Involving Service Users in Probation

Developing a continuum of staff and user support in Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Service

A User Voice Project

Contributions and Intellectual Property

User Voice

User Voice developed the consultation model, conducted all fieldwork and managed the process. The Probation Council is a User Voice concept.

The International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion

The report was written by Alastair Roy who provided advice and support to User Voice on the research components of the project, developed the research tools, documented discussion groups and seminars, analysed the data and developed the 'continuum of helping relationships for probation service users' which is adapted from a model developed by Davidson and Rowe (2008).

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The impetus for this project came from Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust. The trust recognises that service user involvement can play a vital role in the effective delivery of its services.

The aim was to gain an insight from people who use probation services about the effectiveness of these services in helping them rehabilitate into successful living. This report intends to set out the main findings of the consultation setting out strategic objectives to address the issued raised by staff and users. This consultation process is also intended to provide a foundation for the future involvement of offenders and ex-offenders in Probation.

It is intended that these themes will enable the Trust to design a future continuum of support which is informed by the expressed needs of its client group.

Methods

This project was a collaborative venture between User Voice and the International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion at UCLan.

In order to achieve the study's aims, the project undertook a brief review of relevant literature in order to support the analysis of empirical data and explore the perspectives of service users on all issues related to the project. In total, data were collected from (n=156) individuals who participated in individual interviews, discussion groups or the final seminar.

Qualitative data, relevant literature and other documents were collated thematically. Thematic analysis made it possible to report on a wide range of experiences and perceptions concerning these issues, to identify areas of consensus and divergence on specific issues and to recommend how the Trust might address the issues raised in the consultation.

The context of user involvement

The input of service users is an integral feature of service provision in the new NHS and social care and it has been a central theme in the government's modernisation agenda (see, for example, Department of Health, 1998a, 2000b, 2001b). Implementation is still patchy and inconsistent in the drug treatment sector and much further behind in criminal justice.

The promotion of user involvement builds on a recognition that staff and service users are separated by role, power and perspective, that the two groups can each make vital but separate contributions to developing and sustaining activity and that the two groups stand to benefit in different ways from user involvement activity.

An approach that involves offenders and ex offenders in shaping services may lead to greater responsivity to offenders' needs and thus an improvement in retention and completion rates.

Locally there are three current approaches:

1. The Multi-Agency Prolific and other Priority Offender (MAPPOM) group has been running for nearly five months and meets on a fortnightly basis.
2. The CJDT has an established mechanism for Service User Involvement, a Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and a fortnightly Service User Group.
3. In addition to the two peer mentoring programmes described above Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust has a number of existing approaches to eliciting the views of those who use probation programmes.

Findings

Questionnaire findings

The first methods of data collection involved the completion of n=119 questionnaires completed in the context of one to one interviews.

Describe the quality of the relationship with your probation officer:
69% reported a positive relationship, 11% a negative relationship and 20% a relationship that was neither good nor bad.

Why do some people choose not to attend probation programmes?
Pre-conceived attitudes of offenders (29%), don't see the relevance or benefit of courses (18%) and lifestyle issues (e.g. drug use) (18%) were the most commonly cited reasons for this.

What could improve the ways service users relate to the service?
More 1 to 1 time with officers (35%), increased flexibility from officers (24%) and improve the quality of relationships with officers (20%) were the most common responses to this question.

What does the term Service User Involvement mean to you?
50% of the sample said this term meant nothing to them. Other responses included probation listening to service user views (13%), service users attending services (13%) and service users delivering services (11%).

What does the term Peer Mentor mean to you?
Service users supporting service users (48%) was the most regularly cited response to this question followed by 'nothing' (45%).

Are you interested in having your say about probation?
61% said yes and 39% no to this question.

What's the best way for service users and probation to communicate on these issues?

Face to face meetings (53%) and through a third party (20%) were the two most regularly mentioned suggestions.

Discussion group findings

Issues which affect service user's relationships with the service

Quite a lot of people reported decent relationships with individual probation officers. However a number of people reported issues that they felt affect a client's relationship with the service. These are as follows:

- Housing Issues

- Employment and education

- Throughcare and aftercare for drug and alcohol problems

- Support around mental health

- The needs of minority groups

- Issues related to probation officers

User Involvement and peer support

Most people in these discussion groups supported the potential value of user involvement and peer support. However there was limited confidence that the service is committed to implementing 'real' user involvement.

When asked 'what sorts of things might act to alter these views' people made the following suggestions.

- Face to face meetings with people at the top
- Action
- Seeing change happening
- A proper process which gives recognition to the issues being brought forward and some accountability of issues, views and actions.
- The development of forms of support initiated and led by offenders for offenders. What one person described as "a sort of NA, AA thing for offenders."
- A commitment to something long term or permanent
- Seeing the service actually using 'our knowledge and expertise in developing and delivering services, because stopping using (drugs) does not improve the situation but seeing people who are successfully recovered does help'.

Seminar findings

Staff and service users made the following suggestions for next steps at the end of the seminar

Service user and ex-service user next steps

The service users made positive comments about the discussions which were seen as a useful beginning. Ideas moving forward included:

- Developing an out of hours helpline which involves ex-users
- The co-production of pamphlets and DVDs about key issues
- The co-production of successful stories of rehabilitation
- A need for befriending services for service users who are socially isolated
- A possible newsletter to update on current issues
- A continuation of events which bring service users and staff together for a real exchange of ideas
- A need to gauge progress to demonstrate it is not tokenistic
- A need for a structured approach

Staff next steps

The staff also sought to emphasise that this event has been very useful and that the discussions provide many useful ideas for ways forward. These include:

- A need to build on existing strands of activity but also to create a coordinated strategy
- The need to develop an improved approach to aftercare
- A new focus on getting things right at the beginning of orders
- The need to develop some out of hours support
- A plan to institute co-training involving staff and service users
- A plan to use positive stories of successful rehabilitation
- A commitment to developing a full action plan around user involvement

Discussion

Introduction

Many people on probation place great importance on establishing a positive relationship with their probation officer. The vast majority of those who took part in this consultation saw offenders own roles and responsibility for re-offending journeys.

However, participants also identified a series of issues which they felt have the capacity to interfere with their probation service journeys. There is a striking commonality between these issues and those emerging from the Social Exclusion Unit's report on factors which influence re-offending.

The issues from this consultation emphasise the extent to which contextual factors such as housing, benefits and employment exert a serious influence on how people can take part in and benefit from what the service has to offer.

