



## **Development Plan for Voices of Experience (VOX) 2020 to 2027**

### **1. Overview**

VOX Scotland is Scotland's national voice on mental health. We are a membership organisation and we represent our members' views to Scotland's politicians, policymakers, health professionals, civil society and others to make sure Scotland's laws, health services and community support reflect the needs and interests of people with lived experience.

VOX is Scotland's only national mental health collective advocacy organisation run by people with lived experience of mental health problems for people with lived experience of mental ill health. We firmly believe in the principle of "nothing about us without us".

VOX aims to represent a broad range of people who have had mental ill health, to address injustice, build capacity within our membership, work with marginalised communities to ensure they have a voice, influence change and create a vision for the future in mental health.

VOX was set up in 2006 after a public meeting identified the need for a national voice from people who have mental ill health. Since then VOX has been central to a number of developments where we have ensured the voice of our members (and others who have mental ill health) is heard and understood. This has included ensuring that people who have been in intensive psychiatric hospitals/wards have a strong voice, developing new tools such as the climate tool to look at in patient safety (from the point of view of the patient) and increasing opportunities for those who have not always had a voice, such as those in prisons, those who have experienced domestic abuse and people from rural communities.

VOX is an independent charitable company hosted by the Mental Health Foundation who employ VOX's staff and provide line management to the Development Coordinator. The Mental Health Foundation also support the organisation more generally providing advice and support (from a range of staff within the organisation). VOX manages its budget for the running costs of the organisation.

VOX is currently operating with 3 part time members of staff: a Development Coordinator at a 0.5fte post, an Equality and Development coordinator at 0.8fte and an administration officer at 0.6 fte.

### **Current programmes of work**

#### **a. Support for Governance of VOX's board – Development and Training**

The fact that VOX is run by individuals who have their own lived experience of mental health problems means that we are in a unique position in understanding the key problems

individuals are facing on the ground and to seek solutions to those problems, in addition to this we have a neutral stance in terms of not being a service provider.

To ensure this model to work effectively the governance of VOX needs to be supported to thrive. We do this in a range of ways, a development day was held on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019, looking at governance related topics including Decision Making and Effectiveness, our members priorities, supporting each other, and roles and responsibilities. We utilised the skills of an external facilitator who has a wealth of experience on seeking out any governance related issues and finding ways to improve an organisations ability to become more effective. We also arranged training around communications which was delivered by the Scottish Community Development Centre, where we looked at Creating campaigns, Making the best use of resources, the role of staff/board in relation to communications. This has helped us to consider how we focus our attention.

#### **b. Members lead the way – 2 members meetings**

We plan, prepare and facilitate two national members meetings a year. VOX members agree it is essential that people affected by any changes to services, legislation or society are at the centre of creating, developing, and monitoring those changes, this includes prioritising projects and steering how we work as a charity.

In the last year VOX has held two members meetings to understand our members views, firstly VOX's AGM and Connections Conference held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December in the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling. The conference looked at a range of issues relating to connection, it included the film debut of VOX's Longing for a Connection film, discussions around Connection, Capacity and Psychosis led by Dr Paul Hutton and Dr Philip Murphy from Edinburgh Napier University, and finally the impact of social media on our connections with others. Approximately 50 people attended the VOX's AGM.

VOX also held a meeting open to our full members in Glasgow, which initiated some scoping work around our members views in relation to capacity and compulsory treatment (this was in part based on a resolution put together by one of VOX's members) which led to a decision that more in depth discussions would need to take place to have informed debate on the topic, 35 people attended.

#### **c. Increasing awareness of the Key Issues for VOX's members.**

VOX members have the experience and knowledge to understand where problems arise and where solutions can be found.

Through a range of networks and through direct contact with organisations we seek ways to influence change which reflects our members priorities, we do this both within the mental health arena and across other areas of work.

Work across the Scottish Government;

VOX was involved in the Mental Health and Protection of Rights Division's (Legal Protections Team) Ministerial review into Deaths in Detention in hospital where we helped to input into the engagement strategy.

