



VOX Proposal 2017-2020

Contents:

1. Overview and Background
2. Vision, Aims and Objectives
3. Structures
4. Delivery of specific aims relating to collective advocacy
5. What this proposal could mean
6. The need

Appendix - SWOT analysis
Appendix - Logic Model

1. Overview and Background

About Voices Of eXperience (VOX)

VOX is a mental health charity led by its members. VOX wants to make a difference to society and to services by sharing experiences and enabling its members to influence policy and practice.

To do this VOX works with its members (groups and individuals) to understand what is happening in our members lives whether that be financially, emotionally or socially. We then aim to use these experiences to help to achieve positive changes in society and services. To do this we work alongside relevant organisations to influence policy, research and practice

The purpose of this proposal is to set out a tangible, realistic **three year development programme** which will ensure we have the organisational capacity to deliver on a broader range of outcomes which will build VOX into a credible, “go to” organisation.

The proposal will look at the current structure, what we currently provide, unmet need, and will detail a three year programme stipulating how the need will be met.

This will be followed by an overview of the resources which will be required in order to be able to deliver this additional programme of work. We recognise a clear need to grow in order achieve these aims.

Background: The need for a way to bring together the voice of mental health service users in a meaningful way was explored at an Open Space Event which was held in Dundee in 2004. The event was attended by 102 service users from across Scotland and as a result of the ideas shared, a clear mandate was given to the steering group to develop a national service user led organisation to represent mental health service users in service design and delivery matters at a national level.

An interim management group began work to develop a 3 year Development Plan, Business Plan and a Constitution. In addition, funding was sought to provide VOX with a Development Coordinator. The Scottish Governments Mental Health Division recognised of the need to develop a more consistent and representative approach to engaging with those who are affected by Scottish policy and service development and therefore agreed to fund VOX during its development period.

VOX was launched in December 2006, and in 2009 in we became an independent charity.

2. Vision, Aims and Objectives

VOX's vision is to *“share the voices of experience in mental health to create an equal, improved and empowering society for those with mental health problems”*

Mission Statement

To sustain a national organisation of, for and by people who have experienced mental health problems, facilitate partnership working and strengthen the voice of people who have had a mental health problem.

Aims of VOX

- ❖ To advance community development through the facilitation of communication and exchange of experiences, information and support between and among people who have, or have had, mental health problems and other support organisations, to develop the capacity of such people to more fully engage with their communities and to participate in civil society.
- ❖ To promote, establish, operate and /or support other similar projects and programmes which are in furtherance of VOX's charitable purposes.
- ❖ To advance the health and to relieve the needs of people who have, or have had, mental health problems by encouraging the provision of services which will improve their conditions of life and also facilitate their full integration into society;
- ❖ To advance education in relation to mental health issues;

Objectives

VOX's objectives are as follows;

- ❖ To sustain an accountable national organisation of, and for, people who have or have had mental health problems.
- ❖ To be a source of information, support and guidance in developing the capacity of people who have or have had mental health problems to participate in civil society and in the development of services with which they may engage.

- ❖ To offer a structure for people to communicate with each other, and other organisations, so that they may exchange opinions, perspectives and experiences

3. Structures

Legal and Management Structures

On the 25th June 2010 the register of Companies for Scotland recognised Voices Of eXperience as an incorporated company under the Companies Act 1985 as a private company and that the company is limited. Company Number 361753. Charitable status was given by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, charity number SC040646.

VOX is managed by a Board of member Directors who develop the strategic vision of the charity;

Board of Directors

Dougie Pickering – Chairperson,
Pauline Bradley – Vice-Chairperson
Chris White – Treasurer
Colin Murchie – Secretary
Dianna Manson
Andrew Muir
Alistair Simmons
Chris Evans
Paul White
Eddie Lennon

Non member directors

Dr Alison Thom
Barry Gale

Dr. Alison Thom is a consultant in adult general psychiatry and provides a wealth of experience and skills to support VOX's development. Barry Giles has personal experience of being a carer and ensures VOX considers the importance of the dynamic between service user and carer.

