

SHIEN Shared Solutions Workshop Report

1st July 2009 Albert Halls Stirling

Aims of the day

The Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Shared Solutions workshop focused on best practice in involvement and empowerment.

The objectives for the day were to:-

- raise awareness of SHIEN
- share perspectives and understanding of service user involvement
- share best practice in service user involvement and empowerment.

Format of the day

The Shared Solutions process is an innovative approach to events that has been used successfully by Glasgow Homelessness Network in the past. It is a collaborative approach bringing together all key stakeholders in homelessness (service planners, managers, frontline staff, policy makers and service users as equal stakeholders in the process of identifying potential solutions to key issues.

After an introduction and presentation outlining the objectives of SHIEN and the aims of the day, the delegates warmly received 3 keynote speakers, and were given the opportunity to contribute to thematic round table discussions, based on a question prompt set by the speakers.

The afternoon sessions welcomed 'service user champions' coming from a wider variety of backgrounds and positions within services leading on workshop-style discussions.

The day closed with a drama performance and an opportunity for Questions, Answers and Comments.

The Keynote Speakers

Matt Howarth - Housing Access and Support Division Scottish Government

Matt Howarth opened the conference with a presentation providing the delegates with a policy perspective from the Scottish Government on their support service user involvement. At the end of his presentation he provided a question to prompt round table discussions. 'What are the best ways for service user involvement to inform government policy in Scotland including helping government to address negative perceptions of homeless people that may exist?'

Sarah Cameron – Community Recycling Network Scotland Procurement Development Officer

After the discussion group, Sarah Cameron presented the delegates with a practitioner perspective on service user involvement. Sarah prompted discussion with her question 'What can service providers do to encourage service users to become involved and to conquer any barriers?'

Wallace Blake SOAR Service User/ Volunteer

Wallace Blake presented on a service user perspective via a wide range of service user and volunteer experience. Wallace prompted the final discussion group with the following question 'If we all agree that service users offer a unique and necessary perspective, then why are our views sometimes not taken on board?'

Roundtable Discussions:

As mentioned previously, the discussions were prompted by the questions outlined above. And each were designed to provide a perspective from either a service user, service provider or policy maker point of view. The following bullet points record the responses provided by delegates.

Round table discussion 1. Policy Perspective

'What are the best ways for service user involvement to inform government policy in Scotland including helping government to address negative perceptions of homeless people that may exist?'

- Increase input of young people.
- Politicians need to raise the agenda again to give service user involvement a higher profile.
- Recession will improve perceptions of homelessness, but reduce that of other care groups.
- Policy makers need to take more consideration around Literacy & Language
- Recession has increased the number of homelessness can happen to anyone.
- Early consultation.
- Decrease fear and ignorance.
- Benefit anomalies need to be re-addressed.
- We need more community based seminars. To get more people involved and aware of homelessness services in their areas.
- More conferences like this one today with a panel of 'high head yins'.
- Live or work in hostel for couple of weeks to see what happens.
- Politicians should experience homelessness.
- Promoting people affected by homelessness to decisive groups, and input on committees and boards.

Round table discussion 2. Practitioner Perspective

'What can service providers do to encourage service users to become involved and to conquer any barriers?'

- Short staffed and lack of information & training to help direct service users to training and volunteer opportunities. More staff & more information about training. Volunteer opportunity.
- Use a flexible approach, make meeting times accessible.
- Listen, Believe, Respect & treat as an individual.
- What isn't working needs to be fed up as well.
- Service user to be at a level so they can take part.
- Make people aware of where any information is going
- Provide the benefits of getting involved and jargon free information.
- House meetings and open pays.
- Focus on needs of service users, not the needs of the service & staff.
- Provide Evidence of outcomes and feedback to all involved.
- Peer Group Advocate.
- Ask Service User opinion. And ask it in lots of different ways. Ask how we can involve service users more.
- Provide Incentives, cover expenses, consider transport issues
- Don't exclude those not keen to take part find out why.
- Recognise personal barriers.
- Quality of service user involvement, sustained, open staff attitude.

- Less bureaucracy between homeless people and government bodies. Government bodies to get down to grass routes level.
- There shouldn't be any barriers up in the 1st place. That would put a service user needing help from that service of from seeking help.
- Create lots of different involvement groups and opportunities.
- More team working needed to make sure everyone's on board, all staff should be involved.
- Don't give up.
- Make use of key workers in supporting service users with communication.
- Service providers to be consistent.



- Confidentiality, trust about how information is used by organisations. Loss of trust reduces information.
- Promote the voice of the service user.
- Ensure that independent people gather views and feedback.

Round table discussions 3. Service User Perspective

'If we all agree that service users offer a unique and necessary perspective, then why are our views sometimes not taken on board?'

