



The National Service Users Executive Ltd.
91 Leopardstown Avenue,
Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

National Service Users Executive preliminary submission to the second Independent Monitoring Group for Vision for Change

Mandate

‘A Vision for Change’ recommends that:

‘A National Service User Executive should be established to inform the National Mental Health Service Directorate and the Mental Health Commission on the issues relating to user involvement and participation in planning, delivering, evaluating and monitoring services including models of best practice; and to develop and implement best practice guidelines between the user and provider interface including capacity development issues.’

The fundamental underlying principle is that service users and their families are central to mental health service provision. All agencies and organisations that provide mental health services should therefore work in partnership with service users and their family members/friends. It is essential for all stakeholders to know and to understand the service user perspective. Service users have a unique insight and expertise to contribute to the development of quality mental health services and also to the development of measures which promote positive mental well-being. This comes from their personal experience of psychological/ emotional distress and recovery and as recipients of services.

Mission Statement

The Mission of NSUE is to protect, promote and represent the interests of all service users and their families while ensuring that every individual can feel confident that their own views and wishes will be heard and will help shape service delivery and the strategic direction of mental health services over the coming years.

While we share the concerns of many other organisations that are actively involved in mental health with regard to the Vision for Change; the slow pace of implementation, the lack of financial and human resources due to the embargo on recruitment, the uncertainty

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surrounding the retention of monies that may be raised from the sale of land in the future and the difficulty of providing services within structures that are constantly changing, we have to take into account the views of our members and their daily experience of current mental health service provision. To this end we recently contacted all our members and invited them to complete a short survey on the current state of their mental health service.

The Survey

We decided to ask questions that were relevant to the basic principles that underpin the Vision for Change. Recovery can only flourish in the right conditions, and those include full acceptance of the citizenship rights of all those who use mental health services and their families and friends.

These were about dignity and respect, staff attitudes, any noticeable change in services, inclusion of their views and whether or not they were happy with the services currently being provided. None of these had any resource implications, so that positive changes are possible even in the current economic climate.

The survey also asked people to state their main priorities for future change and development of a quality mental health service.

Responses

To date we have received 520 completed questionnaires, and they are still coming in. Early analysis shows some reason to be hopeful. A significant number of respondents (though not a majority) have reported improvements in their local mental health services over the last two years, a near majority were happy with the services currently being provided, whilst a significant majority are hopeful that improvements will happen, one respondent ascribing this to the fact that: “the service user movement is gaining pace”.

Of some concern is the wide variance in standards of delivery. Whilst one local service was clearly meeting the needs of those who used its services, with high satisfaction scores on nearly every question and over 90% of respondents happy with the services provided, another service achieved a perfect score in the opposite direction- 100% of respondents were unhappy with the service being provided. There are also variations in the satisfaction scales by HSE Region. More positively, the richness of the qualitative data will allow us to identify which services need to improve and specific actions that need to be taken. It is clear that leadership will be vital.



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Priorities for change

Respondents were asked to identify their main priorities for change. To date the top five identified are as follows:

1. Less medication
2. Being seen by the same doctor
3. Being listened to
4. Choices of treatment (not just choices of medication)
5. More counselling services

We hope to launch the preliminary results of the survey around the next birthday for Vision for Change, i.e. in late January 2010. We are certain that the survey itself will create much debate, and that it will provide a positive impetus for future change. We intend to repeat this exercise annually, so that improvements can be tracked, monitored and identified. We hope to meet with the monitoring group on an individual basis in the near future and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Kelly
Chairman
National Service Users Executive