



HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCILS

**Response to
Implementing the Health, Social Services and
Public Safety (HSSPS) Good Practice Reviews**

October 2003

IMPLEMENTING THE HPSS GOOD PRACTICE REVIEWS

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PROCESS BY THE FOUR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCILS

USER INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

The four Health and Social Services Councils (Councils) played an active part in the work on the good practice reviews in their respective Board areas. The Councils have chosen to make a joint response to the consultation process on the implementation of the recommendations of each of the review reports. This paper sets out the Councils' response to the proposals for implementing the recommendations of the good practice review on *User Involvement*.

1. The Councils have a specific remit for ensuring that the views of service users are taken into account in decision making processes in the Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) and have an important role to play in promoting positive practice in relation to service user involvement. For these reasons we welcome the decision of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to follow through on the work of the Good Practice Review (GPR) Groups by the issuing of draft guidance on the implementation of the report recommendations in a timely manner.
2. We note that the draft guidance is intended to relate only to those recommendations which can be implemented in the short term, and that the HPSS Equality Steering group will consider how best to take forward the medium and long term recommendations. The recommendations in GPR report on

user involvement are contained within the body of the document rather than being listed separately. Care is needed in reading the report to distinguish between suggestions made by respondents and recommendations supported by the review group. The structure generally does not facilitate an easy analysis of what recommendations can be implemented in the short term and what needs further discussion. However the Councils support, in general, the overall recommendations included in the draft guidance for implementation in the short term.

3. We would recommend caution in considering this GPR report as other than one starting point for the development of a HPSS strategy on the topic of user involvement. As referred to in Annex C Public Engagement is a major theme of the emerging Regional Strategy, and user involvement is an important component of that theme. A wider public debate than was possible in the context of the GPR is required as a basis for the development of an overall HPSS strategy on the issue.

Councils have already expressed their concerns to the Department at the lack of coherence in the development of policies and strategies in the HPSS in relation to user involvement/ public participation/ public engagement, and the need for overall leadership within the Department to draw the strands of the debate together. In considering how best to take forward the medium to long term recommendations of the GPR we recommend that the HPSS Equality Steering Group should do so with an awareness of other action to develop policies and guidance on this topic within the HPSS.

4. We support the recommendation contained in paragraphs 9-11 on the need for management boards to account for agency practice in relation to user involvement and on the requirements

for reporting on how the needs of equality groups are being met.

5. We support the notion that in the shorter term each HPSS should develop its own clear policy on user involvement, and that they should do so in the manner outlined in paragraph 12. However, we believe that this process could usefully be supported by an overall HPSS policy on the issue of user involvement, and the identification of a single point within the DHSSPS responsible for providing leadership in relation to good practice and the monitoring of performance.
6. We welcome the recognition of the importance of staff training and development to the implementations of the recommendations and the recognition of the resource issues involved.
7. We are unclear precisely what is being recommended by paragraph 18. Complaints relating to access to services or information, or to staff attitudes may indicate a need for improvements in practice in relation to user involvement, and to the involvement of equality groups in particular. However, these are wide categories of complaints and more precise reporting of complaints may be necessary to identify the relationship between the complaints and the good practice areas identified in the report.



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