

SCIE Participation Strategy

Introduction

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) works to develop and promote knowledge about good practice in social care. We work with people and organisations throughout the social care sector to identify and distribute useful information, research and examples of good practice.

Central to SCIE's work, and a core value of our organisation, is our commitment to participation. Participation means working together, making sure that everyone who has an interest or stake in social care is able to influence and take part in SCIE's work. In particular we hope for service users, carers and their supporters to be at the heart of our programme so that people who require social care services get what they want and need.

SCIE's participation strategy sets out some of the key things SCIE thinks are important for developing good participation practice. The strong emphasis on the participation of service users, carers and their supporters comes because traditionally this group of people have less power and are not always listened to when decisions are made or services are planned. However, SCIE also works with practitioners, researchers, providers, academics and others who have a role in the development of social care to enhance their participation.

Vision statement for participation

SCIE wants service users, carers and their supporters and other stakeholders involved in social care to participate in our work at every level. Participation should influence the organisation from the bottom up as well as from the top down. Participation has to be considered throughout all projects and built in right from the start of a piece of work. It must also be proportionate to what is required by the task in hand.

Values and principles

SCIE's participation work will be built on the following:

- The developing human rights culture in social care
- A belief in citizenship
- Adopting a social model of disability which recognises that many service users are disabled by barriers in society
- Recognising the importance of equality and diversity
- Having a commitment to taking action to tackle discrimination
- Promoting the things that empower people
- Supporting organisations to be independent and properly resourced
- Believing everyone who wants to can contribute to our work
- Giving everyone's opinions the same priority
- Developing and using different approaches to participation
- Being inclusive in everything we do
- Being clear about where people can be involved and where they cannot
- Ensuring that SCIE's work is accessible so people do not find obstacles to participation or when using SCIE's products
- Using working approaches that are suitable for what is required
- Recognising that as an organisation SCIE can grow and learn by involving others and it may be necessary to adapt to changing circumstances and expectations.

Explaining key words

Carers

This describes people who are providing assistance to service users but do not get paid for this. Often they are family members, partners or friends. Carers need support in their own right therefore they should be treated as service users if they feel comfortable about this. Some people may be service users and a carer or parent.

Participation

Participation and involvement are words that are sometimes used to mean the same thing. SCIE uses the word participation to talk about actively working together on a particular project or activity. SCIE wants to work together or in partnership with service users

and carers, and other stakeholders, so these groups can have a full part in the work done rather than just having limited involvement in consultation exercises (as can be the case).

Participation can happen in many shapes and forms. For example, at one level it can mean giving people information and actively listening to what they have to say, at another level it can mean giving money or help so that people can do research or run a service.

Service user

SCIE uses the phrase service user as a way of describing people who receive or require social care. The term can refer to lots of different groups of people, including families, young people in care, children, people with physical and sensory impairments, survivors and users of mental health services, older people, people with drug or alcohol misuse problems and people with learning difficulties.

It is important to note however, that not all service users like this phrase or identify themselves in this way. One reason for this is that people with problematic substance use are called 'users' (or abusers) and can also be service users. This can create a blurring of the terms and puts some people off being called service user.

Social care

Social care is defined as the provision of social work, personal care (but not nursing or medical care), protection or social support services to children in need or at risk and their families and carers, or adults at risk or with needs arising from illness, disability or old age or poverty and their families and other carers. That provision may have one or more of the following aims: to protect service users, to preserve or advance physical or mental health, to promote independence and social inclusion, to improve opportunities and life chances, to strengthen families and to protect human rights in relation to people's social needs.

Partnership working

Participation and partnership working is about working together. SCIE has identified four main types of partnership working. These involve different levels of participation and just because one type is

used does not mean the others cannot be developed. It is not necessary to use all four types of partnership working, but what is important is that the approach used is suitable for the task in hand:

Co-ordination

- Each group works separately
- Each group knows what work it has to do
- Everyone agrees on what each group does
- Everyone shares what they are doing as they go along.

Co-operation

- Each group is working towards the same thing
- All the groups do their own work
- People only share what they have done when the work is finished.

Collaboration

- All the groups work together
- Everyone agrees on how they are going to do things together.

Co-production

- Everyone puts an equal amount of money, time, information and/or expertise together to produce one thing
- Each group keeps its way of working and independence.

Making participation work

Payments for participation

SCIE values the particular experience and expertise that service users and carers contribute through participation work therefore we pay a fee and expenses to service users and carers involved.

Diversity

Equalities law and good practice guides are promoted in our work. SCIE ensures a range of groups, such as older people, disabled people, lesbian and gay people, black and minority ethnic people, children and young people, are included in our work. For instance, extra work needs to be done to involve people in residential homes, people with communication impairments and people with more than one impairment.

Inclusion

Not all service user groups consist of people who actually use services. In some groups people may want to use services but cannot get access (because they do not meet the necessary conditions), or some do not use services because they do not like them. Prisoners, homeless people and refugees are often not treated as citizens and as a result are not able to use services.

SCIE aims to develop links and work with people who social care services find hard to reach.

Using different approaches to participation

Thought should be given to using different ways of enabling participation to happen in an organisation. This can vary from including people in meetings or carrying out research, to letting service users, carers and their supporters to taking the lead on a piece of work, running teaching sessions or providing services.

Too often participation work is added on to an activity or project at the end, or is not taken very seriously. Whenever a project at SCIE is planned participation issues need to be thought about at the beginning and built into all stages of the work.

Service users are often not communicated to directly and they do not have access to the right information to be able to make choices about the services they are using. Therefore it is essential that a range of methods are used for participation work and include service users, carers and their supporters in a meaningful way so that an equal part can be played.

People need to remember that speaking is not the only way to communicate; using art, dance, video or other creative methods may be more appropriate and more accessible for some people.

Evaluation

Participation is an important commitment, it should be a process that feeds into every part of an organisation's work, rather than just being something we do as a token gesture. It is particularly important that SCIE looks at what impact participation work has.

Ways need to be developed to measure the results of involving people.

Future work on participation

This participation strategy aims to provide a starting point for SCIE's work and is a guide, it will change over time according to the demands and changing circumstances that SCIE works with.

The participation strategy is not a stand alone document, it needs to be considered alongside other policies and guides (ie. equality and diversity policy, access guidelines and guide to service user payments).

SCIE's participation strategy implementation guide outlines a plan of work to implement the participation strategy. This aims to build strong foundations for:

- Setting out good practice for participation work
- Building good practice into all parts of SCIE's work
- Promoting and securing good practice among organisations and people involved in social care
- Measuring the results and value for money of SCIE's work in the area of participation.

Conclusion

Participation work is central to what SCIE does therefore there is a strong commitment to making sure it happens at every level of the work that is done. There is a recognition that as work progresses action needs to be taken to look at what difference participation makes, what results are achieved through participation work and how things could be improved.

SCIE will learn and grow through participation work so as time goes by different work will be needed, therefore this strategy is a living document that will regularly be reviewed and developed according to changing needs and circumstances.

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