The Health and Social Care directorates (Reform of Adults with Incapacity legislation and practice) are currently working alongside VOX to undertake engagement work on the review of the mental health act to ensure they reach those who are most likely to be affected by compulsory treatment orders e.g. individuals in psychiatric hospitals, supported housing, and linked to community health services, we aim to engage with 200 people with lived experience. We have committed to running 14 discussion sessions (reaching 200 individuals who currently are unlikely to have a voice).

The Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services: VOX is gathering evidence for the forensic review which is currently taking place, we are meeting people in low and medium secure forensic wards in addition to individuals who were forensic patients within the community. We aim to reach 40 people (the population of forensic patients is around 500 in Scotland).

We are also involved in strategy groups overseen by the Mental Health Directorate such as the Quality and Safety Board for Mental Health.

Other influencing spheres;

We also aim to influence change through groups such as the Advisory Group for the Mental Welfare Commission, inputting into the Scottish Patient Safety Programme around topics such as the Observation Practice Review, by providing lived experience input into the Royal College of Psychiatrists and working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland reviewing the Patient Safety Climate Tool.

Public Bodies;

Public Bodies such as the Scottish Ambulance Service see VOX as a resource and utilise our membership and involvement work to embed lived experience within their service. This includes seeking advice on how to recruit and involve people with lived experience to take part in forming the mental health strategy for the Scottish Ambulance Service, and more recently asking us to directly provide lived experience input in relation to their mental health strategy. The Scottish Prisons service has also asked if we can provide support to ensure that people in prison are heard and that they have the opportunity to influence policy/practice.

Equalities Angle:

We amplify the voice of our members from an equalities angle, examples include the following;

- Contributing to the Cross Party group on Race equalities on mental health perspectives and intersecting identities.
- Working with other Disabled People's Organisations (DPO's) to find solutions to encouraging the local authority to work with DPO's when it comes to planning and embedding the voice of disabled people around the table, including developing publicity materials highlighting key issues.
- Highlighting key issues for our members at the Consultation on A fairer Scotland for Disabled people: employment action plan Raising

- Involvement in the Rural Forum, utilising work we had previous carried out.
- Shaping the Mental Welfare Commissions LGBT inclusive mental health services guide.

**d. Understanding Members Views and Experiences in depth – 3 areas of consultation**

Compulsory Treatment/Legal Equality

Compulsory treatment remains a divisive issue amongst our membership. However, all members agree that Compulsory Treatment requires consideration of the Right to Life, Autonomy, Choice and Participation in decision-making, Non-discrimination and Equality under the Law.

VOX has carried out scoping work around our members views on issues related to capacity and compulsory treatment, this was in part, based on a resolution put together by one of VOX's members. The resolution led to a decision that more in depth discussions would need to take place to have informed discussion on the topic. These events took place in Glasgow, Inverness and Dundee, 62 people have participated.

The key point our members generally agreed on in relation to compulsion and detention for those who have mental ill health was that human rights of people with mental health problems are not currently being upheld because people do not have a properly funded level of service which supports people in times of distress adequately, and that conditions deteriorate sometimes leading to compulsory measures.

This work will help to inform the way in which approach the Consultation on the review of the Mental Health Act.

Mental Health Tribunals

We have written a report about Mental Health Tribunals, where we assimilated information provided by 57 individuals who had experience of the tribunals system. We will continue to utilise this report when and where appropriate.

This report highlights a number of issues within the Mental Health Tribunals system which are inadequate. Whilst it is clear that many people the tribunal service has "saved their life", for others the process has been demeaning and individuals have felt disempowered and broken.

Firstly, there needs to be additional support to ensure as much autonomy and power as possible for the service user, whilst acknowledging that there are times when some people do not feel they are in a position to make the best decision about themselves (due to their emotional decision making at that point in time).

Secondly, it is noted that the lack of understanding of the full picture of someone's life/relying on snapshots and historical information is completely insufficient. It is stated that professionals' opinions are not necessarily backed up as they should be, and that this is extremely concerning.

Thirdly it is crucial that more support is required throughout the process, and that we need to start finding ways of supporting people, this can include talking therapies, peer support, advocacy, mediation and other forms of support to ensure individuals going through the process are empowered and supported both in their decision making and more generally.

To summarise, there are good and bad experiences of the tribunal system, and it is important that these experiences are utilised to improve the system and ensure more autonomy of service users, accountability of professionals and support throughout the process more generally.