Developing a continuum of support in Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust

The findings of the consultation indicate that a range of different relationships are important to probation service users in move-on journeys from crime. These include:

- Relationships with probation officers
- Probation programmes
- Friends and family
- Self-help and mutual support
- Current peer mentoring and service user involvement locally

We would articulate a need for the Trust to move towards a more independent model of Peer-led support. This does not suggest that peer-mentoring has not got a vital role to play in services, it has. It simply argues that it has a much larger role to play in supporting move-on journeys both within and outside services and will benefit in this endeavour from appropriate independence of role and function. The purpose of advocating independence is that it may strengthen the programme and diversify those who take part.

We think it is important to see an ambition for independence in the context of what is currently missing from the lives of many service users in terms of 'self-help and mutual support' and the support of 'friends and family'. Peers are often described as 'trusted messengers' and the types of support that they can provide have been summarised as: psychological and emotional, social, and practical.

The limits in 'self-help and mutual support' and the support of 'friends and family' experienced by many in this consultation articulate a clear need to widen the sphere of influence of peer-support locally. Some examples of how this might happen include:

- Forums – which offer a social and emotional support and also a consumer orientation;
- Ex-service users trained and employed to provide telephone and out of hours support;
- Developing links to established self-help networks such as Narcotics Anonymous (include local examples);
- Developing a new overarching structure for user involvement, peer-support and representation (e.g. a probation council).
- Supporting the development of new self-help/peer-led approaches for specific groups of offender (e.g. women);

- The development of co-produced programmes such as training and information products.

Strengths and limitations of this consultation

Given the resources available for the project the sample of n=156 is considered a good number and the data provide a rich picture of views and opinions.

This said, the data are subject to a number of limitations and women are underrepresented in the sample as a whole.

The overall positive picture emerging from the seminar should be tempered by the possibility that those who attended (both staff and users) may have been those most positively minded to this agenda which may create false optimism about future prospects.

Summary

Both staff and service users recognised value of service users contributing to the design, evaluation, and delivery of services. However all recognised that developing this agenda will require investment, time and commitment from both users and service providers and commissioners.

Involvement of users from the outset in the design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of programmes is now seen as an essential prerequisite of strong modes of user involvement in health and social care.

The work has begun in Leicestershire and Rutland but there is a need for more ambition. The development process will take time, patience, determination, and the explicit investment of human and financial resources. It will also require the development of an overarching strategy, the explicit communication of an action plan and of achievements in order to dispel levels of suspicion about tokenism.

If the agenda is to benefit the service and the lives of those who use it, it can not be developed and controlled by one group in isolation. Hence developing this agenda requires an equal balance of two sets of champions: a) ex-users as catalysts of projects and key to support provided; and b) professionals and organisations, key to their ongoing development and stability (Home Office 2006).

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Develop an overarching strategy and action plan for the development of User Involvement and Peer-Led Support locally

Recommendation 2: Contribute to the development of a continuum of helping relationships for probation service users to support move-on journeys

Recommendation 3: Develop a set of user-champions capable of contributing to UI and co-production locally and developing different models of peer-led support

Recommendation 4: Consider implementing a pilot probation council for the development of the above agendas

1. Introduction

The impetus for this project came from Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust. In the recent NOMS performance ratings the Trust was recognised as one of the best performing in the country. The trust recognises that service user involvement can play a vital role in the effective delivery of its services. As a result its Criminal Justice Drugs Team has appointed a dedicated member of staff for user involvement and recently set up a peer mentoring scheme '*the Peer Support Group*'. MAPPOM has also established a service user group. The Trust is now looking to embed its commitment to the inclusion of service users throughout the Probation area and across all its teams.

The aim of this consultation exercise was to gain an insight from people who use the services of Leicestershire and Rutland Probation about the effectiveness of these services in helping them rehabilitate into successful living. This report intends to set out the main findings of the consultation setting out strategic objectives to address the issued raised by staff and users. This consultation process is also intended to provide a foundation for the future involvement of offenders and ex-offenders in Probation.

The ideas which emerged from this consultation were rich and complex. In reporting the findings we have not simply reduced this rich picture to a series of uniform findings, as to do so would distort the diverse and different experiences reported. Rather we will draw out a number of important themes and to highlight areas of consensus and disagreement wherever possible.

It is intended that these themes will enable the Trust to design a future continuum of support which is informed by the expressed needs of its client group.

2. Methods

This section outlines the data sources used for this study and the approach to data analysis.

2.1 Research design

This project was a collaborative venture between User Voice and the International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion at UCLan.

Given the subject of the research it was vital that the design of this research altered the traditional dynamics of power in research activity. Often research is undertaken by academics and about offenders with cursory attention given to issues of power and involvement. In this research User Voice was the lead organisation and ISCRI were employed to work in partnership and to advise on the research components of the consultation. This is important because is represents a change in the dynamics of power between service user and researcher, redressing the power dynamic in favour of the user.

The partnership between User Voice and ISCRI had specific strengths which supported the feasibility and delivery of this project. In previous work User Voice has demonstrated it can engage and consult with some of the most excluded groups in society and the criminal justice system. ISCRI has extensive experience of participatory approaches to research and consultation and has undertaken a series of national and local research projects in relation to the criminal justice, youth justice and drug treatment systems. In this joint venture ISCRI staff designed a solid methodological approach, collaborated in collecting data and supported the production of the final framework and report.

2.2 Data collection

In order to achieve the study's aims, the project undertook a brief review of relevant literature in order to support the analysis of empirical data and explore the perspectives of service users on all issues related to the project. In total, data were collected from (n=156) individuals who participated in individual interviews, discussion groups or the final seminar.

Phase 1

It was apparent at the initial stakeholder meeting in September 2009 that a number of strands of user involvement activity were already underway locally. Hence there was a need for this consultation to begin by capturing and documenting this activity. Phase 1 delivered on this aim with two specific strands of activity:

(i)   All individuals taking a lead on User Involvement (including peer support) locally were asked to set out briefly – on paper – the main strands of work which are currently being delivered. These written summaries were to include:

- What user involvement and peer support activities were currently underway?

- How long had each of these been running?

- Who was the staff and/or user lead for each activity (and their role)?

- A detailed description of each activity in terms of aims, objectives, aspirations, achievements.

- How many people in total (and regularly) engage with each activity?

- Are there any perceived barriers to increasing those engaging (i.e. numbers), and the diversity of those engaging?

- How might any barriers be resolved?

(ii)   User Voice undertook 3 weeks of ground level work in October and November 2009. This activity successfully engaged relevant stakeholders and built discussions on the basis of information provided in (i). This work included meeting with the individuals who are leading and participating in user involvement activity locally. ISCRI staff attended these meetings and detailed notes were taken in order to build up a clear picture of what was already happening locally and its strengths and limitations.

