

# Service User Involvement

## Involving and including the people who use our services

MHA is committed to ensuring that all the people who use our services are empowered to have a voice and meaningful opportunities to be involved in shaping and influencing those services.

Much has been written about “user involvement” and we at MHA strongly support and value this. There is however a danger of being tokenistic and simply being seen to tick the right boxes. Involving service users as equal partners is not easy. Many difficulties have to be overcome if professionals and service users are to fully embrace full collaboration and inclusion in relation to MHA services and organisational structures.

At MHA we do not make grand statements about our record in relation to involving and including service users, because we know that we are on a journey together that still has a long road ahead. What we can say is that we are getting there, through sharing, learning and growing together.

We can evidence some excellent examples of good practice in relation to full service user involvement in many of our services, where service users have significant and strong involvement. In other services we do not do so well, but we are working hard to enable good practice to be shared and disseminated in every aspect of our work, with positive results.



A clear example of this is the emergence of our newly formed MHA People’s Services Forum. This is a group with elected representatives from each of our centres who meet bi-monthly to address issues in relation to our services in particular and MHA in general. It is anticipated that, over time, representatives from this group will sit on each of the sub groups of MHA’s Board with a view to eventually, when they are both confident and competent to do so, taking up full places on the Board of Directors.

MHA has a long way to go before we can claim to fully involve our service users; what is not in doubt, however, is our commitment and enthusiasm to make inclusion and involvement part of the culture and practice in each and every one of our services. Watch this space!

*. . . as members we are fully involved in everything. We have an annual planning meeting, regular member’s meetings - that we control. We chair them and keep records! (The Arches)*