

# Briefing note seven: User controlled research

## User controlled research

User controlled research is research that is actively controlled, directed and managed by service users and their service user organisations. Service users decide on the issues and questions to be looked at, as well as the way the research is designed, planned and written up. The service users will run the research advisory or steering group and may also decide to carry out the research.

Some service users make no distinction between the terms user controlled and user led, others feel that user led has a different, vaguer meaning. They see user led research as research which is meant to be led and shaped by service users but is not necessarily controlled or undertaken by them. Control in user led research in this case will rest with some other group of non-service users who also have an interest in the research, such as the commissioners of the research, the researchers or people who provide services.

In an INVOLVE report ([Faulkner 2010](#)) exploring seven examples of user controlled research, service users highlighted several key reasons why user controlled research is important for them:

- a commitment to changing or improving the lives of their community of service users
- frustration with traditional research and services which exclude them
- frustration with mainstream research in failing to capture their needs or to research things they feel are important.

As a researcher, you might get involved in user controlled research in several ways such as:

- training or supporting a group of service users who are undertaking their own research
- supporting user controlled research in a specific part of your research
- a user controlled organisation might commission you to carry out research under their direction.

**Find out more** about user controlled research:

[Changing our worlds: examples of user-controlled research in action](#) (Faulkner 2010)

[User Controlled Research: its meanings and potential](#) (Turner and Beresford 2005)

[Publications, examples and videos of user controlled research are available on the INVOLVE website](#)