User Voice engaged over 200 service users in phase 1 and conducted (n=119**)** questionnaire interviews. This element of the study, which was not included in the original proposal, was added to ensure that service users who chose not to or were unable to attend discussion groups could still contribute their ideas and experiences to the consultation.

Phase 2

Five preliminary workshops were held to include as many service users as viable within the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Area. User Voice promoted, recruited and facilitated these workshops with existing and previous probation service users in the area. A total of n=37 individuals who had not taken part in phase 1 took part in the discussion groups. Two discussion groups were held in the evening to ensure that people in day time employment were able to attend. Recruitment to these events was managed through the existing Leicestershire and Rutland Probation service user groups, other relevant local networks known to the Probation Service and User Voice's own networks. Care was taken to ensure that there was flexibility to tailor events around the expressed needs of specific groups of service users. Previous experience suggested that this strategy helps to create a sense of ownership and empowerment.

The selection workshops were designed to enable service users to select delegates for a main event. This process ensured that participants at the final seminar were those selected by the group as most relevant to represent their views and not those who would put themselves forward, or be put forward by staff.

The initial discussion groups enabled delegates to familiarise themselves with the aims of the consultation process. The workshops were introduced and overseen by Craig Morrison and Mark Johnson and captured by an academic researcher.

At the end of each discussion group 2 to 4 individuals were selected by the group to act as representatives at the final seminar. These individuals were also asked to consult with their own offender networks on the issues discussed. They were asked to seek the views of at least ten other individuals in relation to the core themes of the consultation. They will also be asked to offer views on possible solutions to any problems to be raised. In order to fulfil this role, in which the service user becomes the researcher, User Voice provided a brief element of training at selection workshops and additional support in preparing presentations for the main event.

A final seminar was convened in December 2009 and was attended by users and staff. Four of the fourteen service users who attended the final seminar made presentations which communicated common issues to the service providers. Staff members were also asked to appoint a maximum of twelve representatives to attend the seminar as, despite a high level of interest from staff and users, we sought to limit the numbers attending the seminar to a number which would be conducive to creating a productive dialogue.

This seminar was structured as follows:

Seminar Structure

- Introduction and scene setting

- Presentation by service users of the findings of the consultation

- Presentation by academic researcher

- Discussion in break out groups

- Question and answer session

- Discussion of ways forward

- De-brief, highlighting and next steps.

2.3   Data analysis

Qualitative data, relevant literature and other documents were collated thematically, according to the themes that most consistently arose and that are pertinent to the focus of the study. The analysis is therefore firmly grounded in the data received from participants during this study. The use of a thematic analysis made it possible to report on a wide range of experiences and perceptions concerning these issues; to identify areas of consensus and divergence on specific issues; and to recommend how the Trust might address the issues raised in the consultation.

2.4   Ethical issues

The consultation plans and methods for this project were reviewed and approved by the International School for Communities Rights and Inclusion's Ethics Committee at the University of Central Lancashire.

All researchers were briefed in advance of undertaking any data collection activity on issues including the ground rules of good research, ethical issues, informed consent and ensuring the safety of participants and researchers.

Potential participants were provided with written information about the focus of the study in order to help them make an informed decision about whether or not they agreed to participate. Clear information was provided about data protection and confidentiality and that participation was entirely voluntary.

Conducting research about stigmatised issues involves a number of ethical considerations and those participants who took part in discussion groups were asked to give particular consideration to what they were happy to share in front of other people in a group setting. All those attending discussion groups were asked to respect one another's confidentiality.

3.   The Context of User Involvement

3.1   The context of user involvement in health and criminal justice services

The input of service users is an integral feature of service provision in the new NHS and social care and it has been a central theme in the government's modernisation agenda (see, for example, Department of Health, 1998a, 2000b, 2001b). The need for involvement in planning, development, provision and arrangement of services is predicated on a desire to raise standards and meet complex and diverse needs.

Since January 2003 all providers of state funded health and social care services have had a statutory requirement to involve users in their activities (Stationary Office, 2001). The new NHS standards published in 2004 place patient focus as one of the core standards emphasising that health care is provided as a partnership between professionals, patients, carers and relatives.

As Patterson et al. (2007) have identified:

> *User Involvement has been progressively embodied in public policy for over 30 years and has been made a central feature of the modernisation of the NHS.*

The NHS now has a duty to consult and involve patients. The NHS plan (2000) requires all trusts to ask patients and carers for their views about the services they receive. Involvement has taken many different forms, including:

- Individual care planning, service delivery and review;
- The planning and development of services;
- The development of service user and carer-led initiatives;
- Staff and student training; and
- Research.

In the drugs field Drug and Alcohol Action Teams (DAATs) are now required to undertake local consultation and involvement activities in order to support the development of quality services that meet local needs. Each DAAT reports its activities through the treatment planning process. DAATs are recommended to include service users at local DAAT level and to encourage involvement in regional and national activities where ever possible. However Patterson et al. (2007) who have undertaken the most detailed study yet of how user involvement has been implemented by DAAT's across England have identified the following core issues:

> **User involvement in efforts to improve the quality of drug misuse services: factors that promote and hinder successful working**
>
> - There is marked variation across England of the structure, process and integration of involvement;
>
> - There is a need for robust policy, plans and strategies to shore up shaky foundations and support ongoing development of user involvement;
>
> - There is no single identifiable 'best practice' model; however, volunteer programs that facilitate broad based user involvement and support user skill development have received widespread support and offer potential for incorporation as part of the treatment journey;
>
> - Contextual factors, including the illegality of drug use, stigma and inherent power imbalances are fundamental influences on service user involvement;
>
> - Pressures on treatment agencies to achieve targets in relation to numbers in treatment and retention leads to a perception that user involvement I is additional work;
>
> - The meaningful engagement of users from the outset in the development of strong clear policy is vital to establishing a workable framework;
>
> - Power imbalance are inherent in user involvement in the drugs field. A change in mind set is required if people who use drugs are to be embraced as partners in the planning, commissioning and delivery of treatment.
>
> **Patterson et al. (2007) Department of Health**

The descriptions above set out the reality that, despite user involvement being a requirement in the health sector, its implementation is still patchy and inconsistent in the drug treatment sector. There is a great deal of commonality in the issues and challenges faced in drug treatment and criminal justice settings and obviously many shared clients and programmes. However user involvement is much further behind in criminal justice a fact demonstrated by the dearth of UK literature on user involvement and peer-led support in criminal justice settings. The literature that does exist mostly relates to prison settings which have made greater use of peer-led support than community corrections in general.