Current VOX staff team

Wendy McAuslan	VOX Development Coordinator (part time)
Mahmud Al-Gailani	VOX Development and Equalities Officer (part time)
John Steel	VOX Administration Officer (part time)

Hosting arrangement

VOX is hosted by the Mental Health Foundation who employ VOX's staff and the Development Coordinator receives line management from Scotland head of programmes.

VOX's staff are based in the Glasgow offices of the Mental Health Foundation, being based with peers who are all working on mental health policy and development ensures an effective environment for informal peer learning and support.

National and Local Structures

VOX has both individual and group membership; we currently have 15 group members who are local or thematic in nature, and over 500 individual members.

We work closely with local and thematic groups as appropriate, and over the last two years have developed the VOX collective, a mechanism for group members to get together, share good practice and act as an informal learning network.

Individuals and groups are invited to national members meetings at least twice a year where we always have a prioritisation session in order for our programmes of work to be developed.

4. Delivery of Specific Aims and Outcome measures for VOX

- ❖ Members direct the work of VOX
- ❖ We will build Capacity and Develop Good Practice
- ❖ We will gather evidence/capture our members views and experiences
- ❖ We will utilise members' experiences to Influence Positive Change
- ❖ We will challenge Stigma and Discrimination, and promote human rights

Members direct the work of VOX

VOX continues to ensure that our members set VOX's priorities, we are clear that it's our members' organisation. We do this by using a range of methods including world café style, open space, participatory appraisal and by utilising creative methods. We hold two large members meetings a year and a local development session.

We also ensure that we have strong links with the views of a range of groups by attending other organisations members meetings, and have also developed structures such as the VOX collective.

Our members regularly mention employment, meaningful activity and the benefits system as key priorities; however priorities change and we must always ensure we continue to engage with our members in innovative ways to find out what our members think is important. We aim to continue to explore new methods of engagement.

Build Capacity and Develop Good Practice for those with mental health problems to influence change

Capacity Building within mental health in particular is crucial. Unfortunately, having a mental health problem can sometimes mean that your opinions and ideas are not always taken seriously, or that you are not always offered all the opportunities and choices you would like. This can be difficult to deal with, especially when you need to communicate regularly with health care professionals, or other professionals.

People with mental health problems are also within a small group of people who can have their liberty taken away to ensure their safety/wellbeing which again reinstates the need for building capacity.

By building capacity, engaging in rewarding meaningful activity and improving career options it is hoped that we can support individuals in their recovery, in addition to influencing positive change..

VOX plans to develop the capacity of membership greatly over the next three years by focussing on a **national capacity building role**. The role will look at a range of activities such as delivering training, promoting involvement, understanding what it is to be representative voice, and supporting individual members and groups to more effectively develop their own involvement mechanisms.

Good practice will be supported within collective advocacy organisations through training on facilitating groups and developing core skills in relation to community development, advocacy and campaigning.

The role will also be to support a national lived experience leader's programme. This will enable good practice in collective advocacy and ensure a credible and effective process of involvement is being developed.

One of the ways we want to build capacity is through local health and social care integration structures where we will develop a partnership approach bringing together key local partners to understand areas where change is required and co-produce solutions to make this change happen. In order to achieve this we will work with local mental health advocacy organisations, the third sector interface, health and social care, and build local involvement with the aim of creating local solutions.

Key areas we will focus on in the next three years

- We need to grow to effectively build capacity e.g offering training, campaign support and community development skills.
- We need lived experience leaders to influence change across Scotland
- We want to support local capacity to strengthen local influence within the health and social care structures
- The VOX collective can be an effective vehicle to share, model and develop good practice, we will take a more proactive role in providing a range of opportunities.
- Civic participation good practice/solutions will be shared and developed over the coming year.

Gathering Evidence/Capture our Members Views and Experiences

VOX's plans include four consultation exercises each year; this includes a mixture of proactive and reactive consultations to make sure there is a balance between members' priorities and government priorities.

