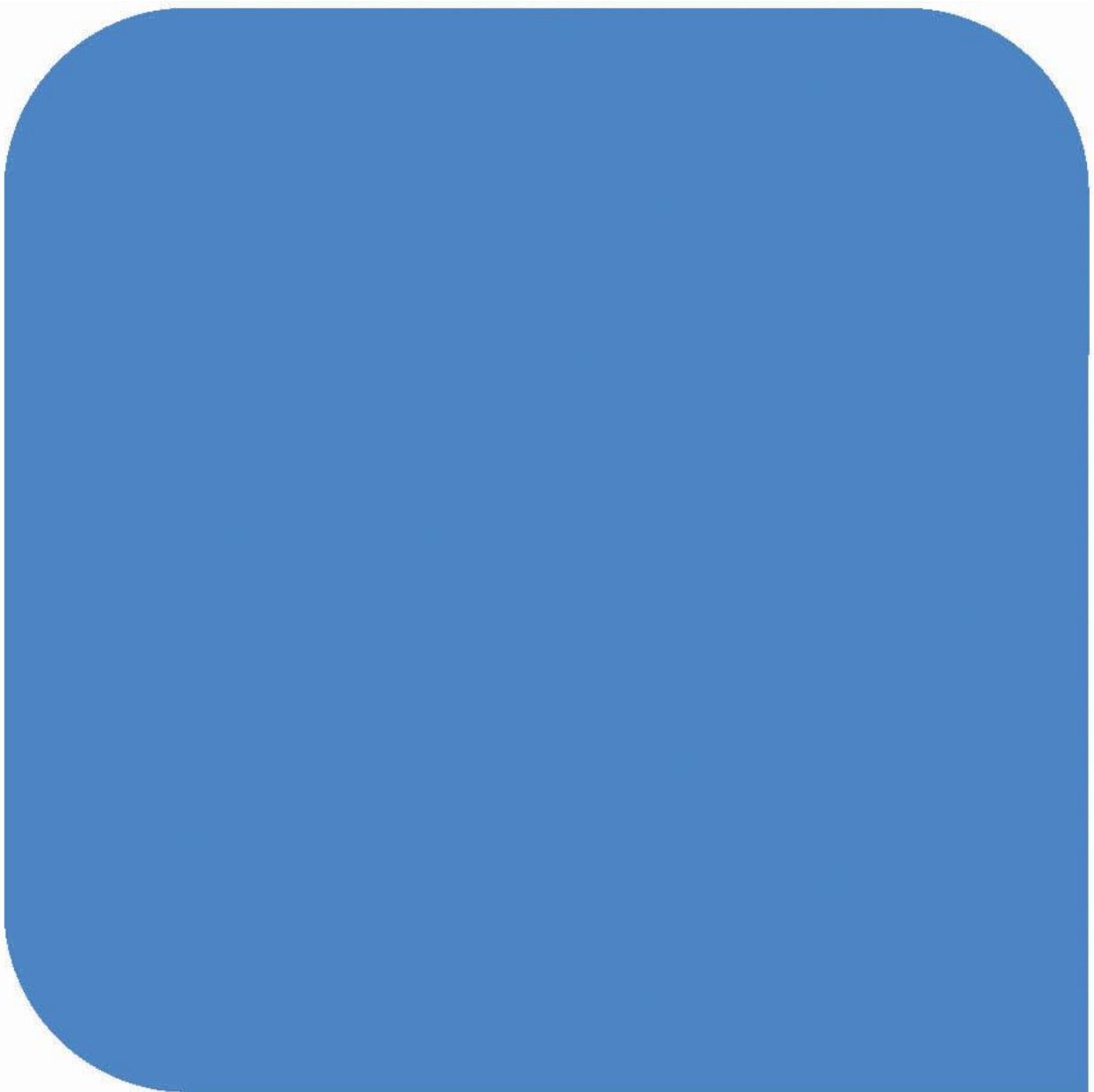




Towards co-production: Taking participation to the next level



1 Introduction

This short report details the findings of an independent evaluation of SCIE's participation function and describes SCIE's new strategy to work towards co-production.

SCIE has a strong reputation and track record of involving users and carers in shaping its strategic direction and in the making of its products. SCIE's particular strength in participation was recognised by NHS Evidence following our successful application for NHS Evidence accreditation in 2011:

"The Social Care Institute for Excellence is very strong in stakeholder and patient involvement and in considering the target audience. Patients' and service users' views are sought throughout the guidance development process."

However, participation is a fast moving field. No organisation can claim to have completely cracked the issue and no organisation can afford to be complacent.

