



## **Annual Report 2014-2015**

## **Foreword, Joyce Mouriki, VOX's chairperson**

VOX has had a successful year representing our members, developing ways to share good practice and continuing to develop our work on diversity and mental health, it has also been a year where we have been preparing for a great deal of change within the organisation.

As some of you will be aware some of our directors, including myself, will retire as they have reached the end of their 6 year period as a director of VOX. To try and ensure a smooth transition we have been preparing the way forward to manage this change including looking at how to support and encourage new board members becoming involved in VOX, and providing taster board sessions for aspiring directors.

Sadly this year was the final year of our comic relief investment grant, and for this reason are looking at how we can mainstream our diversity work more closely into our key outcomes.

Whilst all the changes taking place are always difficult, it will also allow for many new opportunities which will help the organisation to thrive and develop over the coming years.

We very much hope to maintain your continued support, and I hope that the work of VOX continues to build upon the success developed over the last few years.

VOX's chairperson

Joyce Mouriki

## **Background to VOX**

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 member's led organisation at a national level.

The Scottish Government Mental Health Division in recognition of the need to have a national voice agreed to fund VOX during its development period. VOX was launched in December 2006, and has since been developing and growing to become an inclusive and sustainable organisation. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 VOX became a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

## **Objectives**

VOX's objectives are as follows;

1. To develop, support and sustain an accountable, national organisation of, and for, people who have or have had mental health problems.
2. 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 which they may manage.
3. To offer a structure for people to communicate with each other and other organisations, so that they can exchange opinions, perspectives and experiences.

## **What we do**

We are a national mental health members led charity and we work in partnership with mental health and related services to ensure that people with mental health problems get every opportunity to contribute positively to changes in the services that serve them and society more generally. VOX has individual, group and associate membership.

VOX produces information and opportunities to allow individual and group members to have their voices heard, and it is a chance to hear about and influence a range of work across Scotland in relation to mental health.

VOX also arranges consultation events and focus groups, developing opportunities to allow people to have their say on specific topics. We like to balance out our focus between members' priorities and the policy direction at the time.

## Who's Involved?

<u>Member Directors</u>	<u>Non Member Directors</u>
1. Joyce Mouriki (Chairperson)	1. William A Davidson
2. Gordon A. Johnston (Vice Chairperson)	2. Richard E Norris
3. Dougie Pickering (Treasurer)	3. Dr. Alison Thom
4. John Sawkins (Secretary)	
5. Colin Murchie	
6. Tracy Laird	
7. Donald Grant	
8. Carol Mapley	
9. Dianna M. Manson	
10. David Harrison	
11. Chris Evans	
12. Francis Fallan MBE - resigned Jan 2015	

We also have advisors who we seek support and advice from on specific topics.

1. Ronald A Franks, Legal Adviser
2. Maria Docherty, Nursing Adviser
3. Kate McCormack, Social Work Adviser

### VOX Staff Team

- |                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Wendy McAuslan    | VOX Development Coordinator    |
| 2. Graeme Bowman     | VOX Senior Development Officer |
| 3. Mahmud Al-Gailani | VOX Diversity Coordinator      |
| 4. John Steel        | VOX Administration Officer     |

## Most importantly – VOX’s members!

### **Your Views shape how VOX develops**

We continue to ensure that at our members’ meetings you have the opportunity to set VOX’s priorities, remember it’s your organisation not ours!

At the VOX AGM which took place during September 2014 we used world café format to capture your thoughts on what we should be looking at in the next few months;

This included amongst other areas;

Models of support, social connections/isolation, stigma, inequalities, benefits reform, employment, and finally human rights and impaired decision making.

### **So what have we done?**

In January 2015 we held a panel discussion on issues around rights and decision making, and this has led to two focus group sessions to unpick some key issues around impaired decision making, and a larger piece of work (where we aim to reach more widely to our membership) which we will develop over the coming months.