One paper (Pyecroft, 2006) argues that an approach that involves offenders and ex offenders in shaping services may lead to greater responsivity to offender's needs and thus an improvement in retention and completion rates (p.1), although it also asserts that to new probation trainees the idea of user involvement is an alien concept. Pyecroft goes on to highlight that the establishment of the National Probation Service saw the abandonment of the notion of a trusting empathic relationship as central to changing problem behaviour, whilst asserting that this institutional shift is out of kilter with established evidence about the basis of behaviour change.

3.2   Costs and Benefits of User Involvement

It is important to remember that user involvement is not an end in itself but means of achieving change. This can involve change to the personal lives of service users (often referred to as the service or treatment journey), change to service structure and/or delivery, the development of new methods or modes of support or changes to the feedback loops.

Users often feel differently and more political about involvement than service providers and, as a result, often advocate different sorts of involvement activity. It is important to remember that a great deal of user involvement activity has grown out of political action undertaken by groups of users who have organised around specific issues. A Home Office report on Peer-Led Support (2005) advocates the need for two sets of champions in the development of peer-led support;

- User champions who are catalysts to change and key to the forms of support provided; and
- System champions who provide stability and support and are key to ongoing development.

The promotion of user involvement builds on a recognition that staff and service users are separated by role, power and perspective, that the two groups can each make vital but separate contributions to developing and sustaining activity, and that the two groups stand to benefit in different ways from user involvement activity. Hence it is important for staff to remember that user involvement should not be an end in itself but a means to achieve change (Danso et al. 2003: 13); and therefore models of user involvement which focus solely on feedback loops and service improvement (often referred to as a consumer agenda) benefit and interest service providers to a greater extent, whereas models which focus on individual journeys, skills development, empowerment and employability, benefit and interest users to a greater extent.

Warren (2007) sets out the following benefits to user involvement:

The Benefits of Service User Participation

For the service

- Communicating a service user orientation to staff and service users

- Leads to some traditional views and assumptions being challenged

- Real involvement can open up more equitable communication channels between staff and user

- Developing more efficient and effective services, supports and programmes

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- Recruiting the right people – including ex-users – into the service

- Complementing the services' 'social reintegration' goals

- Recognition of service users as experts by experience

For service users

- User involvement can offer opportunities for learning, training and development;

- Raising self esteem, confidence and empowerment which accrues from being listened to and taken seriously;

- Increased service 'ownership'

- Engaging with those who are successfully rehabilitated can provide role models and motivation;

- Involvement can promote self and group advocacy;

- Contribute to the development of relevant forms of self-help and mutual support and peer-led initiatives;

- Users can realise the value of collective action

- Adapting the services to better meet their needs

Janet Warren (2008) Service User and Carer Participation in Social Work, Learning Matters, Exeter.

3.3   The local context of User Involvement

3.3.1 The MAPPOM service user group

Overview

The Multi-Agency Prolific and other Priority Offender (MAPPOM) group has been running for nearly five months and meets on a fortnightly basis. The founding philosophy of this group can be described as having a consumer orientation in that it was aimed at improving the service offering. As the MAPPOM literature suggests:

> *The group was formed with the objective of generating and using ideas of people being supervised by MAPPOM, on how we as a service can improve the service we offer in order to help people make the most of their supervision.*

Current activities

The first activity undertaken (a questionnaire about MAPPOM service provision completed by service users) also reflected a consumer orientation. However as the group has developed it has formulated some different activities some of which are more ambitious. Two proposals relate to the developments of arts and photography sessions with an aim of producing materials to improve reception areas and interview rooms at probation. A more ambitious aim relates to altering public perceptions of offenders and preventing children from beginning offending careers by producing stories for local newspapers and visiting schools to provide information and share experiences. These are ambitious projects which require strategic planning and may require the development of appropriate skills and knowledge amongst those delivering them.

Support and recognition structures

One staff member described the current situation as "a bit hit and miss!" In November 2009 only three people were attending the group regularly and another three or four attend sporadically. Staff described to us that the current group is made up of people who are already pretty compliant and have ceased drug use. This group are understandably not keen to include people who are at an earlier stage in their recovery journey. Hence, the plan is to begin another group that will allow people who are still using to attend. Staff suggest that this group is still likely to be made up of people who are pretty compliant.

Future objectives

The view of staff leading this programme is that there are no real barriers to engagement. As one staff member put it:

> *I cannot perceive any major barriers. I think that, given a little more time, and more co-operation from officers in telling people about/instructing people to attend, the group's size and diversity could be pretty wide ranging.*

3.3.2 CJDT Peer Support

Overview

Service User Involvement is described as a key priority by the Criminal Justice Drugs Team (CJDT) a picture which reflects the longer history of UI in the health sector and requirements developed by the National Treatment Agency (NTA) for DAAT performance measurement. The CJDT has an established mechanism for Service User Involvement, a Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and a fortnightly Service User Group. Service Users are also involved on an individual basis in their treatment and care plans as required by the National Treatment Agency (NTA).

The CJDT suggests its aim is to continue to develop and embed Service User Involvement to ensure:

- Service Users are consulted about services to make continuous improvements;

- The skills of Service Users are developed;

- Service Users views are represented at events and meetings; and

- Aiding compliance with treatment and positive outcomes.

Developments are also being made in line with the DAAT User Involvement Strategy and in line with the intentions of the Leicestershire and Rutland DAATs.

The CJDT document reports system benefits and user benefits and the support structures described below indicate that this is a reality. However the low number of individuals currently taking part and the focus on what happens in services may limit the size of the benefit to the user community.

Current activities

The CJDT document sets out four areas of activity for peer mentors:

- To act as a positive role model in groups and induction sessions.

- To develop their own skills and confidence.

- To influence and Comment on CJDT Services.

- To represent CJDT Service Users at meetings and events:

Support and recognition structures

The CJDT documentation sets out specific support structures for those referred in and assessed as suitable to undertake the role:

- An initial full day training event entitled "An Introduction to Peer Support".

- CJDT Peer Support Group which meets fortnightly to support and develop CJDT Peer Mentors providing: (i) additional training and development to support the role (ii) sharing of experiences and co-learning and (iii) a Service User Consultation Group

- Fortnightly 1 to 1 supervision provided by the Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and Probation volunteers.

- Additional support for attending meetings, forums, conferences and events to ensure people feel supported and empowered.

- Involvement in training and mentoring, where activity is recognised with certificates

- Travel expenses are reimbursed

Future objectives

Future developments for CJDT Peer Support may include the development of one-to-one mentoring (with appropriate training), the development of a Peer Education Programme, and developing links to other initiatives which would aim to develop qualifications for Peer Mentors and improve employability.