SCIE commissioned *InHealth Associates* and *Papworth Research and Consultancy* to evaluate its user and carer engagement and the way SCIE's Partners' Council worked. The evaluation project was carried out in the second half of 2010 and completed in early 2011.

The Partners' Council was SCIE's stakeholder forum which included service user and carer organisations, service providers from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors, regulatory bodies and academics. One third of the members came from user and carer organisations and it was co-chaired by a service user and the chair of SCIE.

2 How the evaluation was done

The consultants carried out the independent evaluation by conducting:

- interviews with 16 SCIE staff and trustees
- workshops at a Partners' Council meeting
- individual interviews with 26 Partners' Council members
- interviews with people from five comparable national organisations to identify learning on user and carer engagement.

The consultants' report and emerging development plans were discussed by SCIE's Board several times and a Partners' Council meeting also considered the future of participation in SCIE.

3 Findings from the evaluation

The views of staff and trustees

The general view was that SCIE has a user-engagement ethos, practices what it preaches and has a commitment to engagement work that informs many levels and types of activities in the organisation.

Things could be done better and people saw serious challenges ahead given the changing context within which SCIE works.

Other positive points included that SCIE:

- is doing more than most but the quality of involvement vary and there is a need for tightening of internal systems and processes to ensure that involvement has a clear impact on SCIE's work and outputs
- is serious about its efforts in the inclusion and diversity field
- deals well with access and communications issues for users.

Staff and trustees identified the need for engagement to have a greater influence on corporate priorities and for the Partners' Council to have greater impact. People saw there being a disconnection between the Partners' Council and SCIE and the Board. A need for the Partners' Council to re-establish its purpose was identified.

Other issues seen as needing to be addressed were:

- clarity about how resources and budgeting decisions for engagement are made
- better monitoring and performance management of engagement
- more information available to the Board about engagement
- a more systematic approach at programme and project level
- more consistent support, learning and development opportunities for staff and better induction processes.

Views of Partners' Council members

Partners' Council members rated user involvement at SCIE highly and had a significant amount of goodwill towards SCIE. Meetings of the Partners' Council in particular were seen in a largely positive light.

Areas where they saw a need for improvement were for the Partners' Council to have:

- greater clarity of purpose
- clearer roles for members
- greater impact, particularly at a corporate/strategic level
- more feedback from SCIE.

Other suggestions for improvements included finding ways of building richer and safer dialogue and involving older and younger people more effectively.

Many interviewees had worries about user and carer involvement in social care and at SCIE. Many acknowledged that the Partners' Council had to prove itself, particularly now in terms of value for money.

Learning from other organisations included:

The key message from these organisations was the need for clarity about purpose and outcomes and 'fit for purpose' mechanisms for engagement that lead to impact.

There need be direct mechanisms for user and carer voice - including bringing 'real user stories' to the table – with different mechanisms to influence corporate and strategic level decisions and to inform projects or particular initiatives.

Internal systems and processes to embed engagement are crucial. They should include:

- committed senior leadership
- support and learning for staff
- solid internal relationships between user engagement teams and decision makers consistent and rigorous programme and project management.

The organisational context for participation is critical. There is often a tension between allowing the evolution of informal mechanisms of involvement and formalising those structures - both bring advantages and disadvantages. There is merit in re-thinking 'engagement' as 'co-production' in the new climate.

Managing engagement through a time of change is not easy. Organisations need to do 'the bread and butter' while at the same time shifting to use existing mechanisms in different ways and, in particular, to allow people to contribute to the changes. It is also important to provide time to learn and reflect as part of this process.

There may be several ways to utilise web-based technologies in social care and for the use of SCIE. But there are also challenges. Online forums bring some benefits, but online dialogue is not easy to support and can be under-utilised.

4 SCIE's programme of action

Co-production

The independent evaluator's recommended SCIE adopt a co-production approach. Co-production is increasingly being used as the basis for work with service users and carers in the social care field and beyond.

The term co-production dates from the 1970s and as a relatively new term it is defined in a range of different ways.

The difference between participation and co-production is a shift from service users/carers being consulted to being equal partners and the co-creators of products and programmes.

SCIE's research briefing on co-production (<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing31/index.asp>) argues that it should mean service users and carers work with frontline staff who are empowered and confident about sharing power.

SCIE is now moving towards describing its work with service users and carers as co-production to signify SCIE's new approach to engagement and participation. This ensures that SCIE is using the most up to date terminology and plays a more visible role in defining co-production.

A new statement of values

SCIE is developing a statement as recommended by the evaluators. It will set out SCIE's commitment to participation in simple, clear language and outline the main features of the strategy to work towards co-production.