We participated alongside SeeMe and the Scottish Recovery Network in the two day rights for life interactive event which provided an arena for discussing human rights and mental health, and shall continue to support the service user input into this area of work. Further information is available on the rights for life website [www.rightsforlife.org](http://www.rightsforlife.org)

We are continuing to challenge inequalities issues relating to the criminal justice system, domestic abuse and dual diagnosis, this has been a large initiative where we have trained individuals and they had in turn worked with a range of individuals who have experienced inequalities, and facilitated sessions to understand key areas of importance and actions which will make a difference.

We continually represent our members’ viewpoints in relation to models of care, including access to talking therapy and patient safety.

We have a future focus on employment issues, and this shall be initiated at VOX’s September 2015 conference.

### **We share good practice with others, locally, nationally and internationally**

The VOX Collective held its first meeting in October 2014 and a follow-up meeting in April 2015. We’ve now agreed our terms of reference and are ready to push forward on issues that matter to our members throughout Scotland in subsequent meetings. The VOX Collective will meet twice a year from now on and stay in touch by email and phone calls in between the face to face meetings. This improved level of contact will help us to share good practice, and will also enable VOX and its various member groups to use their knowledge, expertise, contacts and experience for the benefit of

our members wherever they live. After all, if the same issue is affecting people in Dumfries, Dundee and Dingwall it deserves a national response and this is where the VOX Collective can play a really valuable role.

VOX (in partnership) hosted international guests to take part in an exchange visit as part of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) looking at human rights and patient safety issues to help share good practice at an international level. This included hearing from the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Mental Welfare Commission as well as a range of our own member organisations e.g. PLUS in Perth and the Mental Health Network Greater Glasgow, and other speakers to understand the picture in Scotland in terms of how those with a lived experience of mental health problems steer and get involved in a wide range of initiatives relating to human rights.

Furthermore we provided opportunities for six individuals to attend the IIMHL conference which took place in Manchester during May 2014, this was a fantastic chance to learn from other countries and share the good practice which takes place in Scotland.



Photo - VOX Collective sharing ideas

### **Capacity Building and leadership for Individuals, Groups and Organisations**

VOX continued to support service users in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire to have a voice. We supported two final sessions to enable to develop skills and create opportunities for those who got involved, and we have involved many individuals thereafter in a range of consultations and developments.

We carried out development work in Moray with See Me where we came together with local activists in Moray to plan a service user and carers change event in Moray to capture thoughts and develop a report for ways forward.

We are supporting the development of an International Peer/Lived Experience Leadership Academy project - a collaboration with a range of partners to establish a project group of lived experience leaders. A VOX representative attended an initial meeting at Yale in May 2014, and since then an outline proposal has been approved by the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) board.

### **We represent our members' voices**

VOX sits on a range of groups where collaborative working helps to ensure that service users' views are taken into account, this includes;

Participating with steering groups and networks where we represent our members' views. VOX utilizes service user research, consultations with our members and other mechanisms to provide our representatives with knowledge on our key issues we should progress on behalf of our membership.

This includes our involvement with the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Mental Health Cross Party Group, the Mental Welfare Commission, the cross party on race and ethnicity, Sanctuary project, Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Anti Stigma Partnership Group, LGBT Action Group, Commitment 5 of the Scottish Governments mental health strategy focusing on human rights and equality, Commitment 2 on carers and many others. Some examples below;

#### **Patient Safety**

VOX was a member of the delivery group of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme, Mental Health. One of the key areas of development was around the development, piloting and implementation of the Patient Safety Climate Tool.

VOX has also presented at conferences and learning sessions both nationally and regionally to represent the service user view.

#### **Psychological Therapies Implementation and Monitoring**

VOX sits on the Scottish Government Psychological Therapies Implementation and Monitoring Group bringing a service user view.

#### **Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour - Tallin**

VOX supported two individuals to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour in August 2014. This has since led to the development of a report of the conference, and presentations to our membership on some key ways of working and thinking around this issue internationally from those who attended.