3.3.3 Consumer oriented user involvement

In addition to the two peer mentoring programmes described above Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust has a number of existing approaches to eliciting the views of those who use probation programmes. It is beyond the remit of the current project to explore these in depth, however current approaches include:

- A comments, compliments and complaints system

- An annual user survey

- Participant evaluation of probation programmes

- The consultation function of the CJDT peer mentor group

4.   Findings

4.1 Questionnaire findings

The first methods of data collection involved the completion of n=119 questionnaires completed in the context of one to one interviews. This allowed some common questions to be asked to a number of probation service users and also to ensure that we sought some views from those who did not wish to, or were unable to, attend discussion groups. These data have been analysed thematically and are presented in the tables below.

4.1.1 Describe the quality of the relationship with your probation officer

The first item on the questionnaire asked participants to describe (in a short phrase) the quality of the relationship with their probation officer. We analysed and rated responses in the following range: (i) positive, (ii) negative, or (iii) neither positive nor negative. The rated responses are presented in chart 1 (the overall sample was n=119).

Chart 1: rated responses

- Positive (n=82) 69%
- Negative (n=24) 11%
- Neither good nor bad (n=24) 20%
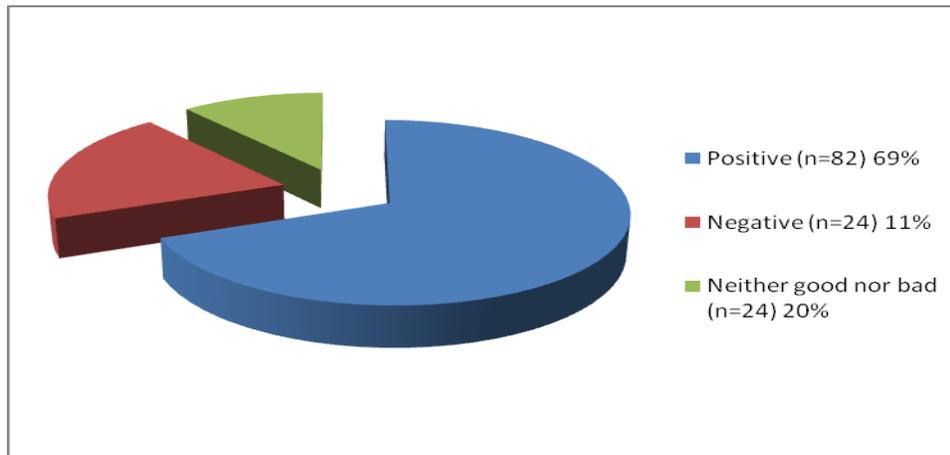
Examples of the things people said under these three categories are as follows:

Examples of positive comments:

The relationship is good and helpful, not overbearing

Good, because she knows me and helps me sort out my problems

Always been there and helpful and when I've been down she tries to pick me up

We have a good relationship, we look at my past and my future and she makes me realise what I have got to lose and helps me to come to terms with my past.

I enjoy appointments and she is interested in me succeeding

Examples of negative comments:

We don't have much of a relationship because the visits are in and out (too short)

Not good because he doesn't listen to me

All I get is hello and see you next week, what's the point in that?

The relationship is poor; I just let them do the talking

Examples of comments which were neither positive nor negative:

He's good and bad

It's OK but [he] doesn't always listen to me

It's OK but he could be more sympathetic

4.1.2 Why do some people choose not to attend probation programmes?

The second item in the questionnaire asked participants to comment on the reasons some service users chose not to attend probation programmes.

Chart 2: rated responses

Why do some people choose not to go to probation programmes?
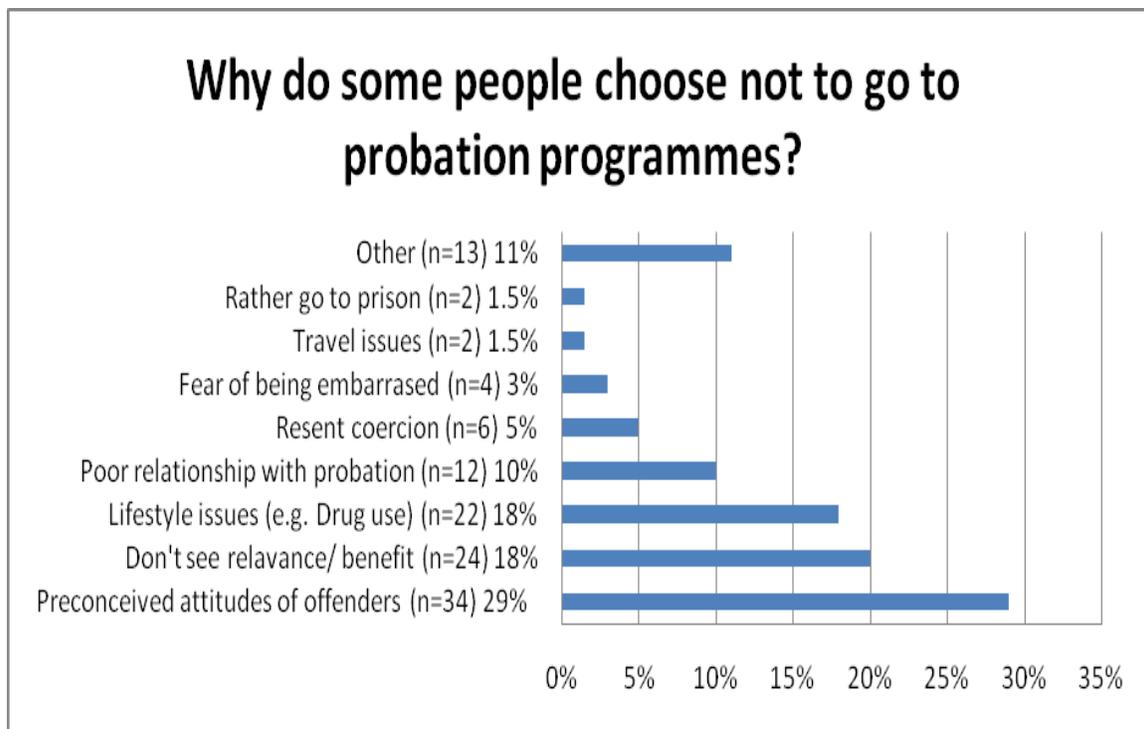
Examples of the things people said under these categories are as follows:

Preconcieved attitudes of offenders

Some people are not willing to change

Some just can't see light at the end of the tunnel

Some offenders just don't care

Don't see the relevance/benefit of the courses

There is no incentive to go becasue the certificates are useless and employers disregard them

Sadly many courses are meaningless

On some programmes you feel like you're not achieving much

Lifestyle issues (e.g. drug use or housing)

Some accomodation settings don't help people to attend.