The Partners' Council discussed the content of the statement at its final meeting and it has also been discussed by SCIE's staff. The statement will be approved by the Board in early 2012 and made available on SCIE's website.

Staff engagement

Building an organisational culture which supports participation is critical to working towards and achieving co-production with service users and carers. A crucial aspect of developing a good culture of participation is staff capacity and engagement, particularly in the process of change and policy development.

SCIE has already started this process with a seminar for all staff about the new policies and the plan to move to a co-production approach.

Staff will continue to be involved in the development of co-production policies. The evaluators' recommendation to develop an internal network of co-production

champions has raised several issues and there will be further discussions with staff about this proposal to decide whether it will be useful to SCIE.

Procurement and commissioning

Co-production positions users and carers as co-creators and designers of products and services. SCIE's systems currently encourage staff to engage users and carers mainly in more passive roles.

A co-production model implies that users and carers will be much more closely involved in the actual creation of products. SCIE already commissions some work from user led organisations and user researchers but this needs to be developed further as part of the new co-production approach.

One of the aims of new approach is to build the capacity of user and carer organisations and individual users/carers so more of them can work with SCIE. Project management systems will be reviewed to ensure that, when appropriate, staff proactively seek to commission work from user and carer led organisations and individual users and carers.

Project and programme management

SCIE already has in place various points in the project management process where managers have to explain how they will involve users and carers. These processes will be reviewed with a view to strengthening them where necessary.

Policy and procedures review

Participation touches on a wide range of functions and processes. It is not a bolt on extra but needs to be embedded across all organisational functions and activities.

SCIE will conduct a review of all policies and procedures to ensure that they all address SCIE participation strategies. All relevant policies will be reviewed to ensure they adequately supporting the new co-production approach.

Digital engagement

SCIE will explore online methods of engagement. Online engagement will enable SCIE to communicate with a wider group of people. It is important that online engagement is complementary to actual face-to-face activity.

Reporting and monitoring

There will be an annual report to SCIE's board giving an overview of progress, details of the impact of service user and carer involvement on specific projects and programmes and statistical data gathered from the project management database and other sources such as monitoring of user and carer attendance at SCIE meetings and events.

This report will be coordinated by the chair and core group of the new service user and carer network detailed below.

The new service user and carer network

Purpose of the network

The Partners' Council was the most visible part of SCIE's participation activity. The independent evaluators recommended refocusing the Partners' Council, being clear about its purpose and strengthening its links to the corporate decision making.

To achieve this SCIE decided to create a new network to replace the Partners' Council that would support the new strategy of moving to co-production. It will run for three years initially and will be reviewed annually. There will be flexibility built into the new structure so it can change and adapt.

The purpose of the new network will be –

'To support user, carer and equality groups involvement in SCIE strategic decision making and provide a pool of stakeholders which SCIE can involve in projects and programmes.'

The formal name of this new network will be for its members to determine.

Membership

The network will aim to engage with stakeholders which SCIE finds it difficult to access and who may not have other routes into SCIE. The membership will consist of a representative group of:

- national user-controlled organisations
- national carer-controlled organisations
- equality group organisations and those representing seldom heard groups
- a small number of local organisations may be asked to join the group if they represent constituencies not otherwise represented or if they have specific experience to contribute.

The number of members will initially be 30 and they will form SCIE's key stakeholder network.

Proactive efforts will be made to ensure that young people's organisations and older people's groups are well represented.

How the network will work

The members will be a group of people who understand and are sympathetic to SCIE's objectives who are actively involved in a wide range of SCIE projects, provision of training and other interaction with SCIE staff.

SCIE will communicate with the members on a regular basis with email and print bulletins on developments. Members will also take part in online and/or telephone surveys.

In addition to this there will be two meetings of network members each year. One will be timed to fit into the business planning cycle and focus on strategic issues and would be attended by network members and SCIE Board members. The second meeting each year will focus on SCIE products and programme development and will involve members and SCIE staff.

The network will be chaired by a new SCIE Board member/trustee who is a user of services. They will work with a small group of core network members to co-design meeting agendas with SCIE staff and participate in the annual reviews of progress. They will fully briefed on SCIE's priorities, ways of working and other relevant issues.

Setting up the network

SCIE will use a co-production approach to setup the new network. This will begin with the selection of the new service user trustee/chair of the new network. They will then advise SCIE on recruiting the core members.

