



Registered Charity No: 1035326.

Service User Involvement Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Ponhafren Association was initiated by people who had lived experience of mental health services. We still seek to ensure that our services are member centred and demand led.
- 1.2 It is therefore the policy of Ponhafren Association to ensure that members of the Association's services are included in all discussions about how the organisation should develop. They should experience a sense of ownership in respect of the services and feel that their own unique voice and opinion can contribute to shaping service delivery and the future direction of the organisation.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that they are respected partners in all aspects of their own involvement with Ponhafren Association. In order that this can be achieved appropriate procedures are in place and must be adhered to by all members of Ponhafren Association staff and failure to comply with the policy will result in disciplinary action.
- 1.4 Service user/member involvement is important because it:
 - Builds upon our core values of respect, listening, challenging discrimination and promoting personal development and social inclusion
 - Supports our contracts with funders
 - Is within the spirit of our equalities and diversity policy and associated legislation
 - Reflects the guidance and best practice in modern mental health care.
- 1.5 Equally important are the positive benefits it brings members, including:
 - Promoting self esteem of those who take part
 - Raising service user expectations of our service
 - Promoting partnerships to improve service quality
 - Reducing conflict and exclusion
 - Facilitating development of skills and experience which is of value to service users.

2 Principle

- 2.1 Ponthafren Association believes it to be of fundamental importance that the organisation assists people to do things for themselves rather than doing things for/to people and that service users must be fully consulted on all matters and furthermore must be fully involved in the forming of policy, planning and running of services.
- 2.2 Members should be empowered to make real decisions about their own lives and to be able to have a say in and make informed choices about the individual support they need and receive.
- 2.3 In a "needs led" service, it is more important that views and ideas flow "from the bottom up" than from "the top down".
- 2.4 Consultation is an ongoing, two way process and should not be seen as a series of "one off exercises".
- 2.5 Every member should have access to clearly understandable information about Ponthafren Association, the services provided, the organisation's policies and procedures. This information should also be explained verbally to members to ensure that its contents and implications are understood.
- 2.6 Jargon free language should be used at all times.

3 Definition of Terms

3.1 Member

- a) The term 'member' is defined in this context as meaning any person who uses any of Ponthafren Association services, whether they are experiencing mental distress or not. It may include people who are friends, families, formal or informal carers of those who experience mental distress. It may include referring agents or other related professionals.
- b) We also recognise that people may wish to define themselves by other terms; 'resident', 'service user', 'client' etc and this will be respected in the course of the organisation's work with individuals and groups.

3.2 Involvement

- a) The term 'Involvement' is defined as activity that enables members to have an active influence on actions and decisions at all levels within the organisation. Actions that may be influenced by service users include the provision of their individual support, the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services; staff selection and governance.
- b) The Welsh Government requires everyone in Wales who works within mental health services, statutory, voluntary and private, to work with those that use these services. "Stronger in Partnership 2" is their programme that offers a framework and advice to commissioners and providers of mental health services about how they can work towards "full participation".

“Stronger in Partnership 2” is a guidance document that was reissued in 2008 (original document issued in 2004).

- c) As a “Stronger in Partnership 2” voluntary organisation partner, Ponthafren adopts the Stronger in Partnership Charter formally at an organisation level and a team/department level where appropriate to signify their commitment and their understanding of participation.
- d) Involvement may take place in a number of ways appropriate to the individuals and the activity concerned. Examples of involvement include:
 - Giving information and listening
 - Consultation
 - Shared decision making
 - Working together
- e) We are committed to creating opportunities and supporting people to take part however, involvement is voluntary and service users should not be pressured to take part. Involvement should be as much or as little as people feel able to do.

4 Action

4.1 Responsibility

It is the responsibility of staff, volunteers, members and committee members/trustees to ensure that this policy is put into practice. It is therefore everyone's duty to publicise the policy, ensure that everyone has a copy of the policy and that the policy is explained to people to ensure that they understand its content and implications.

4.2 Scope of involvement

- a) Members should be involved in all decision making at all levels. This will include:
 - Deciding policy
 - Setting budgets
 - Recruitment of staff
 - Adjudicating in the complaints procedure
 - Day to day running of projects
- b) Ponthafren Association will ensure that current members have a variety of ways to express their views about service provision and that we will be open and flexible as to how we involve service users. Methods may include:

- Groups or forums either as individuals or representatives of a whole stakeholder group
 - By consultation using questionnaires or focus groups either anonymously or named
 - By legal or other agreements, e.g. tenancy or working agreements
 - As volunteers for the organisation
 - By making a complaint or invoking their rights under one of the organisations existing policies
- c) Ponthafren Association will be open and honest with members about the areas where they can and cannot realistically help to shape and change day to day service provision.
- b) Ponthafren Association will consult with members about the future development and direction of the organisation and will ensure that any decisions made take account of their opinion.
- e) Ponthafren Association will keep current members informed about the range of services we provide and of any planned changes to service provision.

