User participation and empowerment toolkit

Eurodiaconia

www.eurodiaconia.org

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INTRODUCTION: WHY USER PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT?

Diaconal organisations believe that all people are made in the image of God and that each individual is unique, with resources, such as skills, ideas and competences, which can improve their quality of life and enrich the lives of those around them. A service is a tool to enable the user to make use of those resources, empowering the individual to fulfil their potential. Empowerment of individuals is an evolving process, a journey, rather than a one off event and we also see it as a spiritual task.

Service users' quality of life benefits as services increasingly take into account their wishes and as users gain ownership over the process of service delivery. Participation can thus be seen as a pre-condition of empowerment. Enabling and facilitating users to effectively participate in all decision-making processes affecting their lives brings about this ownership. Service quality also improves as a better understanding of the users' wishes, capabilities and needs is gained and services are more tailor-made to the individual. User satisfaction increases as services focus more on this issue. Experience shows that empowerment is effective in the prevention of institutionalisation and service dependency through fostering autonomy and inspiring progress.

It is clear that users should be offered opportunities and support to participate in their service provision if they so wish but should not be obliged to. In addition, users are free to choose whether they use a service or not. If the service provider or care worker feels that a user's choice might entail risks for the user, or that expectations may not be met, dialogue is essential, respecting the user's opinions.

WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

As seen above, user participation and empowerment are essential elements in ensuring quality, tailor-made social services that support an individual's autonomy. Therefore this toolkit has been developed from the document "Eurodiaconia principles of quality diaconal social services", within which user involvement and empowerment is promoted, and should be read in the context of that document. Members felt that this topic deserved to be further developed. As a result, this document has been drawn up in consultation with Eurodiaconia's social services working group.

This toolkit does not intend to give one definition of or describe one route to participation or empowerment of service users. Rather the document is to be seen as a flexible resource, to develop diaconal organisations' understanding of user participation and empowerment and give a starting point for reflection and internal discussions on how to implement and improve participation and empowerment of diverse user groups. It presents different perspectives in defining empowerment, guidelines for creating an empowering environment and systems as well as best practice methods and ideas for the participation and empowerment of different service user groups.

Eurodiaconia encourages networks of diaconal organisations and individual institutions to discuss the toolkit and to give feedback to the secretariat on the text.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

A process

- Increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities
- Capacity-building needed to partake in society[1]
- Allowing people to be active agents for development and change[2]
- Ways to redistribute power more equally[3]
- Increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes[4]
- A precondition for the enjoyment of rights
- Be informed → make choices → transform choices into desired actions[5]
- Bringing into a state of belief one's ability to act effectively

An outcome

- A set of skills and attitudes of the individual
- Qualities of the professional and his/her organisation
- Higher levels of confidence and self esteem

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[1] World Bank 2007

[2] World Bank 2007

[3] FEANTSA, Empowering ways of working, page 3

[4] One definition as described by Tessa Zaeyen, see
http://www.epr.eu/images/EPR/documents/events/pa_event/2009/tzaeyen.pdf

[5] FEANTSA, Empowering ways of working, page 3

Levels/sites of empowerment

Individual → Group, Family → Institution/organisation → Community→ Civil Society

Some dimensions of empowerment

- Understanding your decisions have an impact
- That your decisions correspond with your values – meaning
- Believing in your skills
- Self-acceptance/positive identity/Overcoming stigma
- Feeling part of a group
- Managing your own career, health and wellbeing

GUIDELINES FOR USER PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Develop a system and environment of user participation and empowerment

- The working environment is one in which the voice of users are heard and acted upon
- The environment encourages and builds respect for users and for the staff to have a willingness to learn from users
- The system is part of an overall quality principles framework
- The system starts from the principle of "co-creation"
- The system is focussed on the users and their involvement in all stages of the process
- The system is planned in detail
- A common understanding of empowerment should be developed and the system based on this

Users can participate in creating and carrying out the service they receive

- Users are informed of their rights
- Users are informed of the services available (especially those who are less capable of informing themselves)
- Users are informed in the appropriate manner of the methodology of the service given and the choice of services available, including their rights to and information on secondary follow up services
- Efforts should be taken to ensure users' ability to express their views
  - o Ensure a wide variety of communication methods to enable all users to communicate, particularly those who cannot communicate verbally
- The user creates an individual care plan, facilitated by staff
  - o The plan is regularly updated and evaluated

Services enable the user to recognise his or her own resources and to use those resources to fulfil their potential

- Services rebuild the confidence of the user where necessary
    - "Low threshold" life skills training may help in this regard
- Staff facilitate/support the user to take responsibility for their decisions where appropriate, whilst continuing to provide all necessary support and taking the relevant responsibilities themselves
    - Where relevant opportunities to take up other responsibilities are offered
- There is support for being involved in and making a positive contribution to community life
    - Activities/places of contact with the local community are facilitated (sport, cultural events…)
    - Users participate as equal citizens
- User meetings/fora take place to enable users to express opinions on the wider context of their services
    - Training is provided to facilitate participation and for self-management
- Services should include strengthening social networking

Users can participate in evaluating the service they receive

- Users are equal partners in the evaluation of quality

Empowerment of Staff

- Staff training sensitises them to the principles and issues that particular user groups face and the importance of user involvement and empowerment
- Team cooperation is supported, staff are continually motivated as to the importance of user involvement
- Self-evaluation of the service should be practised
- Staff of all levels are equal partners in the evaluation of quality
- Staff of all levels are equal participants in the strategic planning process
- Staff evaluation is a positive growth experience