SCIE will then recruit a membership which is broadly representative of the diversity of user/carers of social care services with the assistance of the Chair and core group

Timetable for change

Phase one: November 2011 – April 2012

- recruit members of the co-production network
- develop plans for the co-production network
- recruit service user trustee to SCIE's board who will also chair the co-production network.

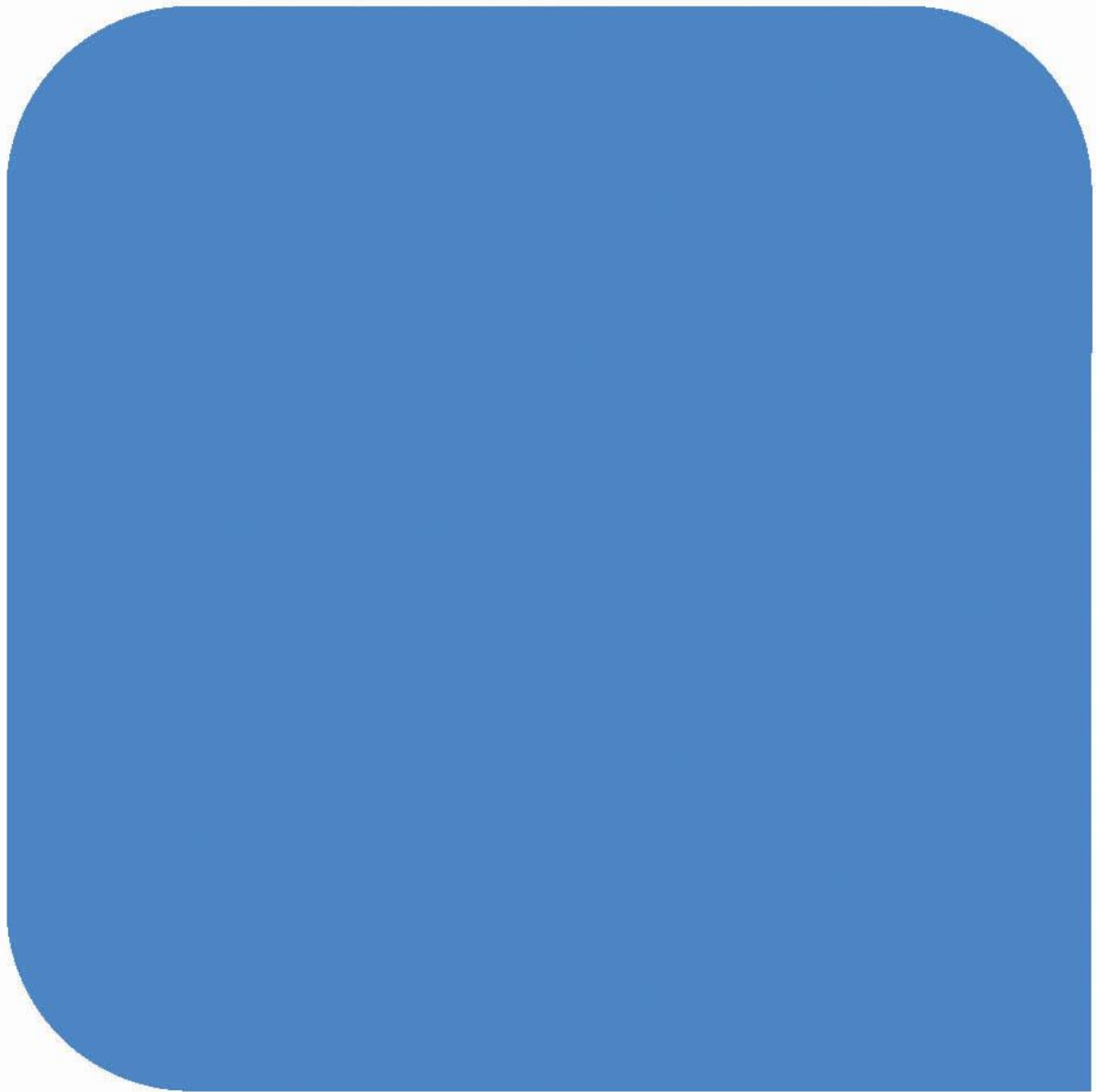
Phase two: April 2012 – October 2012

- develop a common approach to ensuring user/carer voice in programmes and projects through the statement of principles and review to project management system
- hold first meeting of the new network and further develop it with the members
- implement changes to programme and project management systems and review commissioning procedures and review any other policies and procedures as necessary, including human resources
- develop a structure for reporting on participation to SCIE's Board.

Phase three: October 2012 – April 2013

- hold second meeting of co-production network
- implement changes to commissioning procedures
- complete reviews of other policies.

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