



VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

ANNUAL UPDATE

JULY 2021



DEAR VOX MEMBERS

We are aware that not everyone was able to attend VOX's AGM so this is a quick update to let you know what we have been focussing on, and to give you the good news that we have been successful in receiving additional funding from the Scottish Government. This additional funding will enable us to carry out more members led work, to develop and reach a broader membership, and most importantly to make a difference to improve mental health services, support and society in general for our members.

As always, we are keen to hear your thoughts, and will be running an online event near the end of August to find out your priorities, and to discuss the best ways that we can engage with our members going forward.

COVID - CAPTURING OUR MEMBERS EXPERIENCES

We decided it was extremely important to quickly find out how our members were experiencing life during the pandemic whilst lockdown was taking place. We ran a members survey from the middle of April 2020 until the middle of June 2020, and received responses from 154 individuals with lived experience of mental health issues.

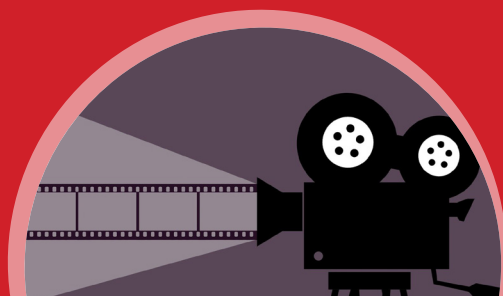
The main aim of the survey was to understand the key concerns related to the pandemic for our members, what people were finding was helping them, and what we could do as an organisation to support them.

Whilst a great deal of research during this period focussed on population mental health/ how those with no previous mental health problems were being affected, we wanted to highlight the impact on those

with lived experience of mental health issues.

We used the results of this survey to inform numerous strands of policy, practice and research. We have also created a members-led animated film to capture these experiences and highlight what needs to happen going forward.

A number of group and individual members were involved in creating the short film, deciding on key themes and who the film should be aimed at. A huge thanks goes to Jeans Bothy in Helensburgh for helping us to find volunteers who were willing to get involved in sharing their personal experiences, we'll let you know when we have a date for the "online launch".



"NOT THE NEW NORMAL" SESSIONS

We initiated sessions involving our group members last year looking at how we could adapt and learn from each other. Although we had a successful shared learning session on clinical services during the pandemic (where 18 group representatives provided feedback via email or at a meeting) it was felt that given the increasing priorities everyone was facing that this was the wrong time to look at shared learning. It was agreed that groups must focus on providing members with additional support or engaging in different, more flexible ways, and that this should be the priority.

The changes in clinical services VOX's group members highlighted were presented at various groups and networks to influence policy and practice.

REPRESENTING OUR MEMBERS THROUGH REVIEWS, CONSULTATIONS AND RESEARCH

A large part of the last year has involved representing our members at numerous meetings and networks. This has included the Mental Health Law Review's work on social, economic and cultural rights, the Adult Social Care review, the Forensic Review, the Mental Health Partnership Manifesto, the Mental Welfare Commission Advisory Group, the Pandemic Scrutiny Advisory group and many, many others.

We also captured views, or worked with others to capture views on the following; gender related mental health inequality

(related to the pandemic), gambling harm, and prescription medicine and withdrawal. In relation to research we linked into a study being led by Glasgow University about disabled people/members led organisations and the impact of the pandemic, and Strathclyde University looking at the impact of Covid on a range of people including those with mental health problems.

In addition to the above we represented our members by coming together with other Disabled People's Organisations to call for immediate action on a number of injustices and discrimination happening to disabled people in relation to the pandemic, this included supporting the letter which was sent to the Scottish Ministers to put an end to "Do Not Resuscitate" notices being received.

VOX- AGM

VOX held its Annual General Meeting on the 20th May 2021 via Zoom. We provided an update on the work carried out in the previous year, used Zoom polls to engage with our members, and the board put forward a special resolution to ensure safeguarding can be better protected within VOX which was unanimously adopted.

An evaluation poll was utilised to capture the views of our members, and 95% of those who attended either strongly agreed, or agreed with the statement that "the AGM provided a good overview of the work which VOX has carried out over the last year".



EXPANSION/FUTURE FUNDING

We are delighted to say that a development plan we put to the Scottish Government has been supported, and over the coming year we will become more representative, have a broader reach and become more flexible, effective and members led in relation to influencing policy and practice.

VOX is continually asked by a range of organisations and public bodies for advice and involvement, whilst we have the skills and abilities to do this, we are currently 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. We will now be able to increase the level and effectiveness of lived experience involvement.

DATA SYSTEMS

VOX has reviewed its data systems and have implemented advice from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) to ensure our members details are safe and GDPR compliant. We now utilise mail chimp as the main platform for communicating with our members.

SAFE SPACES AND INVOLVEMENT

VOX's board of directors have carried out a large amount of work over the last year looking at how we balance inclusion with safeguarding, we have taken steps to strengthen the charities ability to create a safe space, where we embrace all viewpoints, but ensure clear boundaries around what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour.

This has been a difficult process as we always aim to ensure we include as many individuals experiences as possible within VOX, however, we have had to accept that this must be balanced alongside others rights to feel safe and engaged in meetings.

VOX MOVING FORWARD

We will have many more opportunities for you to get involved in the coming months, including the VOX priorities and engagement session, the covid film launch, and new work which our growing staff team will be taking forward. This new work will include the development of a "snapshot consultation" system, more events and activities to engage with our members and reach new members, and opportunities for volunteers who want to get involved in specific projects to be more actively involved. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved, whether that be attending events, volunteering or supporting the work that we do, we appreciate it hugely.



 @voxscotland

 Voices Of eXperience

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