INVOLVEMENT/EMPOWERMENT: IDEAS AND BEST PRACTICE

- User forums – See CrossReach in annex: minutes of a meeting with people with learning disabilities, and FEANTSA "Empowering Ways of Working" p.15 (, below)
- Schleswig-Holstein internet platform for people with disabilities – www.behinder-mich-nicht.de
- Personal/family/group care planning
- Family Group Conferencing; social network problem solving – see for example: http://www.eigen-kracht.nl/
- Creating opportunities to take on different roles and responsibilities; a care-giver, an artist, a sportsperson, a "friend", organising events, trips, managing a budget, being on a board, doing political work… – see FEANTSA p.11-12
- At Kofoed's School users are seen as students to emphasise the role of education in developing people's self-esteem and abilities – http://www.kofoedsskole.dk/internationaltsite/main/home
- Charter for Involvement, National Involvement Network UK - http://www.arcuk.org.uk/scotland/1000391/en/charter+for+involvement.html
- User Organisations – see FEANTSA p.16
- User advocates
- Users involved in the selection of staff, such as in interviews, and the induction of staff.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND LINKS

Eurodiaconia principles for quality diaconal social services
http://www.eurodiaconia.org/files/Social_and_Health_Care_Services/SERV%2021%2009%20Eurodiaconia%20Principles%20for%20Quality%20Diaconal%20Social%20Services.pdf

Empowering Ways of Working. Empowerment for people using homeless services in Europe. FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Working_Groups/Participation/2009/Policy_docs/091019_document_empowering_ways_EN.pdf

Benchmarking the empowerment impact of disability policies and services, Dr. Donal McAnaney, European Platform for Rehabilitation
http://www.epr.eu/images/EPR/documents/events/pa_event/2009/dmcananey.pdf

Measure and Enhance Empowerment; VrijBaan and REQUEST, Tessa Zaeyen
http://www.epr.eu/images/EPR/documents/events/pa_event/2009/tzaeyen.pdf

Report on user involvement in personal social services; Council of Europe
http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialrights/source/ID4758-Userinvolvementinpersonalsocialservices.pdf

ANNEX

CROSSREACH
Service Users' Forum
20th February 2008

In Attendance:

Chris (Advocacy)
David (Chair)
John McCauley
Pat (Advocacy) Minutes
June
John
Jacqueline
Tracy
Jonathan
Helen
Milly
Caroline

David welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chris explained fire safety,

asked people to switch off mobile phones

and explained when lunch would be.

Chris explained the meeting was for **CROSSREACH** service users and workers should only stay if the service users wanted them at the meeting.

David asked if anyone knew of people who could not make it to the meeting. Everyone was there.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Most people didn't get the minutes of the last meeting. From now on The Advocacy Project will take the minutes and send them out. They will go to the people at the meeting and a copy will go to the project that they stay at.

Meetings will happen every 2 months.

At the last meeting, **Milly** had said her service Florentine House needs a minibus.

She spoke to **Mrs. Trainer** who said there wasn't enough money

and no driver.

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TRAINING FOR MEETINGS

David introduced the next item on the agenda, 'Training for Meetings'. **Tracy** said she felt this was important but it was cancelled because the training worker was off sick.

A new date **Thursday 10th April** has been made and the place and time has still to be arranged. **Stuart McCarter** will tell people where and when, and will carry out the training.

SERVICE USER CONFERENCE

David introduced the next item on the agenda, 'Service User Conference' where everyone can say what they think. **Christine Anderson** and **Dave Clark** (staff) want to know what people want at a conference for service users.

IDEAS!

Milly wanted it near the sea. Other people wanted:

Music Karaoke

Computers Baking

Being safe out and about

Lunch or a buffet somewhere posh.

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Service Users' Forum

SERVICE USER CONFERENCE continued:

Caroline said it was not a good idea to have it at holiday times.

People are very keen for it to happen and everyone thought it was a good idea.

Christina (staff) was asked if there were any updates about the conference from the staff team. She said Christine Anderson is the link person with Dave Clark and they need to find out

How much money is available

and how people can get involved.

Jonathon said he would talk to **Christine Anderson** about the conference.

There is also a **Faith Awareness conference** on the **27th February** at Perth Christian Centre. Everyone is invited and transport is arranged.

David introduced the next item: **CARE PLANS**

Jacqueline said that **Kay Buckley** had asked this to be brought up, but was not sure what was meant.

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David introduced the next item: **SAFETY ISSUES**

Caroline was concerned about safety at the **Saltmarket Project**, including:

people using the buzzers in the close

drunk people

broken glass

needles in the close

staff being assaulted

Christina (staff) said Police are involved, as are housing and social work.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John said he is moving to his own flat. He is very pleased about this and hopes to be in before the next meeting.

Tracy hopes to go to Blackpool at Easter and will speak to her support worker to arrange this.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS continued:

Jacqueline said her local hospital is closing, she is concerned about this and will bring a petition against the closure to the meeting

Chris brought up that a letter had been sent from **Derek Westwood** asking if **Ian Hood** from the Learning Disability Alliance could come to the next meeting to talk about what interests people in politics. It was agreed that he could come along.

NEXT MEETING:

The date for the next meeting was agreed:

Wednesday 16th April 2008. The venue will be at:

Room 155, Bell College, Almada Street, Hamilton

Jacqueline will chair the next meeting.

Finally, **David** closed the meeting.

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