Many have accomodation problems which make courses seem less important

Many still have drug issues and need to score

Poor relationship with probation

Some people don't go because they have a bad relationship with the probation officer

There's a general lack of trust with probation

Resent coercion

The staff on programmes are too judgemental and people resent it

They treat you like a child

Fear of being embarrased

The courses work if people let them but some lads fear being embarrased

Many are scared of class learning after so much time out of education and previous bad experinces

Travel issues

Some have to travel quite a long way which gets in the way

Some would prefer to go to prison

Because some would sooner go back to prison than do courses

4.1.3 What could improve the ways service users relate to the service?

The third item on the questionnaire asked people to identify the most important thing that could be done to improve the ways service users relate to the service.

Chart 3:

What's the most important thing that could be done to improve the ways service users relate to the service

Category	Percentage
Other (n=15) 12.5%	12.5%
Improve employment prospects (n=10) 8.5%	8.5%
Increased flexibility from officers (n=28) 24%	24%
More 1 to 1 time with officers (n=42) 35%	35%
Improve the quality of relationships with officers (n=24) 20%	20%
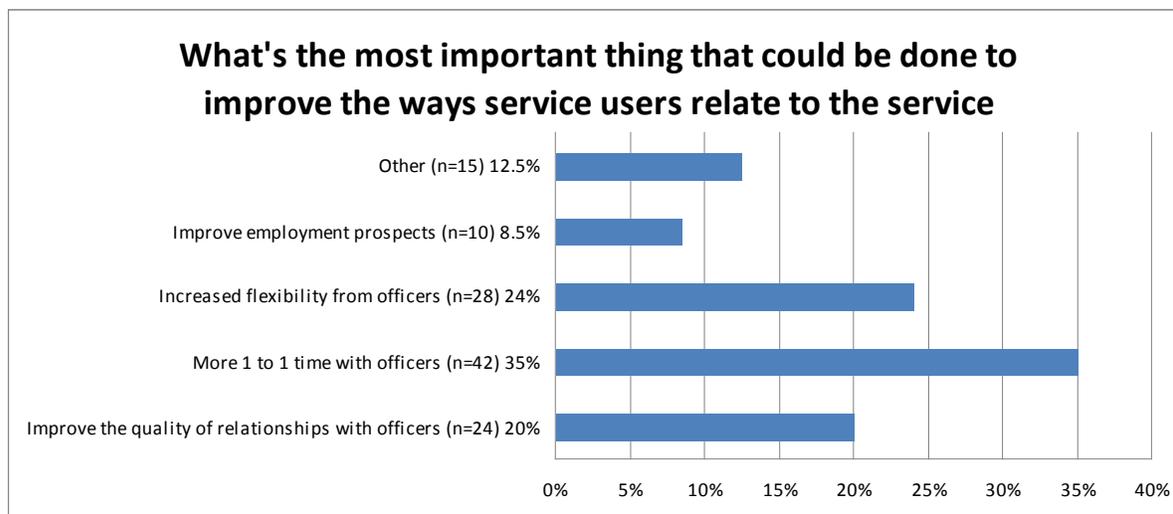
Examples of the things people said under these categories are as follows:

More 1 to 1 time with officers

The case loads are too high and there is never enough time

Increased flexibility from officers

Some officers are just too quick to breach

These days they are so inflexible about timings

Improve the quality of relationships

The key is two-way communication, we are both responsible

More help to interact with each other

Offenders need to learn to be more open

Improve employment prospects

Having the feeling that you might get a job at the end would make it seem more worthwhile

27

4.1.4 What does the term Service User Involvement mean to you?

The fourth item on the questionnaire asked people to describe in their own words what the term Service User Involvement meant to them.

Chart 4:

What does the term Service User Involvement mean to you?

Category	%
Doing their work for them (n=1) 1%	1%
Compliance with requirements (n=6) 5%	5%
SUs supporting services (n=7) 6%	6%
SUs delivering services (n=13) 11%	11%
SUs attending services (n=16) 13%	13%
Probation listening to SU views (n=16) 13%	13%
Nothing (n=60) 50%	50%
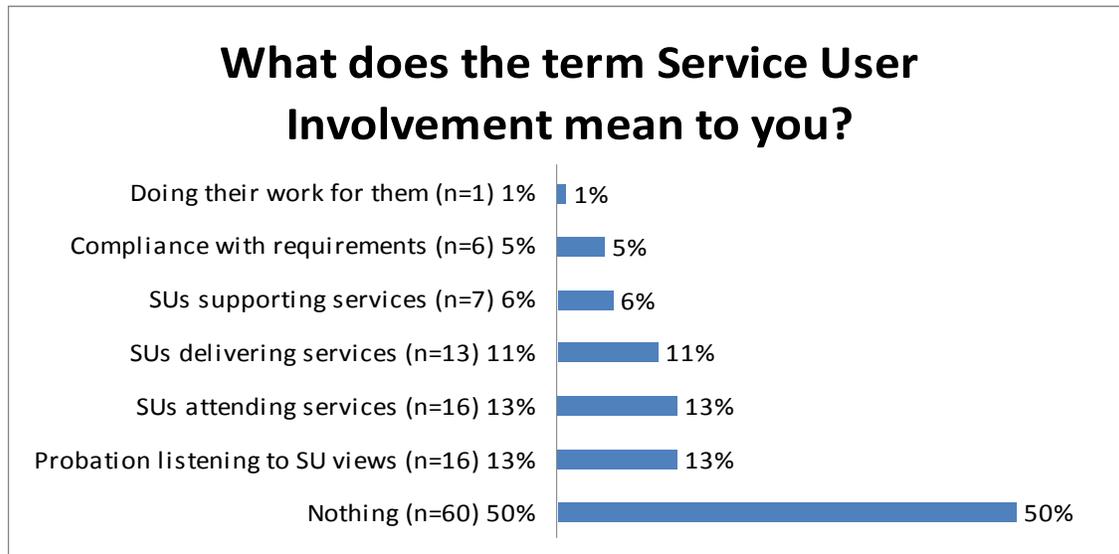
Examples of the things people said under these categories are as follows:

Nothing

I don't know what it means

Never heard of it

Probation listening to service user views

It's when probation listens to feedback from service users

Service users attending services

It's about using what's available

Service users delivering services

It's service users delivering programmes

Service users supporting services

Service users helping out in services

Compliance with requirements

Someone (as service user) made to use the system

Doing their work for them

Us doing their work for them

4.1.5 What does the term Peer Mentor mean to you?

The fifth item on the questionnaire asked people to describe in their own words what the term Peer Mentor meant to them

Chart 5:

What does the term peer mentor mean to you?

