



For better
mental health

Richmond Borough Mind

User Involvement Policy & Procedure

1. A Note on language

For the purposes of this policy, by 'users' we mean people who have themselves used any of RB Mind's current services and projects. Thus the policy does not cover user engagement beyond the range of the work of Richmond Borough Mind (RB Mind). By 'carers' we mean people who are family or friends of an individual who may be experiencing mental distress. However, for the purpose of this policy, and as a specific client group within RB Mind, they also will come under the term 'user'. Some people reject the term 'user', preferring terms such as recipient, client or survivor. People should be able to define themselves using words, which are acceptable to them.

User 'involvement' can be regarded in many ways including participation in decision making in relation to your own care and treatment and/ or in relation to the services you use. Consultation is seen as a process whereby decision makers engage openly with a broad range of people in order to reach decisions, within a clear agreement about how the outcome will be fed back to those consulted. RB Mind will seek to engage users in a manner that is transparent and with a clear agenda for how individuals can be involved in both ways..

2. General principles

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The primary reason that Richmond Borough Mind (RB Mind) exists is to help people and their carers enjoy better mental health. . Service users have an immense knowledge of services, and of the things that do and do not assist those who experience mental distress. The people that Richmond Borough Mind serves also have a wealth of ideas and creativity, and are themselves potentially able to help other people with mental health problems and / or vulnerable people to help themselves.

RB Mind greatly values the experience of service users which it will actively harness in order to improve and develop services, believing that, without this input, services are likely to lose their relevance and effectiveness. RB Mind also does so in order to increase transparency and accountability of the organisation. RB Mind's approach to Service User Involvement is based on building a partnership, the aim of which are to empower the people involved in it, and to continually improve the services provided by the organisation (and, where appropriate, other agencies) Our ethos aims to maximise the chances of achieving our goal of "supporting Recovery". Service user involvement will be an integral part of our approach, rather than an additional or separate activity. It will widen and deepen our knowledge of the field but also celebrate the strengths of individuals and the relationships we have with them [and organisations?], a relationship that is central for the effective implementation of any user involvement policy.

Through service user involvement, RB Mind will endeavour to provide development opportunities for individual service users. People are far more likely to want to contribute to the organisation by getting more involved if they feel they are also getting something back in return for their efforts. We aim to be ambitious and innovative in this area. In all of its activities and projects, RB Mind will remain mindful of the potential to provide opportunities for service users, preserving existing effective practices whilst also developing and evaluating new ones.

Through service user involvement we will endeavour to:

- Foster inclusion, independence, and respect
- Raise self esteem
- Increase positive outcomes of service user's work
- Ensure services reflect and meet the needs of the people they are intended for
- Continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the organisation
- Make maximum use of the ideas, skills and creativity available
- Increase service users' involvement and inclusion in wider society
- Give priority to the issues which are of most concern to service users
- Comply with any regulatory and funding requirements
- Celebrate user strengths and enabling their growth

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For this policy to work, it is important that a two way flow of communication takes place. RB Mind understands that for any service user involvement policy to be effective, all staff, especially management, need to engage actively in this process.

Service users have very diverse backgrounds, lifestyles, needs and interests. To reflect this, RB Mind will seek to develop a range of opportunities for service users to become more involved in, and to influence, how the organisation and its services are managed. Many will have faced exclusion and discrimination, and may be deeply sceptical or negative about participation. The onus will be upon RB Mind to show that its approach to user involvement is genuine and meaningful, rather than upon the service user to show that s/he is worthy of involvement.

3. The Right

It is the responsibility of every worker, volunteer and committee member, and the right of the service user to ensure that this policy is put into practice. Despite responsibility lying with management and workers to seek to engage with service users, it is the choice of the service user themselves to decide if they individually wish to seek to engage or not. It is up to everyone to publicise the policy, ensure that everyone has a copy of the policy and that the policy is explained to people to ensure that they understand its content and implications. RB Mind staff will also explain this to all new active service users within the organisation as part of their induction into whatever service they may be using.

3. Accountability

Accountability for the implementation of this policy is a shared one. Ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy will lie with the board of trustees and its chair. Service User involvement will be monitored annually by trustees and form part of individual staff work plans. Service User involvement will also be a standing item on the agenda of the Management Committee. Whilst Service Users will monitor engagement through RB Mind's Service User meeting.

