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| User Involvement Policy and Programme |

1. Introduction

The Client Participation Programme at The Connection at St Martin's ensures our clients are able to make informed decisions, share their views and ideas, and influence decisions. We believe that actively promoting and embedding a client involvement approach allows us to provide high quality services which best reflect the needs of our diverse client group.

1. Programme Commitments

* To empower clients to recognise the value of their skills, knowledge and experience.
* To give clients opportunities to make active contributions to the management and planning of services and activity groups.
* To consult clients about changes to services, listen to client views and explain the decisions made.
* To monitor services and activity groups carefully and to develop and improve services and activity groups in response to client feedback.
* To empower clients and staff to develop innovative and creative ways to further client involvement at every level of the organisation.
* To respond to changing client interest and demand to continually provide the most appropriate advice, training and personal development opportunities.

1. Activities of Client Participation Programme
   1. Run client feedback forums for all general service areas three times a year and provide appropriate feedback within six weeks

We have found that regular client feedback forums for the different service areas have worked very well and provide clients with a positive opportunity to feedback and contribute to the everyday management of services.

We run client feedback forums for the Day Centre Night Centre, Advice & Housing, Outreach and St Martin’s House.

The credibility of client feedback forums relies on The Connection at St Martin's taking appropriate consideration and responding to user feedback in a prompt fashion, so that our clients genuinely feel like they are being listened to. We are committed to responding in full to client feedback within 6 weeks, ensuring that the relevant investigatory work is completed and that the relevant teams are consulted.

We will continue to facilitate Focus Groups with outside organisation that wish to consult with our service users.

* 1. Run client feedback forms for specific activity groups twice a year that directly informs the aims and objectives of activity groups

The Connection at St Martin's has a diverse programme of activity groups developing supportive, encouraging and positive environments where clients are provided with a degree of routine, new social networks, and the opportunity to develop their skills and self-confidence.

With all our respective activity groups we are committed to twice a year bringing together those clients we have identified as making positive progress and encouraging them to talk about the aspects of the programme that have worked well for them. For example, whether they’ve developed improved social networks, or learnt new skills etc.

On the basis of this feedback, evaluation criteria is developed that can be usefully applied as a starting point to all clients engaging in the activity groups programme. By taking into account the perceived benefits of clients taking part and using this as a measure of the effectiveness of what we are doing, The Connection at St Martin's is committed to an on-going reflexive process of client feedback on how the aims and objectives of our activity groups are determined.

* 1. Encourage all clients to make use of our complaints procedure

The Complaints policy is currently being reviewed to make it easier for people to give feedback about the services. The Connection at St Martin’s is committed to developing a simple procedure that is thorough, responsive and reflects the needs of a diverse group of people.

* 1. Regularly conduct surveys and questionnaires to ascertain client input on service delivery issues

We will conduct regular surveys and questionnaires of our service users. We will continue to organise an annual survey of users to identify what services are used, by whom and how these services could be improved or made more useful. The survey will target all users over the period of one week, and will be carried out by volunteers.

The aim of this annual survey will be to evaluate the scope and appropriateness of existing services, to better inform decisions regarding the development of services and polices, to allow clients the opportunity to influence the development of services, and help target fundraising opportunities.

In addition we are committed to making maximum use of direct surveys and questionnaires to ascertain the opinions of clients on a wide variety of general services issues.

* 1. Operate recruitment practices that maximise client input in the employment of all direct services staff and service staff up to Director of Services

The Connection at St Martin's will continue to involve clients in the recruitment of new staff. All prospective new staff will receive a tour of the building prior to their interview with a Step-Up Day centre volunteer.

* + 1. Direct service staff

A User Group will help identify the personal skills needed for specific vacancies. This information will then help inform the person specification and job description. This needs to be done when a vacancy is identified.

A client interview panel of 3 Step-Up volunteers will be invited to be part of the interview process. They will be supported in this by a member of staff.

The panel members will meet beforehand with the head of HR to agree questions. They will be invited to prepare three or four questions based on the person specification. The panel will be given an overview of CSTM’s recruitment procedure and the role of Human resources and their role in the process. It will include guidance on such things as Equalities Legislation and Confidentiality. The panel will agree the evaluation criteria and the content of the form that will be used to record their evaluation. This evaluation document will inform the decision of the main interview panel.

The panel will role-play and rehearse the interview questions.

* + 1. Non-direct service staff

All staff not involved in service delivery will receive a tour of the building by 2 Step-Up clients and they will evaluate the candidates against criteria agreed with HR and the appointing team manager. This evaluation will inform the decision of the interview panel.

* 1. Recruit ex-clients and people who have had the experience of homelessness where and when possible

Human resources will continue to look at ways of increasing the inclusivity of our recruitment procedures to give more opportunities for people with experiences of homelessness to apply for vacancies.

CSTM is committed to giving opportunities for employment to people who have experienced homelessness. All external job advertisements state: “CSTM... welcomes applications from people with lived homelessness experience”.

CSTM has signed up to the Customer Employment Partnership which is a commitment to Customer Employment between homeless agencies in London.

* 1. Directly involve clients in the delivery of our services through work placements and volunteering

The Connection at St Martin’s is committed to continuing and expanding the Step-Up client volunteering scheme (see [Step-Up Policy](file:///\\cstmdata2\intranet\Policies%202\Step%20Up%20Volunteer%20Policy%20Final.docx)).

* 1. The Connection at St. Martin’s will encourage direct and indirect links between users and trustees

This will include giving opportunities for trustees to volunteer and shadow services. Additionally a mechanism will be set up to distribute Focus Group minutes to Trustees.

* 1. Promote a client charter to ensure all clients are aware of their rights and the quality of the services they can expect to receive

The Connection at St Martin's is committed to having a client charter that states in a clear and accessible format the rights and quality of services that our clients can expect, together with the responsibilities which the organisation can reasonably expect from clients who use its services (see [Client Charter](file:///\\cstmdata2\intranet\Internal%20Resources\Charter%20Final%20draft.bmp)).

* 1. Policy reviews

The Connection at St Martin’s will develop a range of methods for consulting with representative groups of clients when reviewing policies and procedures that impact on service delivery.

* 1. Work towards developing individual client participant strategies for each respective team at The Connection at St. Martin’s

The Connection at St Martin's is committed to developing over the next twelve months individual client participant strategies for each respective team in the organisation which will detail precisely how that team plans to take forward our commitments to client participation. This will become part of individual team plans.