Category	Percentage
SUs supporting SUs (n=58) 48%	48%
Nothing (n=53) 45%	45%
SUs pressuring SUs (n=4) 3%	3%
Working with key worker (n=2) 1.5%	1.5%
Other (n=2) 1.5%	1.5%
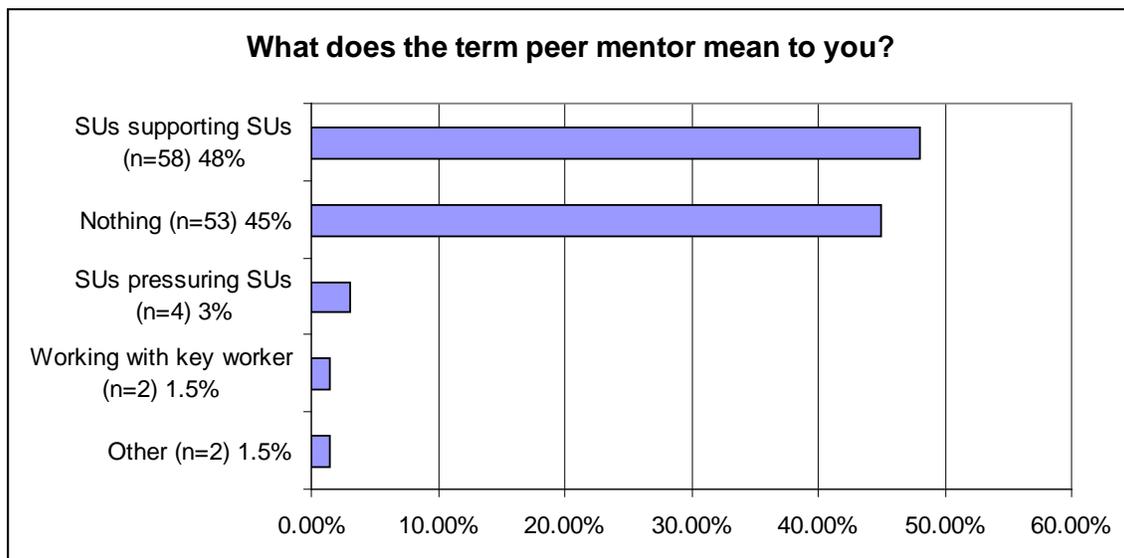
Examples of the things people said under these categories are as follows:

Service users supporting service users

Someone similar to me who's sorted themselves out and can now give their experiences

Peer means equal, and mentoring is supporting people back into the community

A person there for you who uses their experience

A person to talk to who has some understanding of what you have been through

Nothing

I've got no idea what it means

Never heard of it

29

Service users pressuring service users

Service users watching you and reporting back

Service users putting pressure on others

Working with keyworker

That's what you do with your keyworker

4.1.6 Are you interested in having your say about probation?

The sixth item on the questionnaire asked people whether they were interested in having their say about how probation services are delivered.

Chart 6:
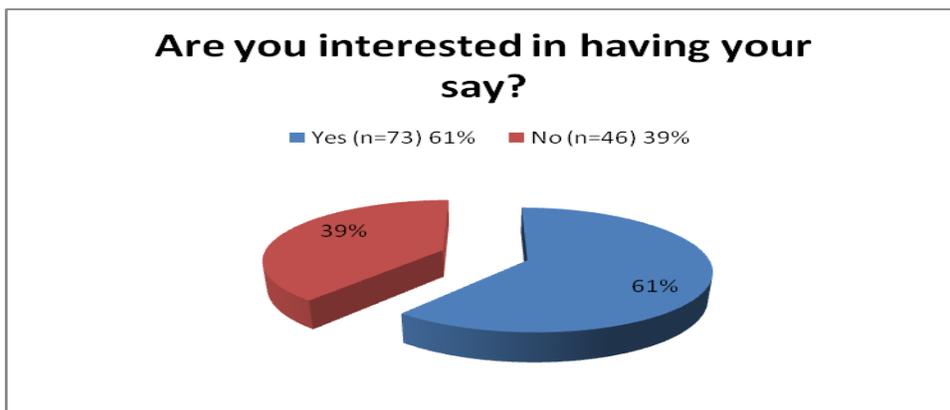
4.1.7 What's the best way for service users and probation to communicate on these issues?

The seventh item on the questionnaire asked people identify what the best way is for probation and service users to communicate on these issues.

Chart 7:
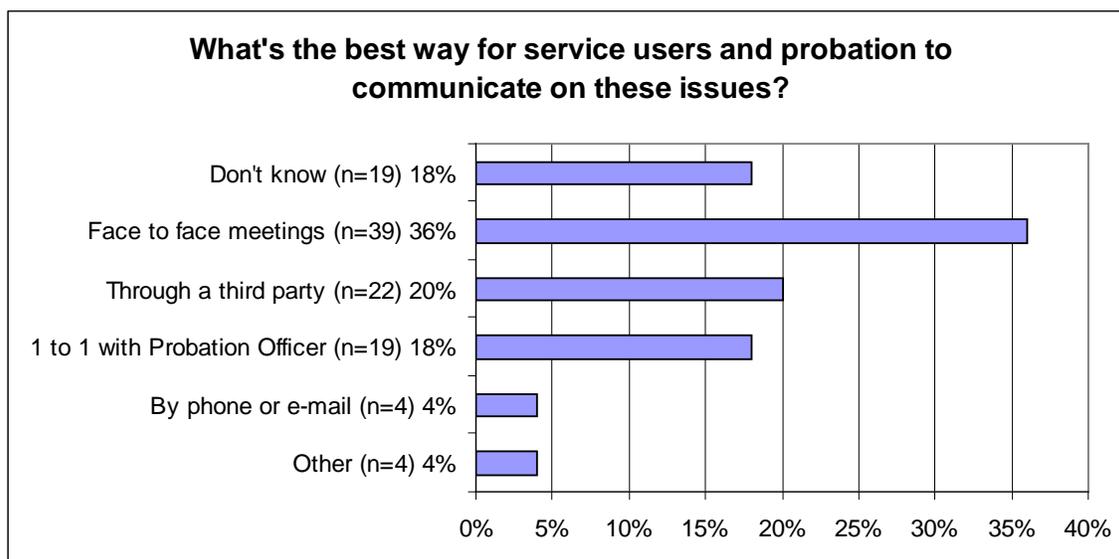
Examples of the things people said under these categories are as follows:

Face to face meetings

In a meeting where both sides attend and people actually listen

An opportunity to actually talk with services

It's got to be face to face otherwise there's no point cause nothing happens

Speaking to PO's with their heads screwed on and their feet on the ground

Brainstorming panels

Through a third party

It needs third party involvement because if you are honest with probation it will come back on you