## **Smoking and Mental Health**

The 2013 Scottish Government document creating a Tobacco Free Generation contains a clearly articulated exemption for the grounds of “mental health facilities” from attempts to introduce smoking bans in NHS facilities. Despite this many NHS areas are starting to consider banning smoking from all NHS grounds. VOX has been trying to push for our members views to remain heard on this important issue.

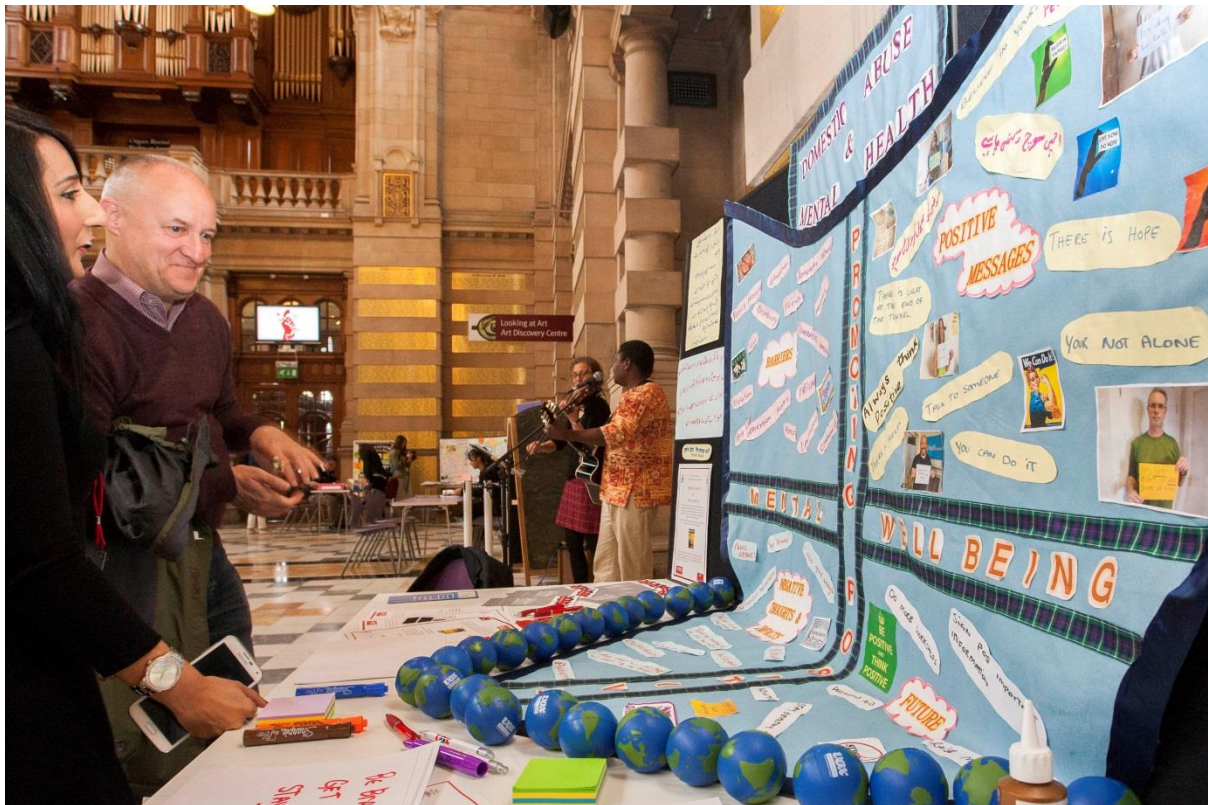


Photo – Moving Minds event

## **Awareness Raising/Challenging Stigma and Discrimination**

VOX has been a delivery partner with See Me, and we have participated in a number of initiatives including recruitment or staff, supporting the grant awards group, attending the advisory group, and a range of other areas of work.

Two larger areas of work have been a movement for change event in Moray, and the Rights For Life conference in Glasgow mentioned previously. At these two events we helped to facilitate, deliver presentations, participate in panel discussions, and to steer programmes of work.