### Students Mental Health

We also got involved in events to gather information, for example, attending fresher's week at the royal conservatoire to understand key issues for students, and talking to s6 students to develop an understanding of young people's awareness of mental health.

This has highlighted to us the need for prevention and wellbeing to be supported and for faster access to community-based support. Again, we continue to highlight these issues at a range of groups and networks.

#### **e. Members led projects – 2 projects a year**

We develop two new projects each year which have been prioritised by our members, for example the civic involvement project where we worked with peer researchers to look at barriers and solutions in relation to civic involvement for those who have had mental ill health, and a members-led film produced which looks at the importance of connection when engaging with clinicians.

Barriers to Civic and Public Participation: VOX launched the DRILL report entitled "Untapped Potential" on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018, which was the second phase of this piece of work. The project funded from Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (the world's first major research led by disabled people).

VOX, the Mental Health Foundation, and the Centre for Health Policy (University of Strathclyde) have undertaken a co-produced piece of research together with the Research Collective (researchers with lived experience of mental health problems) who led the project and undertook the research. The project looked at barriers to public life, and ways of increasing the civic and public participation of people with mental health problems.

We discussed the findings of our peer led research, particularly barriers and supports to civic involvement, and hosted a panel discussion on how we can make positive change in this area. This project provided a good format for peer-led approaches can be successful in understanding barriers and developing solutions. Around 55 people attended the launch event, and we have had many opportunities arise in response to the project, both in terms of its model, and in terms of its outcomes. This includes influencing the four nations DRILL project in Wales and presenting at the 7th European Conference on Mental Health in Split, Croatia.

Connection/Empathy: Over the years our members have often said that the response by the GP, or psychiatrist or nurse mattered a great deal, and they needed to feel as though the

clinical staff cared and made them feel like it was a human talking to a human and not just seeing symptoms or illness. We are continuing to seek opportunities for how to utilise our “longing for a connection” film which was launched on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019.

We have also worked with VOX members, board members and See Me on developing case studies for the Empathy DVD and have included that as part of the teaching session at Glasgow University.

**f. Capacity Building through our group members**

We support the VOX collective (where VOX’s group members come together to share learning across Scotland)

We have developed an online information hub we send out and share a range of opportunities to our group member. This includes various events, consultations and collaborations as well as offering training days to group members. This helps to build new areas of work and develop capacity. An example recently is that we have developed a project along with Acumen (advocacy organisation in Argyle) link workers to support the development of VOX’s Cal Mac ferries pilot.

**g. Mental Health and Diversity – 1 large event**

VOX held the 11<sup>th</sup> Moving Minds annual showcase event (in partnership with Glasgow Museums and Kelvingrove Art gallery, and museum specifically) on the 26<sup>th</sup> May. VOX Scotland has been a national partner of the Scottish Mental Health Arts festival for over a decade now. This has been largely due to our members who have championed the value and importance of the arts as not only a way to express in a creative way their voices and experiences of mental health and ill health but has also supported people’s recovery and helps to build connections. The day aims to challenge perceptions, make connections, develop diverse audiences, and makes connections. The event involved 12 partner organisations; VOX Scotland, Mental Health Foundation, See me, Glasgow Museum, Glasgow Life, Greater Glasgow Mental Health Network, Glasgow Association for mental health, Maryhill integration network, Recovery Walk, LGBT Health and Wellbeing, Lapidus, Hong Wo Association, Mandulu & Hephzibah music. The Day is a collection of events, experiences and activities that celebrate diversity and mental health, promote services and inform members of the general public. Live Music, Mental Health related Songs, Joyous Choir, Fashion show, Dance, Tai Chee demonstration and public participation, creative writing workshops, tailored guided tour of the museum, Card making, face painting, henna painting and many other activities. Raising awareness of individual and collective advocacy groups and organisations to build connections and empower individuals. Around 300 individuals attended the event.

**h. We represent VOX’s views at a number of networks and steering groups to influence policy and practice at a strategic level.**

VOX will continue to push for reducing inequalities and improving opportunities for people with lived experience. VOX recognises the reduction in services and support available to people with mental ill health, due to spending cuts, and the negative impact this has on individuals’ mental health. This year VOX has highlighted this issue at almost every steering

group and network that we attend. Mental health services are severely under-funded and raising this issue this will continue to be a key priority for VOX.

