

Training case study nine

Informal approach to assessing training needs

Summary

The Arthritis Research UK National Primary Care Centre has a part-time patient and public involvement (PPI) Coordinator and a part-time User Support Worker to support the Research Users' Group (RUG) for the Centre. The two adopted an informal approach to assessing the training needs of the service users involved in the Centre at an annual meeting for the group.

Why was it important to assess service users' training needs?

The aim was to assess the training needs of the service users in the Group in an informal way during an annual meeting: to find out what training people felt they needed in order to contribute meaningfully to research meetings.

The PPI Coordinator feels that it is particularly important to address the training needs of people who are to attend steering groups as they can lack confidence and believe that they know nothing or fear that they might say something stupid. This can be a barrier to recruiting service users to steering groups.

The PPI Coordinator's view is that public involvement is more likely to have a positive impact if users first receive appropriate training and then subsequently receive continued support.

How were services users asked about their training needs?

Two A3 posters designed like a bar chart with 13 different training options, including one blank bar for suggestions,

were placed up on the wall. During the meeting, service users were invited to put yellow post-it notes next to their first, second and third choices for training. These were subsequently collated and used to assess the priorities for training.

What has been done in response to the findings?

Training courses

The most popular topic identified was training on the research process, but people also wanted training in team building, management of meetings, presentation skills, and learning about health organisations. Following this exercise, the training options were split into those associated with the research process and those associated with meeting skills. The following courses have been provided to date:

(i) Contributing Assertively at Meetings: Half-day training course 9.30–12.30 lunch included, with external trainer. Funding from Centre Consortium Fund. (A university course for staff adapted to users.) Main course objectives were:

- to recognise the importance of your contributions to research
- to know and use techniques that will enable you to contribute assertively
- to identify ways that would help you to contribute more effectively.

The course was attended by 13 service users; ten rated the course as excellent, three as good. All attendees were issued with a certificate to say that they had successfully completed the course.

(ii) Systematic Reviews – what are they, why are they so important?

Half-day training course of three hours with an in-house trainer, an expert in systematic reviews. It covered an

explanation of evidence based medicine, Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews, the Cochrane collaboration and introduced participants to two Cochrane Review plain language summaries. All participants rated the course as excellent or good and received a certificate to say that they had successfully completed the course.

A further course is planned: **What happens in a clinical trial, what trials are undertaken at the Centre?** This will be a half-day course with an in-house trainer, a clinician with expertise in clinical trials.

Signposting to online Cochrane courses. Those who want to learn more about the research process are directed to the online course on the Cochrane website – [Evidence Based Healthcare](#) by Kay Dickersin and Musa Mayer, which gives further training for users into research process and methodology.

Who developed this approach? Were service users involved?

This approach to assessing training needs was developed by Carol Rhodes, the PPI Coordinator and service user, with Adele Higginbottom who is a long-standing member of the Research Users' Group. As Adele has been a member of the Group from its inception and has also been a member of the Impact Back team who took part in a Health Foundation training course, Carol felt that she was best placed to act as training advisor to help develop a training plan for the User Group. Together they carried out a consultation exercise from which came the decision to assess the training needs of the Group.

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