Over the next three years we will focus on the following;

- There will always be importance of holding face to face meetings with our members, e.g. focus groups and members meetings.
- We should make better use of social media to capture views, further develop our communications strategy e.g. health living discussions, blogs and surveys.
- The lived experience leaders programme shall enable more people who are able to support gathering views

Utilise members' experiences to influence positive change (in society and services)

We aim to continue to focus on ensuring the services provided to our members are influenced by how our members experience those services. VOX is a member of a range of groups whereby collaborative working helps to ensure that

service users' views are taken account of. In addition to work on mental health services we will over the next three years broaden our sphere of influence to include areas such as healthy living, employment and social security.

We therefore wish to continue to influence all of the previous areas we were involved in e.g. The Mental Health Cross Party group, the mental Health Partnership and Mental Health division groups, however, we also want to be able to influence the wider issues which affect those who have lived experience of mental health problems.

In addition to this we want to build on our ability to highlight wider policy issues such as spending cuts through policy work and media work.

Over the next three years we will use members' views to Influencing change

- Influencing broader areas of government/policy such as employment/ benefits/ housing
- We should choose two large organisations this year to build connections with e.g. COSLA and NHS groups
- Look at opportunities with the royal college of general practitioners
- Alternative approaches in living/support/treatment should be debated - at a future members meeting e.g. panel discussion.
- Locally co-producing solutions through health and social care structures will support influencing change.
- Better use of the media and campaigning on issues such as spending cuts.

Challenging Stigma and Discrimination and Promoting Human Rights

VOX shall continue to seek opportunities to raise awareness of mental health; this shall include our continuing involvement with the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (SMHAFF). The Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is hosted by the Mental Health Foundation and involves a range of partners. The partnership approach allows everyone to come together and have a more significant impact in exploring mental health, raising awareness and engaging with the wider community.

Over the next three years VOX shall work with its members to help to steer where national programmes need to develop in relation to stigma, discrimination and human rights, this will include supporting and shaping any future work of the See Me campaign, the Scottish Recover Network and the Mental Welfare Commission.

We want to ensure we are developing and building members opportunities to influence issues relating to human rights and discrimination.

Challenge Stigma and Discrimination

- It will be helpful to engage with members around views on current national campaigns tackling stigma and discrimination e.g. See Me and the SRN
- We should further develop the rights work we were involved in e.g. Rights to Life and Agenda for Change.

5. What this proposal wants to achieve

We aim therefore to spend the next three years building three key areas in relation to the opportunities highlighted above in our outcomes, namely **co-producing solutions through health and social care integration, influencing broader areas of government**, and further developing our ability to **utilise VOX's members' skills and experiences**.

6. The Need

Overall capacity issues

“Collective Advocacy enables a peer group of people, as well as a wider community with shared interests, to represent their views, preferences and experiences. A collective voice can help reduce an individual's sense of isolation when raising a difficult issue. A collective voice can be stronger than that of individuals when campaigning and can help policy makers, strategic planners and service providers know what is working well, where gaps are and how best to target resources. Being part of a collective advocacy group can help to reduce an individual's sense of isolation when raising a difficult issue. Groups can benefit from the support of resources and skilled help from an independent advocacy organisation....1.

1. Independent Advocacy – Guide for Commissioners - Scottish Government

Independent advocacy Provision however is not universal and in many areas advocacy is only available to those individuals who have a right of access under the terms of the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

It is acknowledged that effective support for established independent advocacy organisations to increase capacity would support the ability to provide people with mental health problems the opportunity to effectively influence policy and practice which in turn ensures the best use of resources in addition to reducing a sense of isolation.

As mentioned individuals with a mental health problem can (if they become very unwell) require compulsory treatment, they are therefore potentially extremely vulnerable, and services to support and enable are crucial.

VOX's evaluations have always highlighted the fact that members don't feel they have as many opportunities as they would wish, we aim to ensure we can utilise our members skills, experience and ideas by recruiting a capacity building worker who can support groups and individuals to become more involved and to provide necessary support, training and opportunities..

