

Service User Engagement Policy Statement

Principles

This statement applies to the Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers within The Bond. The Bond Board is committed to encouraging, supporting and developing opportunities for our service users to have their voices heard. We value their lived experiences and believe their views on what will make a difference to their lives should be used to inform the design, development and evaluation of services. Having conversations with people who have used our services can be an empowering moment for all involved. This approach helps to ground discussions in reality and encourages a person-centred, service user perspective throughout everything that we do. This commitment requires all Board of Trustee members, staff and volunteers to encourage and support user involvement and to participate in co-produced activities with service users, where appropriate.

The Bond Board believes that services that reflect and take into account the experience, needs and wishes of their users are more likely to be effective in achieving better outcomes for those who are homeless and/or living in poverty in the Private Rented Sector and that service users are the best or right persons to determine how those needs should be met.

The purpose of this statement is to confirm The Bond Board's commitment to developing a consistent and committed approach to user involvement across our services and to working towards making service user involvement and co-production an integral component of organisational activity. 'Co-production' means delivering services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours" (New Economics Foundation).

In addition to supporting organisational values and objectives, this statement reinforces our commitment to build on local experience and national evidence that demonstrates that genuine user involvement and a Co-Production approach can positively:

- Promote the self-esteem and personal growth of those who take part.
- Raise service user expectations.
- Promote partnerships to improve service quality.
- Facilitate the development of skills and experience which are valued by service users.
- Awaken us to ideas and needs which we may not have thought of ourselves.
- Encourage the growth of peer support networks instead of just professionals as the best means of transferring knowledge and capabilities.
- Allow our services to become catalysts and facilitators rather than simply providers.

- Devolve real responsibility, leadership and authority to service users and encourage self-organisation rather than direction from above.

Approach

The Bond Board is committed to developing opportunities for service user involvement and co-production at all stages of a person's contact with the organisation, where appropriate. Service user involvement may be related to a person's individual support, the organisation or making representation to other organisations or bodies on The Bond Board's behalf.

We will enhance existing opportunities and commit to developing new ways in which Services Users can have the opportunity:

- To be able to have a say in and make informed choices about the individual support they receive.
- To have information available about their services and rights, including complaints, boundaries and confidentiality etc.
- To have a say in and be able to influence The Bond Board's service development and its governance via participation, engagement, research and consultation.
- To have appropriate and supported opportunities to volunteer and apply for employment at The Bond Board.

In developing our approach to service user engagement and co-production, The Bond Board acknowledges that we work with a varied service user group who possess a range of strengths and needs and who are often at a point of crisis in their lives when using our services. To account for this, we have developed an accessible, community based, safe space via our 'Quid's In' Coffee mornings where all service users and others in the community can drop-in as they choose to access Bond Board services. Our approach recognises 'Quid's In' sessions as a major focal point for developing service user engagement and co-production opportunities. As such, we will ensure that an ethos of inclusivity underpins a range of creative approaches designed to facilitate appropriate co-production activities at our 'Quid's In' events and that we take a test and learn approach to ensure opportunities are appropriate and accessible for as many service users as possible. We acknowledge that people in crisis may have limited resources to spare for service user engagement and may choose to dip in and out of activities and opportunities. We will ensure that we take a flexible approach, allowing for the needs of our service users and recognising that even limited or inconsistent engagement is valuable.

We will also take into account the skills and resources available to Trustees, the leadership team, staff and volunteers when designing and developing co-produced activities and ensure that they are appropriately trained so they understand what co-production is and how to make it happen and be involved.

Intended outcomes of our approach

We will take action by exploring ways to address issues and develop solutions and use the lessons learned from service user engagement and co-produced activities to inform how we shape and develop services.

We will seek to influence positive change for our service users by sharing learning with key stakeholders and policy makers.

We will draw on the experiences of everyone involved to work together with other groups and organisations in our communities.

We will encourage and seek opportunities to collaborate with others.