The views we give at these meetings are based on knowledge gathered from previous pieces of lived experience led research, discussion sessions with VOX members, and knowledge from our group members. We brief individuals who attend as representatives on the key issues and concerns of our members.

We have been consulted on the Tayside Review which took place earlier this year, and will also be involved in the Forensic Review and the Mental Health Act Review where we will be looking at what needs to change in order for people to get support earlier/the right sort of support to be available. We hope that by highlighting where services need to change and by seeking solutions, we can be an asset to policy and practice across Scotland.

i. **We share information about current policy issues and projects across Scotland.**

This includes the following;

- Approximately 50 E-bulletins each year which to reach approximately 4200 people
- Facebook posts, polls reaching over 100 individuals
- 3 e-newsletters to our group members
- 120 contacts approximately (based on a month's average) where we signpost to other services or discuss developments
- 18 people with lived experience who either get involved in representing VOX or get involved in our developments.

## **2. Development of VOX**

VOX currently has approximately 600 individual members, and 14 group members, therefore having the scope to reach about 4000 people. Our intention in order to more fully represent the views of people in Scotland with mental ill-health is to grow our membership numbers and diversity significantly. We want to develop our digital methods of engaging with potential members and to develop a digital marketing strategy which enables us to reach many people in a short period of time. In relation to this we want to develop a quick way of engaging with a significant number of our members which we can utilise to inform the Scottish Governments 10-year strategy and other areas of policy and practice and national and local levels. We also want to develop stronger feedback mechanisms to our members than we currently have, again seeking digital as well as more traditional mechanisms.

VOX is continually asked by a range of organisations and public bodies for advice and involvement, e.g. the Alliance, the Scottish Ambulance Service, the Scottish Prisons Service, universities and various steering groups, networks and reviews. We have the skills and abilities to do this, however, we are unable to do this at the level required, this often leads to organisations having no choice but to speak on behalf of people with mental health problems, or to engage with one or two people (who are often giving a personal view and are not able to represent a wider base of individuals experiences).

VOX wants to continue to develop opportunities for our members to come together, share ideas, develop good practice and build capacity. By running more in-depth consultations utilising a range of

methodologies (focus groups, participatory methods and other engagement methodology) we will have a better understanding of our members experiences and ideas, both in breadth and depth.

We also want to further support VOX's groups members (the VOX collective) through training and development work e.g. training on media issues - meet the media, or for example co-ordinating development work around advance statements.

VOX's greatest asset is our members/volunteers, we are currently unable to support volunteers to the extent we would like to, and often take forward our members priorities within the staff team. In order to develop key programmes of work which can build on members/volunteers' assets, utilise co-production models, and develop leaders we want to further develop our strand of work which focusses on investing in VOX's membership. The outcome of this investment will be lived experience led initiatives which will help to provide a resource to a range of external beneficiaries, and most importantly to the Scottish Government as a source of knowledge. For example, we could effectively develop and expand the lived experience led training on the importance of connection utilising VOX's film "longing for a connection" in a more systematic way with clinical staff across Scotland. By carrying out new programmes of work based on members priorities and by considering a life-course approach, we can become a greater asset to a range of both internal and external beneficiaries.

With a wider, more representative reach we can have a broader, more credible scope to influence policy and practice in a more effective and meaningful way, which in turn will increase our profile. VOX can develop into a resource for the Scottish Government both within the mental health directorate and across departments such as justice, health, inequalities and housing, and would ensure and enable a direct route to understanding key issues from people directly.

### **3. Where VOX can play a central role**

VOX aims to become an organisation which represents all mental health voices in Scotland, acts as a key source of information on people's experiences of mental ill health and develops programmes of work which will be an asset for clinicians and students. By doing this we can become a greater asset to the Scottish government when it comes to seeking solutions and understanding people's current experiences of services and developments.



#### **4. VOX's action plan and outputs**

- a. To represent all mental health voices in Scotland

In order to deliver the key objectives stated above we must grow in scale, develop a higher profile and grow our membership (VOX's members – both group and individual).