Breadth/Scope of Influence

Over the last ten years it has become more apparent based on our members prioritisation events that mental health services are extremely important to our members, however, it is the other aspects of our members lives unrelated to services which are of primary importance to them.

The topics that our members continuously highlight are the benefits system, spending cuts, employment, meaningful activity/volunteering and isolation/loneliness. Underpinning these are issues such as human rights, stigma and discrimination which are of course mental health related however, we are fully aware that in order for us to make a difference on these issues we have to focus influencing change more broadly than we do currently, and specifically develop a dedicated focus to these wider policy areas.

To meet this need we are looking to create a **policy and change making role** for influencing and bringing together people who can make a difference on issues such as spending cuts, the benefits system and health inequalities.

Local good practice and co-producing solutions

The legislation to implement health and social care integration was passed in 2014, and was implemented in 2016, which brings the NHS, local council care services under one partnership arrangement in local areas across Scotland.

Making integration work must involve people who use services, those who support them and the wider community as well as staff and partner organisations.

In order to ensure that mental health lived experience involvement is embedded within this new integration arrangement we feel there is a need to explore the best way we can influence and support the strategic objectives of integration.

We will begin this area of work by working through local advocacy structures to employ sessional workers who can work on involvement within the integration agenda. This will build up over the three years and will begin in two local areas in year one, four in year two and six in year three.

Description over time of meeting that need

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-2020
Capacity in advocacy	<p><u>VOX collective</u></p> <p>VOX has been developing the VOX collective, which has been based on peer support, and sharing good practice, however, we want to become more proactive in what we can provide, and we aim to develop the following</p> <p>Relevant training session once a quarter (e.g. facilitation skills, community development training, monitoring and evaluation),</p> <p>Consultation briefing updates for all collective advocacy organisations,</p> <p>Work together to develop good practice guidelines for collective advocacy.</p>	<p><u>VOX collective</u></p> <p>4 training session, consultation updates and good practice guidelines shall be further developed and we shall enable some of our group members to facilitate and/or coordinate the training sessions and produce the consultation updates.</p> <p>We shall also continue to build on the good practice within collective advocacy guidelines, and develop a mechanism where organisations can pledge or sign up to the principles of collective advocacy.</p> <p><u>Influencing change</u></p> <p>In order to support local and thematic advocacy groups</p>	<p><u>VOX collective</u></p> <p>VOX shall aim to get “buy in” from the majority of collective advocacy organisations to sign the pledge for collective advocacy guidelines.</p> <p>We shall continue to support group members to arrange training and consultation updates.</p> <p>We shall launch a best practice event in collective advocacy to showcase the work carried out across Scotland.</p> <p><u>Influencing change</u></p> <p>In addition to training for VOX members we also</p>

		<p>and individuals we shall develop a being heard toolkit to enable individuals and groups to be more effective at making a difference, this will also include the discrimination, challenges and stigma faced by those with lived experience of mental health problems.</p>	<p>want to build capacity within the mental health lived experience more generally.</p> <p>We anticipate that this will take the form of events being developed such as meet the media (how to influence and be safe when working with the media), how to start local campaigns listening to campaigning experts from other spheres of influence, and</p>
	<p><u>Building a leaders programme</u></p> <p>Stage 1 shall be recruitment of those who want to become more involved and linking with relevant areas of work</p>	<p><u>Building a leaders programme</u></p> <p>Stage 2 shall be developing a capacity and training needs programme and providing support for leaders in their areas of work.</p> <p>Leaders will be supported with work plans</p>	<p><u>Building a leaders programme</u></p> <p>Stage 3 shall be leaders supporting others to become involved</p> <p>Leaders shall help others to link into to relevant areas and develop work plans.</p>
<p>Areas of influence, thematic</p>	<p><u>Employment</u></p> <p>Stage 1 Highlighting key issues for</p>	<p><u>Employment</u></p> <p>Stage 2 Based on the</p>	<p><u>Employment</u></p> <p>Stage 3 Implementing the</p>

