

Service User Involvement

Why doesn't it work?

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User Involvement

The Problems with it is!

- That professionals consistently fail to view service users as customers
- That drug & alcohol services and those commissioning services continually fail to deliver and purchase services that meet with customer approval
- That involvement is based within a judgemental, discriminative selective class system which does not support user's individual rights and freedoms
- That user's are often viewed as the problem and not the solution

User Involvement

The Problems with it is!

- That it takes professional, political & social bravery
- That little consideration is given to the environments, sub-cultures, identities, economics & social injustice user's face
- That user's are a heterogeneous population
- That empowerment must work with the community not just in it (Stimson et al 1994)
- That it is both complex and challenging
- That user involvement does not exist in a vacuum

User Involvement

The Problems with it is!

- That no consideration is given to the health & social circumstances that user's face & why they don't become involved
- The social exclusion of user's and professionals inability to deliver socially inclusive services
- That structural inequalities will always exist; an unequal setting of power & control
- That professionals are unwilling or scared to relinquish the power their so called expert role gives them; they fail to consider user's as having any expertise

User Involvement

The Problems with it is!

- That it is often developed & implemented from a top down process with professionals identifying and providing solutions to problems faced by user's
- That it is often insufficiently goal orientated & over ambitious in its aims & proceeds without really knowing where it's going
- That professionals fail to empower user's to define issues & problems & seek & explore potential solutions to such problems & issues faced by people
- That to become empowered is in reality controlled by the state

User Involvement

The Problems with it is!

- That drug / alcohol user's & their communities do not have the infrastructure, resources & funding & support to make sustainable change
- That there is an air of distrust, empowerment and partnerships between drug / alcohol user's & the professional elite
- That it is plagued with in-fighting, political battles, professional dominance & control with weak infrastructures

QUESTION?

How feasible is it to talk of real partnerships with agencies which not only have substantially more power in terms of both resources and influence, but also power to control access to services needed by drug / alcohol user's? (Barnes 1999)

Service User Involvement

So what can make it
work?

User Involvement

What can make it work!

- By approaching the development and delivery of services based around the needs of service users enables them to become involved and take ownership of those services
- Work hard & develop sustainable working partnerships; see the world through one another's eyes: It's a 2 way partnership which should ultimately be based on working trust
- True participation involves people being involved in decision making & leading projects; not just tokenistic involvement (Arnstein 1969)

User Involvement

What can make it work!

- Involvement should be democratic; both internally & externally
- Commitment, knowledge, expertise, skills and life experience; use it
- **EMPOWERMENT: EMPOWER YOURSELVES**
- Once empowered, involvement can be seen as a potential counterpoise to professional power
- Involvement has the potential to give people a sense of identity and belonging

User Involvement

What can make it work!

- An underlying purpose of user involvement “is to campaign for the inclusion of people excluded from mainstream society” (Barnes 1999); So campaign, form peer networks & partnerships
- Professionals must start to view & treat drug / alcohol users as functional citizens in part of their own functional community & sub-culture
- Give each other respect, understand one another’s positions & roles; build up trust & don’t set each other up
- Be clear about what is trying to be achieved, ensure that the infrastructure is in place to develop sustainable change and progress

User Involvement

What can make it work!

- Ensure that there is equitable access to training, share your skills with peers and professionals
- Listen, learn, share, disseminate, flexi-ate, celebrate
- Sustainable resources, people, funding and infrastructures
- Set goals, targets, monitor & evaluate; be realistic, look at what is achievable
- **PAY PEOPLE FOR THEIR TIME, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE & EXPERTISE**

Service User Involvement

Which way now!
Thoughts for the future!

User Involvement

Which way now!

- The well-being of individual users and the wider community can be developed through user involvement
- User involvement is not an end in itself, it can be utilised to empower the disenfranchised, and to also help direct and develop policy and organisational developments

User Involvement

Which way now!

- Above all, it should be utilised as a quality control to ensure that drug services and those commissioning drug services are meeting the needs of drug users and performing efficiently
- As drug users lives become the subject of research, and policy and provide people with professions, logically they should be central to the production of knowledge and to the generation of potential solutions

Service User Involvement

Closing Comment

User Involvement needs to be based with respect to the human rights of drug / alcohol users as members of society and of the community being upheld.

Any erosion of these rights could limit the sustainability and success of user involvement developments and interventions.

Service User Involvement

Models of Good Practice

User Involvement

Models of Good Practice

- ARP
- Walsall DIY & Walsall DAT/PCT
- HOT
- St.Clement's Specialist Addition Unit
- Newham DAT
- LDAN
- Black Poppy