

**Reviewed September 2008**

**North Derbyshire Women's Aid.**

**POLICIES & PROCEDURES –  
CONSULTING AND INVOLVING SERVICE USERS  
(service users refers to both adults and children)**

**PURPOSE:**

To set out the approach of North Derbyshire Women's Aid in relation to consulting and involving service users and ex- service users in the development and delivery of services.

**RELATED POLICIES:**

- Risk assessment/risk management
- Support Planning
- Service Users Charter.
- Welcoming New Residents

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE.**

**Principle:- NDWA is committed to continually review and improve the quality of our services through the process of effective service user involvement.**

**Aims:-**

- **To ensure workers are trained on service user involvement and consultation.**
- **To provide creative mechanisms to facilitate involvement**
- **To clearly document evidence to indicate that user views are listened to.**
- **To provide comprehensive information to users about their service**
- **To reflect user's interests in shaping development**

**Why NDWA wants service users to be involved.**

1. North Derbyshire Women's Aid values the participation and involvement of service users in its work and believes that this involvement can help to ensure that

- service users are empowered to make decisions about things which affect them directly
- children's voices are heard and taken account of in making any decisions which affect them

- service users are able to contribute their unique perspectives as service users to improve the delivery of services
- service users are able to gain experience through the process of involvement which may support their personal growth and confidence

### **Who can become involved.**

2 . The following groups of service users can become involved in the operational and strategic work of North Derbyshire Women's Aid:

- Service users who are currently using services
- Service users who have previously used services

### **Where service users can affect change.**

3. North Derbyshire Women's Aid encourages people who use our services to give their views and to be involved at all levels:-

#### Personal service development, including:-

- Individual support plans
- House meeting discussions
- Cleaning rotas
- Decoration/furniture
- Service/exit questionnaires

#### Organisational development, including:-

- Reviewing policies and procedures
- Interviewing
- Revision of forms
- Feedback to other agencies
- Service promotion and publicity
- Volunteering

#### Supporting people strategic development, including:-

- Supporting people forums
- Peer reviewing
- Publicity
- Feedback through service review

### **4. How NDWA will enable service users to be involved :-**

- Payment of travel expenses
- Payment and sourcing of crèche/childcare
- Training and induction
- Advocacy internal/external

- specialist provision e.g. signing, interpreting, induction loop, large print or audio versions of information.
- Having a clear communication process (see Appendix A)  
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- Further guidelines Appendix B

## Appendix B

### **GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING SERVICE USERS TO BE EFFECTIVELY INVOLVED**

¶ Try to make participation opportunities as informal as possible. If they feel like low key social events as well, more service users may be attracted to them. A chat over tea and biscuits can achieve as much or more than a formal meeting.

¶ If a woman has problems reading and writing, ensure that you explain any information to her so that she does not miss out on an opportunity to voice her views.

¶ If a woman has any other support needs in relation to communication (e.g. hearing, sight or speech difficulties) assess these and ensure that the necessary support is in place for her to participate.

¶ Always offer opportunities to get involved and encourage their take-up. Let service users know they can come along and just listen if they want. It may take time for some women's confidence to build enough to state opinions.

¶ Offer one-to-one opportunities to state views and listen carefully so you can relay these without changing their meaning or emphasis. A lot of valuable information about the service will come your way via informal encounters – make sure you feed this information through as well.

¶ If service users choose not to participate try and find out why this is. A woman may not feel ready to engage or she might like to try with some support. Try and find the best way to support her involvement (e.g. pair her with a friend/ make it clear she can just attend and listen/with prior agreement find out her views and be her advocate at a meeting).

¶ Access any outside support from other agencies that service users or children may need in order to voice their views.

¶ When working with younger children, incorporate consultation and involvement into play sessions and fun activities. Use very visual methods and ask children to draw what they think and feel about the issue/s and then get them to talk about their drawings.

Keep sessions

short and amusing.

§ When working with older children and teenagers, encourage them to help set the agenda and to exert control over the situation by making their own rules for the consultation or involvement exercise, for example. Try combining discussion about the issue/s with a fun or interesting activity for them, which rewards their involvement.

i. When working with ex-service users on the Management Committee, ensure that they have opportunities to go through the papers with a staff member or other management committee member prior to the meeting to ensure they are comfortable with the information and issues presented. Seat them with more experienced management committee members who can support them during the meeting. Offer to de-brief them following meetings so that they have a chance to practice and develop skills gradually.