Procedurally RB Mind's Services Manager will work to ensure all services and projects have a service user element to it. Whilst all active service users who are appointed as reps to specific services / projects / or area of interest will be accountable to their peers who elected them onto this role. Wherever possible, each service user representative, should have a co-representative elected to cover occasions when an individual representative's cannot engage fully in their role. This may be circumstantial or due to ill health (be it physical or mental). The co-representative will hold the same accountability as their counterpart. If both representatives are unwell at the same time, this will be raised at the next service user gathering of that particular service and replacements for both

parties will be found. This will be on a temporary basis until it can be ascertained if the original representatives will be returning to their roles or not. If they will not be returning to that role, the one year timeframe will kick in for those particular users.

Service User representatives as yearly elected members will be held accountable through RB Mind's Service User own Terms of reference, which will apply to their role. These terms of reference will cover the process of how representatives are selected, and also what to do if there are concerns / complaints around conduct. If a Service User representative is unable to continue in their particular role, their fellow user representative will take over that role.

4. How can you get involved?

RB Mind will work to enable individuals to be appropriately involved at various levels within the organisation. For the purposes of this policy, these are identified as;

- **Individual** – Each RB Mind Service User and Carer must be able to influence the services s/he receives, and the activities in which s/he participates (eg; via support planning, goal setting, reviews, key work meetings, etc) in a genuine partnership in which s/he has as much control as possible. This is a fundamental requirement if service users are to be genuinely respected and empowered.
- **Team and Service** – RB Mind is committed to developing the range of ways through which service users can genuinely influence the management of operations of each team in the organisation. All service-delivery projects should aim to achieve this level of service user involvement.
- **Organisational** – RB Mind is committed to developing the range of ways through which service users can genuinely influence the management and operations of the organisation.

Service users should be involved in all decision making at all levels. This will include:

1. Deciding policy
2. Setting budgets
3. Recruitment of staff
4. Adjudicating in the complaints procedure
5. Day to day running of projects

How this policy will be implemented will be through a number of forums and mechanisms. Some of these involve the following;

- a) Involvement in management committees
- b) Individual personal contact
- c) Their elected representatives
- d) Service user forum meetings
- e) Questionnaires
- f) Newsletters
- g) Suggestion box
- h) Any other method

6. Management Committee / Service User Trusteeship

RB Mind believes it is of fundamental importance that service users and mental health carers have an effective and legitimate voice on the Board of Trustees. RB Mind aims to have at least three active service users on the established trustee board.

Service users must be actively encouraged and supported in performing this role by staff and other trustees.

Resources will be made available for training service users to acquire the skills necessary for performing their role on the Board as effectively as possible. User trustees are expected to make use of the training resources and opportunities available. User will bring their own experience and that of others as well.

Finance, Fundraising and Personnel Committees will also have [at least?] one active service user each who is part of the membership of these committees.

RB Mind's Trustee Board will have a standing item that will tackle Service User Involvement.

7. Recruitment of staff

Service users will be involved fully in the recruitment of paid staff and volunteers.

This will include involvement in the following:

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- a) Decisions regarding job descriptions/person specifications
- b) Wording and placement of advertisements
- c) Short-listing of applicants
- d) Interview of applicants

8. Right to Challenge

If a service user or group of service users feel that decisions are being made without their consultation, or that they are not being properly involved in the decision making process they have the right to use this as grounds for making a complaint.

9. Monitoring and review

Implementation of this policy, with particular reference to the standards and expectations outlined, will be monitored, by the appropriate manager at each level: team and service. Reports will be provided by the team manager or chief executive respectively.

Examples of good practice, and successful innovations, should be shared across the organisation as appropriate. Managers' reports to the Trustees will also contain reference to examples of service users' involvement, and reports on progress.

RB Mind's Service User forum will also be responsible for monitoring progress made in the ongoing implementation of this policy. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Oversight of this work will be reported back to the Service User Forum by the active Service User Trustees. These particular individuals will have over-arching ownership on supporting the overall implementation of this work.