To do this we will work in three areas each year holding a roadshow event working with key stakeholders (GP's, local mental health projects, community groups etc) with an aim to increase VOX's reach and raise awareness of local issues and services.

In addition to this we will choose two areas where there is currently little involvement (geographically or subject based) to focus on increasing membership.

By increasing membership, it will enable a broader base of individuals who we can consult/engage with as required. We also want to ensure we reach those who may not identify as a person with lived experience despite the fact they may have had a period of depression or experienced anxiety.

We will continue to plan, prepare and facilitate two large members meetings which will become more energised with new members and will have a firm focus on creating safe spaces.

We wish to develop a digital marketing strategy for VOX, including defining where potential audiences/new members exist, utilising google analytics to develop our membership, and to utilise blogs and podcasts to help create an audience.

We will develop a new mechanism to hear from at least 100 people on a topic through a “VOX snapshot”, the purpose of this will be to understand viewpoints on key issues quickly. This could be utilised by the Scottish Governments and others as a source of knowledge.

We also want to develop a “we hear you” feedback to our members on key issues.

#### b. Build capacity within our membership

VOX wishes to further develop the VOX collective in order to highlight good practice across Scotland within collective advocacy, including organising a showcasing good practice in Scotland event.

We will develop a bespoke training programme which includes training on issues such as meet the media, and development support which enables the group members to thrive.

We also wish to lead key VOX collective projects such as the promotion of advance statements. We have had initial discussions about the idea of all the collective advocacy organisations coming together to develop an advance statement month, we feel this would be of great benefit to our members and would fit well with key strategic developments around the mental health act. We would also like to consider our potential role on issues around supported decision making.

We would also lead consultation exercises through our group members structures. This would ensure we are reaching a broader base of individuals, and using the skills and experience developed over a number of years within those organisations.

Finally, this capacity building role will include developing two areas of work each year around increasing diversity of voice, for example those who have experienced being in the justice system.

#### c. Develop programmes of work led by our members.

VOX wants to work alongside our individual members to develop key programmes based on our members priorities. We also want to develop a life-course approach to our programmes of work which focuses on times where individuals experience particular stresses. We would, for example, like to increase our capacity to develop a programme of work based on supporting parents with mental health problems.

We will develop appropriate models for change, for example co-production and peer research (dependent on the type of project).

We would also like to further develop our members priorities, for example our members state that they need to feel as though clinical staff care/show empathy and connect with them on a human level, so we produced a members led film entitled “longing for a connection”.

We could effectively develop and expand the lived experience led training on the importance of connection utilising VOX’s film “longing for a connection” in a more systematic way with clinical staff across Scotland. Whilst we have taken some steps to initiate this work, we do not have the capacity currently to deliver this effectively.

A key benefit to this approach would be that we would enable volunteers/individual members to build on their assets, whilst at the same time developing programmes which will benefit external beneficiaries. Finally, we want to seek individuals who have potential to take on leadership roles within the charity, for example ensuring that members can become more involved in governance by offering support and training for this purpose.

d. Core functions delivered by strong leadership

The role of the Coordinator would be to work alongside VOX’s board to ensure strong leadership. This would be achieved by implementing VOX’s business plan, developing policies as required, to manage VOX’s staff, to represent VOX’s members views at a range of steering groups and networks, and to oversee the development of any new programmes of work.

We want to invest further in our directors and staff through training on issues such as governance, charity law, digital communications, public speaking etc.

There is also a need for VOX’s profile to grow, to seek opportunities to expand, and to explore how best VOX fits strategically with the other national mental health and other organisations across Scotland.

Furthermore, setting the culture and vision of the organisation (again alongside VOX’s board of directors) is of primary importance. In order to develop strong leadership and manage VOX effectively the hours for this post should be increased.