VOX was invited for a third year by Glasgow University to deliver a teaching session on the value of service user involvement. The session was delivered as part of the MSC Masters in Global Mental Health degree course at Gartnavel Royal Hospital's Academic unit and helps to raise awareness of service user involvement within mental health.



## **Understanding our members views/gathering evidence**

### **Impaired Decision Making**

One area our members felt we should develop our understanding of our members views more fully is on impaired decision making.

At a recent panel discussion we arranged it became clear that we need to do more to understand our members' views on impaired decision making to provide an arena to explore some of the complexities and difficulties around impaired decision making.

To do this we held two focus groups (in Glasgow and Perth) to explore some themes around this area; this has led to the development of a questionnaire which will shortly be distributed across our membership, and more widely to ascertain members' views on impaired decision making.

### **Remote and Rural**

VOX developed a project around understanding the issues that those who are from remote and rural areas face. After some initial introductory research gathered our members (and others with a lived experience of mental health) views on a project which looked at what life with mental ill-health is like, and what issues affect people's mental wellbeing and recovery in remote and rural areas. The focus was on Argyll and Bute and the Highlands. We are utilising this to shape policy and highlight key issues for our members.

### **Ten year review of mental health services**

VOX was a partner in the development of the work around the Scottish Government's ten year review of mental health services along with HealthCare Improvement Scotland and the Mental Health Foundation. VOX helped to steer the initiative, and ensure that the service user voice was central to the process. This will hopefully be utilised as a way of understanding what works/doesn't work, and steer future directions in mental health.

### **Social Isolation**

VOX put together a response to the Scottish Parliaments Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into social isolation. At VOX's September 2014 meeting social isolation and connections were felt to be of key importance to our members. This, in conjunction with a number of previous consultations we have held, and our older peoples strand formed the basis of our response to this consultation. The response highlighted issues around the importance of having a role/value, developing services which support and enhance social connections, the importance of peer support and the ongoing need to challenge stigma and discrimination.

## **Consultation Response from VOX on the Draft Regulations relating to the Public Bodies (Joint Working)(Scotland) Act 2014**

VOX responded to the draft regulations. Our response highlighted the importance of advocacy, and VOX's good practice guidelines for involving people.

## **Consultation on proposals for a Mental Health (Scotland) Bill**

VOX contributed to a broad range of discussions and carried out a number of activities to enable VOX's key concerns to be represented. This included meeting with the legal team, contributing to the draft forms which were refreshed, and highlighting a range of key concerns around issues relating to the named person, advance statements and medical reports.

Our newly developed website is now more flexible using tools such as videos and polls etc which will make our ability to capture views and gather evidence more readily available.



Photo – Moving Minds

## **Promoting Justice, Human Rights and Social Inclusion**

Several of the strands worked towards and delivered awareness raising creative activities at this year's Moving Minds held in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum which marked the launch of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival attracting over 250 people.

One particular area of justice that we looked at was in relation to domestic abuse, where we worked with individuals to develop a visual resource (banner) which they displayed at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery to help generate discussion and raise awareness around this topic.

We continue to develop our community leaders' programme which is aiming to tackle social inclusion and justice, three areas we have looked at are domestic abuse, people with past convictions, and dual diagnosis (all in relation to mental health).

### **Thank you**

We very much would like to say a huge thank you to all of our directors who are stepping down this year (as they have reached the end of their term) for their dedication, hard work and commitment to VOX, and would like again to say that without our members and member directors VOX would not exist.

Joyce Mouriki, our chairperson for the last few years was awarded an MBE for the work she has done on behalf of VOX, we are extremely proud this and recognise the huge amount of commitment and drive Joyce has given to VOX over the last few years.

Finally we would like to thank the Mental Health Foundation for their continued support and passion to ensure VOX continues to thrive.

We hope you will continue to support VOX in its aim to increase the opportunities' to contribute positively to changes in services and society!