4.3 Commitment on the part of the Organisation

- a) Ponthafren Association will endeavour to ensure that resources are allocated to ensure effective service user involvement. These may include:
- Worker time
 - Expenses and other money
 - Training to enable people to participate with knowledge and skill
 - Involvement in Groups and Forums

4.4 The management Committee

- a) It is of fundamental importance that members have a proper (not token) voice on the management committee which is the governing body of the organisation.
- b) A minimum of one quarter of the trustees of Ponthafren Association should be people who are or who have been users of mental health services.
- c) To help achieve this, members will be encouraged to join prior to the Annual General Meeting and staff will explain how to stand for election and assist members to complete the nomination forms if necessary. A user friendly trustee recruitment pack is available to explain the implications of election and the powers and responsibilities of trustees.
- d) Members must be actively encouraged and supported in performing this role by staff and other trustees.

- e) Resources will be made available for training members to acquire the skills necessary for performing their role on the Board of Trustees as effectively as possible. Member trustees are expected to make use of the training resources and opportunities available.

4.5 Staff Recruitment Boards

- a) Members will be involved fully in the recruitment of paid staff and volunteers. This will include involvement in the following:
 - Decisions regarding job descriptions/person specifications
 - Wording and placement of advertisements
 - Short-listing of applicants
 - Interviewing of applicants
- b) At least one member must be a representative of any panel involved in interviewing for a new member of support staff at any level and their views must be given equal weight with other members of the panel. If they require support to carry out their role they can be accompanied by an advocate or friend.
- c) Members must receive any identified training in plenty of time to learn the procedures involved in the running of a staff interview.

4.6 Info-exchange meetings

- a) These meetings give members a regular opportunity to make their views known on services that they are receiving. All members are encouraged to attend and the meetings are given a high degree of importance by staff. Written views may be made anonymously.
- b) Staff must ensure that these meetings perform the function for which they are intended. If they perceive any member experiencing some difficulty in participating they should explore the reasons and seek to rectify the situation.

4.7 Working groups / “task and finish” groups

- a) Occasionally ‘task and finish’ style working groups are set up to tackle particular issues (e.g. new policies, newsletter or planning for events). Members should be included as equal partners with staff, volunteers and trustees on such groups.

4.8 Volunteers

- a) Volunteers for Ponthafren Association will frequently be members themselves and it is recognised that they can bring a unique understanding and empathy to other service users, staff and volunteer.

- b) Their work and involvement will be covered by a volunteering policy. They will have clearly defined tasks which are different from, but of equal value to, paid staff.

5 Making Complaints

- 5.1 The complaints procedure is an important tool for members. If a member or group of members feel that decisions are being made without their consultation, or that they are not being properly involved in the decision making process they have the right to use this as grounds for making a complaint against staff, management committee members or other members.
- 5.2 Staff should ensure that all new members are aware of the procedure and know how to complain.

6 Training

- 6.1 Members must be offered suitable training to enable them to participate effectively in the service.
- 6.2 This should be provided either by the organisation's internal staff or by attendance at courses and conferences with financial assistance.
- 6.3 A programme for delivery of training in member Involvement should be publicised to all service users and their attendance encouraged.
- 6.4 We will ensure that all staff/volunteers receive training in the Recovery model and in the principles and practice of empowering people experiencing mental distress.
- 6.5 We will seek to include people who have mental health issues in the delivery of this training

7 Expenses

- 7.1 All members will receive travel and other incidental expenses for attendance at any meeting or group on Ponthafren Association business providing this has been agreed in advance with a relevant member of staff.
- 7.2 Child care or other carer expenses may be deemed relevant in some cases but must be approved in advance.

8 Evaluation and monitoring

- 8.1 Ponthafren Association seeks to work with members to continually improve the quality of service provided and to use appropriate techniques for the monitoring of the service.

8.2 Ponthafren Association will review its member involvement by considering issues such as:

- How members are informed about involvement opportunities, i.e. events, publicity.
- How support (to members) is provided to members who may become pressured / stressed through involvement activities, e.g. supervision.
- How support to members is provided to improve or develop the skills needed for genuine involvement.
- How members identify any boundaries / restrictions to involvement and why they exist.

8.3 An annual summary of the effectiveness of member's involvement across the organisation will be produced and the findings placed in the annual report.