10. Code of Conduct

All service users involved in Richmond Borough Mind will sign up to and abide to a code of conduct. This will form part of the agreement RB Mind will enter into with a designated service user representative.

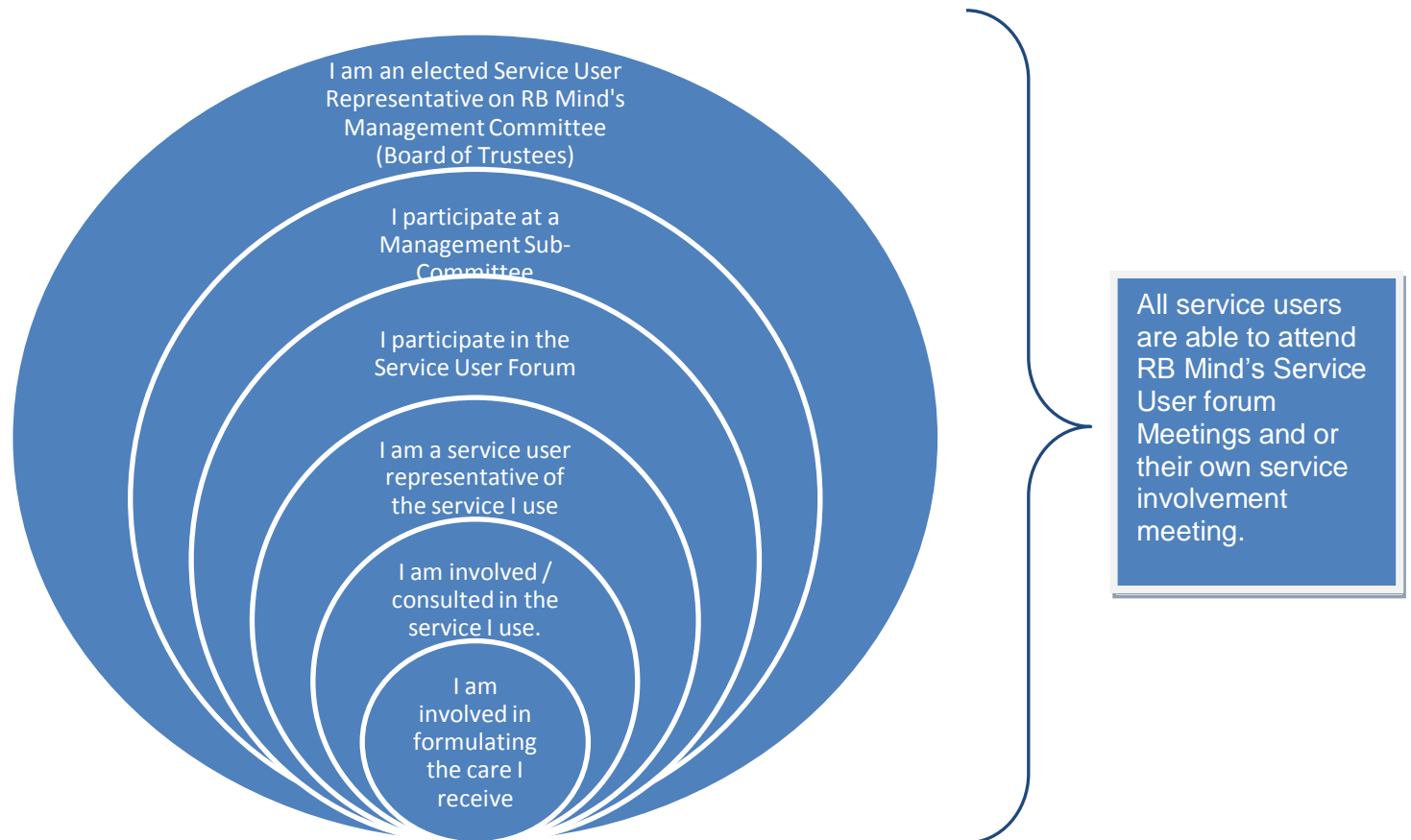
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11. Involvement Structures

Involvement structures within the organisation will consist of a service user representative elected as part of each service and project that is held within Richmond Borough Mind. This will be stemming from service user involvement procedures within each service and project within the organisation. The structures used within individual services and projects will be based around how that particular service operates, as the organisation understands that one size does not fit all.