	<p>our members, carry out large members' consultation on employment reaching 200 members and looking at a broad range of issues relating to employment.</p> <p><u>Fairer Scotland - Disability Inequality Issues</u></p> <p><u>Stage 1</u></p> <p>We shall gather members views from a consultation exercise looking at a range of issues such as benefits assessments and pass ported benefits, using questionnaires and case studies .</p> <p><u>Stage 1</u></p> <p>Healthy Living - Reducing Inequalities (Community, economic, cultural and environmental factors) e.g. smoking/lack of physical activity etc.</p> <p>We shall develop an on-</p>	<p>consultation we shall bring together learning network made of group of individuals with lived experience and key stakeholders in the employment field to develop and co-produce solutions.</p> <p><u>Fairer Scotland - Disability Equality Issues</u></p> <p><u>Stage 2</u></p> <p>Develop a partnership working group which aims to highlight key national issues in relation to mental health and disability inequality issues. With clear tangible outcomes in influencing policy to be developed.</p> <p><u>Stage 2</u></p> <p>The prioritised issues shall then be taken and a group of healthy living representatives shall be developed to</p>	<p>co-produced solutions and work with key partners to ensure ideas are incorporated into policy and practice.</p> <p><u>Fairer Scotland - Disability Equality Issues</u></p> <p><u>Stage 3</u></p> <p>The partnership working group will progress the influencing outcomes which have been identified, and will achieve a media presence, policy influence and a develop a national event based around key outcomes.</p> <p><u>Stage 3</u></p> <p>The lived experiences representatives' shall be supported and trained to enable them to take forward some of the healthy</p>
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	<p>line mechanism to capture thoughts and views about healthy living and mental health. We anticipate this will take the form of quick surveys, on-line blogs, debates and discussions to generate interest. We shall from there develop an on-line prioritisation exercise to identify the key issues</p>	<p>attend relevant meetings, write articles and develop ideas for new initiatives based on the priorities and survey's findings.</p>	<p>living initiatives, and shall be linked in to relevant groups and networks to continue to influence the healthy living agenda.</p> <p>We shall also ensure that we have shared good practice through relevant networks, and showcase these as appropriate.</p>
<p>Integration and co-production</p>	<p><u>Stage 1</u></p> <p>We shall initiate work with two local/thematic areas working within the relevant advocacy structure to recruit an integration involvement worker.</p> <p>We shall explore the key opportunities around integration that could impact positively people with lived experience of mental health problems?</p> <p>We shall also scope out locality planning structures, what challenges and opportunities does this present to improve outcomes and what needs to change?</p>	<p><u>Stage 2</u></p> <p>We shall initiate work with four local/thematic areas working within the relevant advocacy structure to support the integration/involvement worker</p> <p>We shall capture learning across the areas, and explore the development of a good practice toolkit being developed.</p>	<p><u>Stage 3</u></p> <p>We shall initiate work with six local/thematic areas working within the relevant advocacy structure to support the integration/involvement worker</p> <p>A simple guide/toolkit for involving those with lived experience will be pulled together to support lived experience in the integration agenda.</p>

	We shall seek good practice which is being developed to help us identify positive mechanisms of involvement.		
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Appendix 2 - SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis

There are a number of influencing factors which have emerged in terms of the work of VOX.

These include the following;

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<p>VOX is a membership organisation and its views are valid/ independent for this very reason.</p> <p>The Scottish Governments mental health division provides many opportunities to influence policy.</p> <p>We have very dedicated staff, directors and volunteers who help us to progress our aims.</p> <p>We work in partnership with a large number of organisations, and have good relationships with a range of partners.</p> <p>Many of our aims fit with a range of different divisions in the Scottish Government and as a members led non service provider we are in a unique position to influence a range of government departments</p>	<p>We are a very small organisation in terms of staff numbers; we can therefore only focus on some of the issues our members would like us to progress.</p> <p>We find it hard to compete with other larger organisations in terms of bidding for pieces of work on mental health service user involvement.</p> <p>Some areas of influence are very difficult, and we aren't always able to measure our influence in an outcome based way.</p> <p>We sometimes have to rely on output measures in order to see what we have achieved.</p> <p>The amount of time involved in the capacity building side of VOX can be overlooked/ misunderstood. The process of Capacity Building is in itself is an outcome which can facilitate an</p>

