

# SCIE's Participation Policy

social care  
institute for excellence



Updated January 2011  
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## Overview

In all its projects and activities, SCIE works closely with the full range of stakeholders who are relevant to our activities:

- service providers from the statutory and non-statutory sectors, including many organisations in the independent sector, from small scale private and voluntary services to national associations
- practitioners in social care and social work
- researchers and academics
- service users and carers.

SCIE has a particular and strong commitment to the participation of service users and carers in all aspects of its work.

The objectives of stakeholder engagement are to:

- ensure the relevance of our work to stakeholders (who may include service users and carers, practitioners, policy makers, researchers)
- ensure that our work – general and project specific - is accountable to stakeholder groups
- empower service users and carers through their participation
- contribute to decisions about our work at various levels including strategically and in specific pieces of work and projects
- help to identify the fullest possible range of information and evidence to guide our work.

## SCIE's Participation Team

SCIE has a dedicated Participation Team which manages contacts with providers and service users and facilitates their involvement in SCIE projects and product development. The Team produces new knowledge about effective participation strategies and a range of good practice material is available on dedicated pages on the website. The Team also ensures that SCIE's work and products adhere to high standards of accessibility and take account of differing needs. Internally, the Team is responsible for ensuring that SCIE's equality and diversity strategies are implemented, with mandatory training for all staff on the Institute's equality and participation scheme.

SCIE offers support from the Participation Team to service user teams wishing to respond to commissioning calls, plus a small sum (currently £500) to support development of a bid.

## Diversity

SCIE aims to become a leading organisation in the promotion of equality and diversity and to contribute to social justice through its work. In order to achieve this aspiration, SCIE voluntarily adopted a single equality scheme (SES) in 2009 based on the single equality duty that all public bodies will be required to have under the Equality Act 2010. The SES sets out the actions SCIE will take to challenge discrimination, promote equality and ensure that our core business is inclusive in terms of equality and diversity.

SCIE works to ensure that stakeholder involvement reflects the range of protected characteristics as identified in our Single Equality Scheme. This involves addressing representation around gender, race, age, disability, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation and religion/faith/belief. The recruitment process for stakeholder involvement in particular pieces of work should refer to the SES.

## Involvement in SCIE projects

SCIE invariably invites different stakeholders, including service users and their carers and supporters, to participate in projects and programmes of work. This is supported by our Project Management System, which ensures that stakeholder involvement happens at all stages of a project. The Project Initiation Document then requires project managers to put in place a plan for participation by service users.

Involvement in SCIE's work should be:

- Accessible – to make it possible for an appropriate range of people to participate fairly and equitably.
- Transparent – to maintain SCIE's ongoing commitment to involve users.
- Proportionate – the approach taken should be commensurate with the project team's capacity to facilitate and deliver involvement, and not place unreasonable demands on those involved.
- Influential – it should be possible to see how the input from users and stakeholders has impacted on the project.
- Focused – the process should be clear about what resources are available and where there is scope to make changes.

External stakeholders are invited to participate in their own right, or as officers of named organisations. They are not expected to represent the views of others, as this is impractical within the context of meetings. It is important to avoid the tokenism of simply involving a user or carer without trying to ensure that he or she is an 'expert by experience' of the particular intervention or service under review. Where possible, the composition of stakeholder groups should reflect the ethnic and cultural background of people who use the services, using SCIE's single equality scheme as a guide.

SCIE research reviews and other secondary products always consider the views and perspectives of service users, carers and frontline staff, and these are reflected in research questions and inclusion criteria. Our strategy for the economic costing of social care interventions (see Appendix 18) takes into account costs for service users and for informal carers.

## Supporting participation

When involving users and other stakeholders SCIE recognises the fundamental importance of ensuring that people's access needs are met and they are able to participate fully in the process. Different stakeholders are likely to have differing access requirements and we recognise that access issues are particularly important to the participation of service users and carers. The capacity in which different advisers are contributing should be made explicit and transparent.

SCIE is committed to paying service users and carers who participate in our work as this gives value and recognition to their contributions. SCIE is aware that there can be complications for people who receive benefits if they accept such payments, and has arranged for welfare rights advice to be available to any users and carers who take part in its work through a dedicated helpline.

## Higher level involvement at SCIE

Currently, a primary mechanism for stakeholder engagement is the Partners' Council, which has been running for some 6 years. The Council is a mixed group of representatives from more than 50 organisations (providers, users, informal carers and commissioners) across the UK, and it advises on SCIE's work programme, priorities and performance. SCIE is seeking to develop more meaningful linkages with all its stakeholder and service-user groups through:

- Work on the contacts database and better stakeholder profiling
- Securing more specific provider and user involvement in product design, development and testing
- Gaining strategic customer information, contacts and collaborators, through a) a number of coordinating and managing activities and b) contributing to sector-wide standards-setting and quality-raising developments.

SCIE has recently commissioned an external evaluation of both the Partners Council and the way in which its Adults Directorate engages with users, carers and others, which is due to report in early 2011. (See accompanying document "Toward co-production" for a summary of SCIE new approach to participation).

SCIE is proud that its own workforce has a proportion of service users, that there is representation on the SCIE Board for service users, and that there is an inclusive culture within the organisation.