**5. Development Plan**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Identify 3 areas/themes where we need to broaden reach/membership.	Reflect what worked in year one and adapt year two based on year 1 learning.	Reflect on years 1 and 2 for what works in terms of broadening reach.
Plan the approach and stakeholders involved.	Identify 3 new areas/themes where we need to broaden reach/membership.	Identify 3 new areas/themes where we need to broaden reach/membership.
Explore/Pilot models for VOX snapshot of views from our members	Use the VOX snapshot 6 times throughout year 2 (as opportunities arise)	Use the VOX snapshot 6 times throughout year 3 and provide briefings on a range of topics.
Create system required for the VOX snapshot	Develop the feedback mechanism.	
Explore how to engage with those who have experienced periods of distress but who may not identify as a person with lived experience.	Work with three groups/networks of people who have experienced periods of distress but who may not identify as a person with lived experience.	Ensure members receive regular feedback on what we/others have done with their views.  Work with three new groups/networks of people

<p>To define potential members digitally and identify key tools to use.</p>	<p>To use digital strategies to share members voices e.g. through podcasts and blogging.</p> <p>To use google analytics to further develop potential audiences</p> <p>To evaluate the digital marketing strategy, reflect and learn</p>	<p>who have experienced distress and seek opportunities to utilise their views.</p> <p>To review the digital marketing strategy, reflect, learn and adapt as required.</p>
<p>Refresh VOX's guidelines on involving volunteers/what we can expect from each other/other relevant policies.</p> <p>Take forward 1 key programme of work as identified from our members meetings (e.g. develop/use VOX's film to train clinicians), and 1 project which relates to life-course related issues.</p> <p>Involve a small group of interested members who can help steer the programme forward.</p> <p>Develop models of involvement which are appropriate for the project e.g. peer research/co-production/self- management.</p> <p>Seek opportunities for volunteers e.g. training/development to enable them to expand their skills.</p> <p>Seek opportunities/potential funding for projects to develop.</p>	<p>Continue to work on two key projects which were initiated in year one, look at outcomes for key beneficiaries.</p> <p>Seek opportunities for volunteers e.g. training/development to enable them to expand their skills and flourish.</p> <p>Take forward any opportunities/potential funding for projects to develop.</p> <p>Build in another key project which can be developed (based on latest members meetings priorities)</p> <p>Consider future sustainability of projects.</p>	<p>Share learning from some of the project development/research work.</p> <p>Continue to embed learning both internally and externally.</p> <p>Work with VOX's volunteers to look at how learning can shape practice/leave a legacy.</p> <p>Continue to seek opportunities for volunteers.</p> <p>Work on another new project which can be developed (based on latest members meetings priorities).</p>
<p>Identify key issues the collective members wish to be developed.</p>	<p>Highlight key issues the collective members wish to</p>	<p>Continue to highlight key issues the collective members wish to</p>



<p>Staff time, volunteers expenses.</p> <p>Printing costs, website hosting costs</p> <p>Training costs, time for preparation, planning and delivery</p>	<p>nationally on models of involvement.</p> <p>Using social media and other methods e.g. bulletins, website etc. to share good practice</p> <p>We shall grow and ensure we are the voice of all people with mental ill health in Scotland.</p> <p>Bringing individuals together to support the development of new groups (where none currently exist).</p> <p>Strengthening the voice of a range of groups.</p> <p>Developing opportunities e.g. informal information sessions to share and learn</p> <p>Offer development support and bespoke training to group and individual members.</p>	<p><b><u>Sharing, exploring and delivering good practice</u></b></p> <p><u>Outcome 3</u></p> <p><u>Capacity Building for Groups and Individuals</u></p>	<p>Stronger Voice</p>
<p>Opportunities to attend relevant meetings and events</p> <p>Effective partnership working, commitment and time</p>	<p>Attend relevant events/conferences/steering groups and meetings to influence</p> <p>Work in partnership with other national organisations to hear the voice of our membership.</p> <p>Deliver the lived experience training programmes to influence practice.</p> <p>To be a source of quick “snapshot” knowledge so we can respond in a flexible way to a range of stakeholders.</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome 4</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Utilise members experiences to influence change</u></b></p>	<p>Increased understand and awareness</p>

### 7. Budget Implications, more detailed info to follow;

This budget includes **three new staff roles**, the Network Development Worker, a Volunteer Engagement worker, a Digital Marketing Worker and some funding for Peer Researchers, taking the salary total up to £166,000 approx. (we are working with the MHF on salary scales etc), further info to follow.

Salaries	166,000
Travel/Venue/Printing	35,000
Training, Learning and Development	8,000
Management support	29,000
<b>total</b>	<b>238,000</b>