. Copies of these are kept at each housing scheme.

The tenancy agreement is explained fully at each new letting before the tenant signs.

A Tenants' handbook is given to every tenant. This is written in plain English with no jargon and contains a brief outline of the following: aims and objectives of the service; outline of staff/committee structure; main points of the tenancy agreement; outline of policies; social activities; ways of becoming involved as a tenant; emergency phone numbers; reporting repairs; payment of rent; Housing meetings and the complaints procedure.

To ensure that tenants receive relevant information to assist them in 'having a say' in the service they receive, DGS Mind periodically asks (verbally or via memos or the housing sub-group) how tenants wish to receive information. This feedback helps the Organisation maximize the participation of all tenants.

2. 4 Communication

Regular contact with tenants is vital to ensure there are clear and accessible lines of communication. Tenants should feel able to approach staff informally at any time and every effort should be made to encourage regular contact.

Newsletters are produced, establishing a regular communication channel between the service and the tenants. Each scheme has a notice board detailing items of interest and events that may be happening. Each scheme will also keep a book of policies so they are available to tenants when ever they need them.

2.5 Tenants Involvement in the Wider Community

2.5.1 Support Plans

Support and encouragement will be given to all tenants to help them become involved in their local community. Support plans focus on goals and aspirations tenants may have. Depending on identified levels of need, housing or other staff and volunteers may be available to accompany tenants to courses, groups, meetings etc until they feel comfortable enough to go on their own. All the various provisions of North Kent Mind **Wellbeing** services is open to tenants to access. Where appropriate, tenants will be referred or signposted to need to be referred to other local voluntary or statutory organisations. North Kent Mind staff encourages tenants to take appropriate risks to help them move forward with their lives.

2.5.2 Volunteering

North Kent Mind runs a special assisted volunteering service where the service-user will be supported through the first contact with the chosen charity, the interview process and will receive support until settled into the volunteer role.

2.5.3 Employment and Training

Housing Staff, working in collaboration with North Kent Mind Springboard Services, will help tenants to access training for work to suit their needs and support them through the initial booking of the course. Where appropriate they will arrange supporters to accompany tenants to the course until they were confident to attend alone. Staff will also assist tenants who wanted to find paid work i.e. helping them to devise a CV, filling in application forms, training for interview skills, and help with changes to benefits and talking through any fears tenants may have about paid work.

2.5.4 Education

For those tenants wishing to enrol in colleges of further education, North Kent Mind staff will encourage them to research appropriate courses and Colleges discuss transport needs and financial practicalities. They could be accompanied to interviews and taken to view the college before any final decision was made. Staff support tenants to build confidence to undertake a further course of education.

2.5.5 Social Networks and Families

North Kent Mind believes in the importance of keeping in contact with friends and families (as long as the relationship is a safe one). Every effort will be made to support and encourage tenants to maintain these links. There are no barriers in place to prevent tenants meeting with visitors in their homes and friends and family can stay overnight for up to a maximum of 2 nights, (this can be extended with the agreement of the Housing Manager). Support plans focus on maintaining relationships and assistance will be given in talking through problems and planning ways forward.

2.5.6 Income and Benefits

Housing staff have a good working knowledge of the benefits system, or will access expert help as required, and can assist tenants to claim benefits they may be entitled to. North Kent Mind believes that tenants should learn the skills to manage their own money i.e. paying their utility bills, household budgeting etc.

2.5.7 Arts and Cultural Activities

Housing staff will support and actively encourage tenants to pursue their interests in the Arts and other cultural activities. Support will be given to access any events that tenants may want to attend until the person feels comfortable enough to independently pursue the activity.

2.5.8 Physical Exercise and Sports Activities

North Kent Mind believes that physical activity promotes better mental health and will support tenants who want to be involved in any sport or physical activity that interests them.

2.5.9 Faith-based groups

Housing staff will help tenants to access these groups and where appropriate will arrange as appropriate for the tenant to be accompanied for an agreed time.

Annex Two:

North Kent Mind: Statement on Service-User Empowerment

Empowerment means helping the people who use our services to become as independent as they are able to. It means encouraging people to take control over those aspects of their own life for which they have become reliant on others, or where others - professionals or family and friends - have taken control away from them. Empowering service-users is not just a matter of merely expecting people to take more control, for there are skills to be learnt and fears to be overcome if this is to be a success. Support, training and mentoring may be needed along the way, not least where there are setbacks, or where things do not work out as planned.

We believe in empowerment because in achieving it, a person is not only rightfully back in control of their own life, but they also will experience the improved self-esteem, confidence and well-being that comes with it: and this in turn improves their mental health.

As an organisation which seeks to help people, North Kent Mind must be aware at all times of the danger that people using our services may become over-reliant on them, or on the staff or volunteers who deliver them, and that this itself would be a disempowering experience. We must try therefore to be skilful enough to provide help in a way which enhances, rather than overrides, existing coping skills. Where, during periods of great vulnerability, the level of dependency on the organisation or its staff is increased, care must be taken to plan for a return to optimum levels of empowerment at the end of this period.

Any organisation that believes in the empowerment of the people who use its services will also place great value on the participation of its service-users throughout the organisation. North Kent Mind therefore supports, and commits resources to, ensuring the genuine participation of service users in the delivery, evaluation and planning of its activities. It does this through a wide range of current strategies; through self-help groups, feedback forms, forums for day services, questionnaires and tenant meetings, and is keen to explore new ways of facilitating meaningful participation.

Annex Three:

North Kent Mind: Statement on Positive Risk Taking

North Kent Mind recognises that service users have the right to take risks and believes in helping them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves and others. A lack of positive risk taking feeds upon and exacerbates low expectations and threatens the aspirations of people suffering from mental health issues to take control of their future. Risk taking is a vital part of the process of moving on and living independently.

Overprotection, i.e. risk avoidance may appear on the surface to be kind, but it restricts people to make their own decisions and gain control. People who are over protected can feel smothered, they can lose their hopes and expectations and it can strip them of their dignity.

North Kent Mind defines positive risk taking as 'working together to enable service users to take positive risks in their lives to move forward to greater independence'.

Positive risk taking is about collaborative working, based on the establishment of trusted working relationships, whereby service users can learn from their experiences by taking chances just like any other member of society. It is about understanding the consequences of different courses of action; making decisions based on a range of choices which need to be supported by adequate and accurate information. Service users need to trust that that staff will support them if things go wrong, as they sometimes can.

Normal everyday life can be full of risks for us all, however taking everyday risks moves people forward with their lives. People suffering from mental health issues are no different to anyone else.

Staff should use this guidance when support planning and in their everyday day work within all North Kent Mind services. The Statement on Service User Empowerment also gives guidance on enabling service users to take more control of their everyday lives.