

Service user and carer engagement focus groups
Additional Information and Application Pack

Overview

The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act is looking to partner with local and national organisations to hear the experiences of people who have been detained under the Act and their carers, in order identify priorities for the Review. We are now seeking expressions of interest.

It is vital that the Review is co-produced, and so partnering with groups of service users and carers, and organisations with close links to them, is crucial. We are asking organisations to support the Review by running semi-structured discussions ('focus groups') in settings that are familiar, accessible, and comfortable. To be most accessible, a discussion might be incorporated into an existing meeting or event.

The Review team is therefore seeking expressions of interest from all types of organisation, however small or large, that bring together groups of service users and carers. These might be local groups of service users and carers themselves, third sector organisations, or local statutory bodies.

The Review is seeking to partner with organisations that can enable the involvement of service users and carers with a variety of different characteristics, reflective of different experiences of the Act. The Review is particularly interested to hear from organisations with strong links to BAME communities, and based in different regions of the country.

The Review team will provide support, guidance, and (with your agreement) attendees from the Review team to join the discussion.

Our aim is that these initial sessions will take place during January and February 2018, and their outputs will feed into the Review's interim report in spring 2018. The interim report will identify priorities for further investigation prior to the Review's final report in late 2018. We will set out further plans for service user and carer engagement alongside the interim report.

We are seeking expressions of interest by noon on Monday 8th January, and would welcome enquiries in advance of Christmas to aid planning.

Format

Our expectation is that one or more facilitators would support the discussion, and a scribe would record the session. The Review is open to different styles of facilitation (e.g. one large group / smaller groups; some one on one interviewing etc.). We ask that outputs are captured in a reasonably consistent way across sessions run by different groups.

Participating organisations will be given materials to help them capture issues raised in discussion. The output of these groups could include details of issues raised in discussions, copies of any session outputs (e.g. brain storms, flip charts), and testimony which will inform the Review, as well as some

basic statistics if appropriate (e.g. number who agreed with a certain statement from a total of x number service users).

Characteristics of service users / carers:

The Review is seeking to partner with organisations that can enable involvement of service users and carers with a variety of different characteristics, reflective of different experiences of the Act. The Review is particularly interested to hear from organisations with strong links to BAME communities, and based in different regions of the country.

The Review would like to see participants across focus groups consisting of service users / carers of different ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, regional backgrounds, diagnoses, and type of detention. The Review team is seeking a number of partner organisations to cover different service user and carer characteristics.

Topics to be covered:

The Review team expects that all sessions will:

- Allow service users / carers to raise and discuss any issues from their experiences of the Act in an open forum
- Include some more targeted discussion / questions about issues of interest

The Review team plans to develop a set of standard topics and questions to be asked at all sessions, to ensure a degree of comparability across sessions run by different organisations. The Review team will discuss these broad topics and questions with organisations running sessions in advance, and seek to agree scripts for facilitators which are appropriately targeted to the experiences of the individuals attending each session.

Approach:

Organisations may have events planned already with service users / carers, in which case the Review team is keen to incorporate sessions discussing the Act into these events. In other cases, the Review could commission organisations to organise and bring together groups for the specific purpose of focus groups. Funding will be available to support delivery of the events.

In our initial phase of work we expect to run approximately ten sessions in total. We will then set out plans for further engagement based on our findings.

Expressions of interest

Expressions of interest should answer the following questions in a Word document.

Summary details:

- Group / organisation contact details (name, contact name, contact details etc.)
- Group / organisation summary (what does your group / organisation do; what are your objectives; how does you work directly with service users and or carers)
(Max 200 words)

- Summary of previous recent experience running focus groups (Max 200 words)

Proposal:

- Outline your approach to running a focus group / focus groups (e.g. number of sessions you propose to run, number of participants, facilitation style). How do you intend to meet the specification? Why is your group / organisation well placed to facilitate this type of session? Do you propose adding an item about the Act to an existing event, or setting up a new event? Do you propose to invite service users, carers, or a combination of the two to sessions? How do you intend to ensure that the session is coproduced with service users / carers? (Max. 200 words)
- Outline the characteristics of service users / carers your organisation works with regularly, and or that you expect to involve in sessions, in relation to the Mental Health Act (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, current / past service user / carer, civil / Part 3 detention, region) (Max 100 words)
- Would you be happy for members of the Review's leadership / secretariat teams to sit in on at least part of the session/s?
- Do you anticipate needing funding to enable you to run this focus group discussion (over and above what you expect to spend on any event you are already planning)? If so how much do you think you will need? Please provide a breakdown of anticipated costs.

By submitting a proposal you are confirming you are content with the following:

- You have the capacity to carry out a focus group session / sessions by the end of February 2018, and provide outputs to the Review team
- The Review team plans to develop a set of standard topics and questions to be asked at all sessions, to ensure a degree of comparability across sessions run by different organisations. The Review team will discuss these broad topics and questions with you and other organisations running sessions in advance. We will seek to agree scripts for facilitators which are appropriately targeted to the experience of the individuals attending each session.

Submitting expressions of interest / deadlines

Please submit completed expressions of interest to MHActReview@dh.gsi.gov.uk with a subject line of 'Expression of interest: Service user / carer focus groups' by **noon on Monday 8th January**.

If you have any questions before submitting your interest, please send them to the same email address and the Review's secretariat team will respond.

The Review team will follow up for further discussions with a shortlist of organisations, and expects to commission up to ten different focus group sessions through a number of different organisations.