	individual's recovery.
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>There are opportunities for VOX to support health and social care integration by co-producing solutions through local areas</p> <p>To expand our work so we work on influencing to include areas such as employment, housing, social security.</p> <p>We could further utilise the skills of our volunteers by seeking funding for a volunteer capacity builder.</p> <p>We have started to obtain new funding on civic participation and there is likely to be further work in relation to this in the near future.</p> <p>More than ever mental health is on the political agenda, and we hope that this means that VOX is seen as a valuable mechanism to influence change.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>There is likely to be a reduction in funding from charities, trusts and the government.</p> <p>In times of economic crises sometimes funding is directed more towards service provision.</p> <p>Due to the economic situation individuals may be less likely to feel empowered, and may feel worried about getting more involved in a voluntary capacity in case it has a negative effect on accessing benefits.</p> <p>Changes in the focus of government could affect future funding.</p> <p>Reduction in funding for local projects could reduce local knowledge and capacity which in turn could make VOX less able to reflect the views of our group members.</p>

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes (short/medium)	Outcomes (long term)
<p>Members and staff time</p> <p>Funding for events and activities, catering, travel and venue costs</p> <p>Support to those who are attending, volunteers commitment</p> <p>Printing costs, website hosting costs</p> <p>Training costs, time for preparation, planning and delivery</p> <p>Opportunities to attend relevant meetings and events</p>	<p>Members Meetings to prioritise and direct areas of work</p> <p>Regular links with members</p> <p>We shall work with all members to support and develop the sharing of information by either hosting a meeting or attending local or national meetings to share views.</p> <p>Individual members 'links' to other groups & organisations</p> <p>Attending relevant conferences/e.g. IIMHL to share and learn</p> <p>Using social media and other methods e.g. bulletins, website etc. to share good practice</p> <p>Bringing individuals together to support the development of new groups (where none currently exist).</p> <p>Developing opportunities e.g. informal information sessions to share and learn</p> <p>Offer development day facilitation sessions to individuals and groups. Develop individual and group training sessions</p>	<p><u>Outcome 1. VOX members direct VOX's developments</u></p> <p><u>Outcome 2 Sharing, exploring and delivering good practice</u></p> <p><u>Outcome 3 Capacity Building for Groups and Individuals</u></p> <p><u>Outcome 4 Utilise members experiences to influence</u></p>	<p>Members led organisation</p> <p>Improved services and society</p> <p>Stronger Service User Voice</p> <p>Improved services and society</p>

<p>Effective partnership working, commitment and time</p>	<p>programme</p> <p>Attend relevant events/conferences/steering groups and meetings to influence</p>	<p><u>Outcome 5</u> <u>Challenge stigma and discrimination</u></p>	<p>Increased public awareness</p>
<p>Staff and volunteers time and commitment</p>	<p>Work in partnership with See Me re-founded to develop the lived experience component of the See Me programme</p>	<p><u>Outcome 6</u> <u>Gathering evidence/capturing our members views and experiences</u></p>	<p>Clearer view of the direction of travel</p>
<p>Staff time, individuals who want to become community leaders, programme costs</p>	<p>Work plans/strategic plans directed from members views.</p> <p>Run consultation events/focus groups, surveys etc.</p> <p>Work with organisations such as the Mental welfare Commission and the Scottish Human Rights Commission to progress members views.</p> <p>Developing the community Leaders Programme to build capacity within communities who are often not actively engaged in the mental health arena.</p>	<p><u>Outcome 7</u> <u>Promoting Justice, Human Rights and Social Inclusion</u></p>	<p>Greater awareness of rights and influence from those who are currently not as engaged in the mental health arena</p>

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