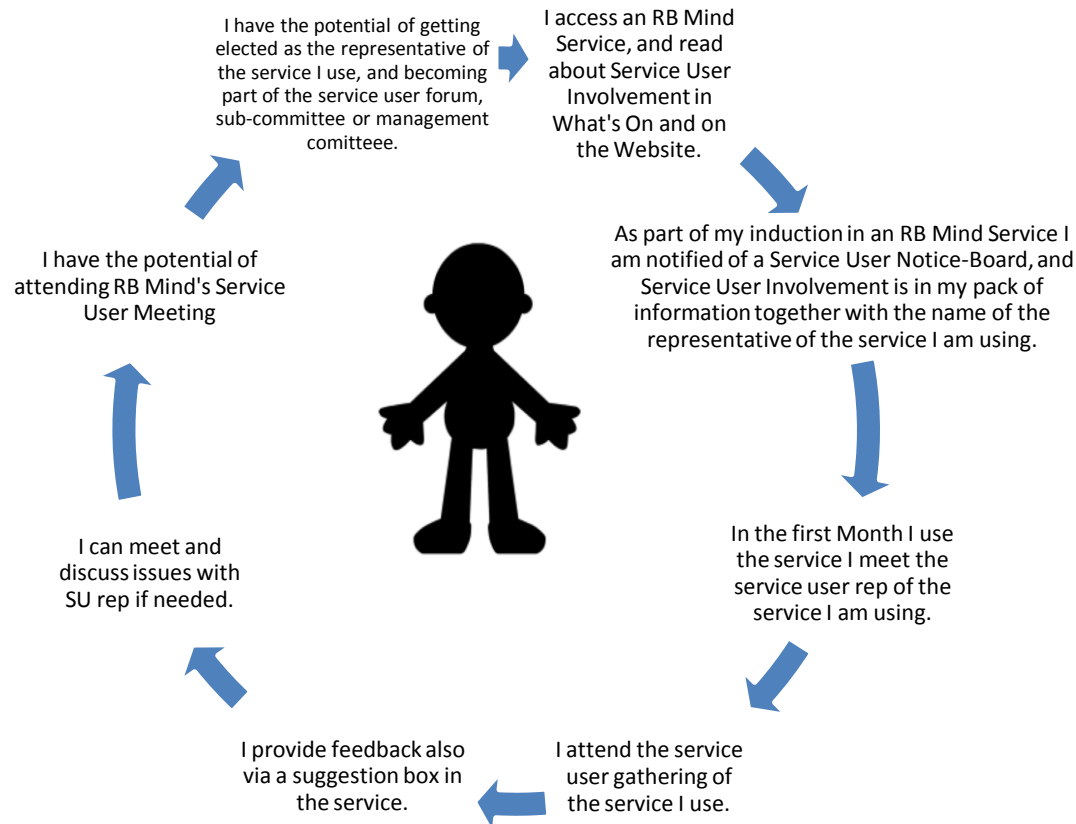
12. Service User Involvement Ladder

RB Mind aims to offer many different opportunities to people who wish to get involved in the organisation. The diagram below depicts the different ways of how an individual may get involved in the work of RB Mind. .



13. Process of Service User Involvement

In enabling the appropriate implementation of this policy the diagram below will demonstrate how an individual user of RB Mind services will be facilitated in becoming more actively involved in the running and involvement of RB Mind services.



14. Benefits and Support

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RB Mind believes in the process of involvement and volunteering as one that enables and assists an individual's journey towards recovery. We plan to implement this policy in the spirit of providing individual user representatives with a clear opportunity to develop their skills and embody in their lives the major tenets of recovery (hope, secure base, self, supportive relationships, empowerment and inclusion, coping strategies and meaning). Also RB Mind will be providing adequate training (as far as funding allows) for individuals to develop specific skills that will enable them further to fulfil their service user representative role.

RB Mind understands that taking an active role within the organisation can be quite challenging. All active members within the organisation will be given the possibility of taking breaks as part the support necessary to engage, and that taking a break will not hinder in any future participation.