- Power relationships, service users are not the most powerful stakeholders. Services think they know best. Some staff have bad attitudes. Service users will be able to provide the best and most direct experience and criticism. Bodies (Boards) bosses are reluctant to give up power.
- Staff too are constricted in what they can do, and guided by policy.
- Staff lack experience and understanding.
- Staff lack knowledge of service user involvement and don't provide opportunities and information.
- Staff have a lot of pressure on them for time and service user involvement falls to the bottom of the list.
- Budgets and funding issues, and poor fund raising decisions. Also, some services get 18 months funding then stop. Too fragmented.
- Sometimes services are not able to take views on board. (E.g. priorities funding)
- No longer a peoples service, now more a business.
- Sometimes there is a non realistic expectations on behalf of the service users.
- Mechanisms for change is poor. There are structural restraints, fitting criteria & not knowing rights.
- Services are just doing it for box ticking exercise. It's tokenistic. Sometimes just in time for care commissioning.
- They are not asked.
- Pre- agenda, people don't listen as they already know the answer they want.
- Paperwork and formality act as barriers to involvement.
- How do we make the people who are responsible for legislation see what actually happening?
- More about paperwork than people.
- Discrimination & stigma, within & out with homeless organisation.
- Services user opinion is often overturned to stop being controversial/limited.
- 2012 target, drives everything. No focus on real issues.

Afternoon round table discussions:

The following delegates kindly offered in advance of the event to facilitate workshops designed to share best practice and learning around service user involvement activities they had carried out in the past.

Name	Service	Heading
Louise Walkup	Frontline Fife DC	Implement positive organisational change
Leslie Gregory	Open Door Accommodation Project	Young Peoples Service User Involvement
Cecilia Curry	Phoenix Futures	Service User Mind Map Tree
Michelle Coulter	Phoenix Futures	Evidence Book
Sarah Cameron	Community Recycling Network for Scotland	Furniture Pack Feedback
Johanna Spiers	SAMH Connect	Service User Open Day
Bill McMurray	Salvation Army	Peer Research Project
Graham Watt	Stirling Council	Peer Research Project
Margaret-Ann Brunjes	Glasgow Homelessness Network	RE-Focus
Iain Shaw	Media Education Ltd	Engaging with difficult to reach groups
Richard Howatt	Dundee Cyrenians	Consultation on day services
Lorna Murray	East Ayrshire Community Health	Street Worker Pack
Karen McGilvery	East Ayrshire Community Health	Food and Health Toolkit
James Hyslop	Glasgow Homelessness Network	SpeakOut
David Ramsay	Glasgow Homelessness Network	Peer Mentoring
Alistair McDermid	Rock Trust	Focus Groups
Sandra Keown & Maureen Adamson	Glasgow Homelessness Network	Unheard Voices
Kate Haycock	SAMH	Confidential Comment Card
Lesley Bon	GHN	Shared Solutions Workshop
Margaret McMillan	Glasgow Homelessness Network	Action Research Project

Discussions:

All workshop facilitators worked to a prepared template in which they recorded their name, the project, their capacity, and a brief outline of the organisation/project.

They provided information on the service user involvement activity, the steps they took and how the activity was evaluated. They then considered what type of involvement they were achieving, and the level of impact and resources needed.

The group then contributed to sharing the success and recognising the positive aspects of the activity and suggested learning and improvements for future activities.

Next Steps:

Finally, the facilitators kindly agreed to share the details and information which will be made available on the SHIEN Website and Resource Exchange, which will be launched later this year.

Themes for the next Shared Solutions event to be hosted later in the year, and the conference to be held in March 2010, will be based upon and address feedback and evaluations received from this workshop.

Drama Performance:

Unheard Voices drama group, comprising actors who have been affected by homelessness, closed the day with a debut of their new performance 'A Comments Box'. The play highlights accessibility and issues around service user involvement within projects and was written, developed and performed by the group.

This powerful piece was warmly received by a delighted audience. The play put across strong messages in an accessible and sometimes 'humorous' way.

The performance was followed by a question, answer and comments session with the actors.



Conference Evaluation:

The workshop received great feedback, out of the 86 delegates, over half those in attendance completed evaluation forms (49 forms returned).

2/3rds of the delegates reported representing the voluntary sector, and one third represented the statutory sector. There was almost an equal spread across front-line staff, managers and service users in attendance.

40 of the 49 evaluations gave a good or excellent response when asked to rate the workshop overall. More general feedback can be found overleaf.



Evaluation Comments

'Liked the morning sessions – question then 10 minute discussion. The afternoon was good and enable ideas to be taken back which could be put into practice'

'I thoroughly enjoyed input of the service users at the table I was at'

'Very informative – great networking'

'Very relevant and concise content, good representation by service users'

'Some speakers and facilitators didn't use plain English'

'I liked all of it. I liked the opportunity to be able to see what good Service User involvement we have and to hear about others experiences'

'SUI is very much a part of our daily practice. I am one of the lead persons within the group. It has given me more to think about'.

'Well organised event'

'I'm not directly involved in service user involvement re homelessness but will take back a greater knowledge of the issues surrounding it'.

'Tea, cakes, lunch, venue, timings, all excellent. Thanks'

'Worthwhile travelling from Glasgow'

'Keep going. Every change has to start somewhere'

'Fantastic'

'I think that Unheard Voices should do the tv ad of being homeless'

'When is the next one?'