Service user forums with outside involvement

One to one with Probation Officer

Calm one to one talking with your officer

By Phone or e-mail

People to phone up and give their views

I'd send mine by e-mail probably

4.2 Discussion group findings

4.2.1 Main issues faced by probation clients which affect their relationship with the service

Introduction

In common with the responses in the questionnaires quite a lot of people in the discussion groups reported decent relationships with individual probation officers, although the proportions reporting positive relationships were not quite as high. However a number of people reported issues that they felt had the capacity to positively or negatively affect a client's relationship with the service. These are as follows:

4.2.1.1 Housing Issues

Housing was raised as an important issue in each of the five discussion groups. The main issues identified around housing were as follows:

- The majority suggested that they had a poor understanding of the housing system and their rights and entitlements;
- Several people had lost accommodation whilst they were in prison,
- Several had ongoing problems getting housing due to debts incurred whist they were much younger (in some cases more than fifteen years earlier);
- Many had difficulty planning housing for their release whilst in custody, especially those serving short sentences;
- Some felt probation officers were reluctant to get involved in housing issues either due to the time consuming nature of handling these issues or because the officers had a poor knowledge of the system;
- Low levels of suitable hostel accommodation for women and for former drug and alcohol users who are abstinent were also mentioned.

One woman's story is as follows:

> *I have been on probation since July 2008. When I first started on probation my PO said she would help me with housing and help me with a job. But I did it all myself. I have been on probation for two years... I was expected to live on the street at the Blowers [on the street] where homeless people sleep to keep warm.*

Things that people advocated to address these issues included:

- A one stop shop for housing issues
- Literature and/or leaflets co-produced by service users and housing specialists which provide relevant information about the system and people's rights within it.

4.2.1.2 Employment and education

A large number of people in the discussion groups felt that there is a limit in real employment opportunities and in training opportunities which have a realistic possibility of delivering employment. Several people suggested that this situation essentially leads to offenders leading a continued exclusion even after they have served their sentence. Several made statements such as 'what's the point' indicating a belief that there was little realistic possibility of gaining employment. Two people reported that one employment organisation told them they were over qualified . As one person put it:

> *I have a CSCS labourer's card to go on site. I got the card through probation and a fork lift licence, but hasn't helped get a job cause I haven't got any experience. It's another system catch 22.*

Participants made the following suggestions related to employment:

- Workshops which provide skills which increase confidence, sense of achievement and employability (e.g. motorbike workshops leading to NVQs).
- Programmes which offer real qualifications that help get real jobs.

- Programmes with links to real employers who want to give offenders a chance.
- More opportunities available than simply unpaid work

4.2.1.3 Throughcare and aftercare for drug and alcohol problems

A large number of those in the discussion groups emphasised that problems related to reoffending and/or relapse into drug or alcohol use had occurred after the end of their orders. Several people articulated a need for some form of support and throughcare at the end of probation orders. As two people put it:

If you are off your license and you feel vulnerable that's when you really need the help. I finished probation order 6 months ago but I have started relapsing with drink. I contacted probation because I was feeling vulnerable but she said you are off your order we can't help.

When I came off my order I was taken up to LCPT but I never took that up. It was my fault. My treatment worker took me there. I did not want to make contact with anyone else, I was sober, but I was not looking forward to that time when there was no contact with the probation service.

People recognised that Probation Officers are necessarily constrained by role and that many already have high caseloads and some articulated that a helpline for when people who are feeling vulnerable, or mentors outside of probation, may provide a valuable avenue of support in such circumstances and reduce a burden from the service. Another person suggested that an out of hours service would also be useful for people who are feeling vulnerable and one said:

My officer (names worker) gave me his personal number and I can ring him when I feel vulnerable if I feel weak and need someone to talk to. This really helps because the hardest bit (about stopping drug use) is not getting off but staying off and there is very little in the way of ongoing support.

A large number of those attending the discussion groups had some history of drug and/or alcohol problems. There was a good balance of people stable in recovery, those early in recovery and those still using. The general feeling was that there is insufficient focus on recovery in Leicestershire and Rutland and people pointed to lots of other towns and cities as places with a better culture of recovery. One person stable in recovery made the following comment:

In (names location) it is different because there is a culture of recovery. When I came back from (names location) there was no support and when the craving came on me I was on my own, it was awful.

People pointed to the following needs:

- An increased use of the fellowships in probation
- A rehabilitation unit for Leicestershire and Rutland
- Intense peer mentoring for those early in recovery to build a rapport and show the way forward.

- More hostel accommodation for those opting for abstinence
- Structured day care for abstinent people

4.2.1.4 Support around mental health

Many of those in the discussion groups identified current and enduring mental health problems and many feel that officers often have a low level of understanding about mental health and/or medication. This can extend people's sense of isolation and inhibit their relationship with their officer. People advocated:

- Literature and/or leaflets co-produced by service users and mental health specialists which provide relevant information about the system and people's rights within it.

4.2.1.5 The needs of minority groups

Six of those who attended the discussion groups were from Black and minority ethnic populations and four were women. Both of these groups are seen as facing specific issues which can make it more difficult for them to benefit from what is available. A lack of suitable hostel accommodation for women was one specific need identified and some from Black and minority ethnic groups suggested that cultural differences could interfere with the development of useful relationships with officers sometimes. As one person put it:

> *They (probation officers) need to understand your background because if it is a different culture, they can't exactly understand. For example if you are Muslim then you get shunned by your own community and you come back from prison you don't get accepted back. The stigma is a big issue.*

4.2.1.6 Issues related to probation officers

High case loads

Those who wanted the opportunity to spend more time with their probation officer suggested that the high case loads that officers carry limit the possibility of spending one to one time together. Some suggested that due to the high caseloads some officers were unable to remember what had been said in previous meetings and ended up feeling they were repeating themselves. If this happened continually they tended to withdraw from investing in this relationship feeling it was a 'one way street'. Some feel the high case loads that officers are forced to carry have made some officers more cynical about their role. Two comments made in discussion groups were as follows:

> *I sometimes get a two minute appointment; it's hello and how are you and that is it. It feels like a waste of time.*

> *Hello how are you, what have you been up to. And that's it.*

Changes in officer

A lot of people raised changes in officers as a time in their service journey that they found difficult.

> *When you get passed from one worker to another it is really bad because you feel like you are starting again. You tell them your life story and just*

get to feeling comfortable and then it changes and that sets you back. And these things can make you vulnerable to reoffend. And I think fuck it and go and have a drink. If they can't be bothered neither can I.

It seems relevant that some who reported positive overall service journeys also suggested that changes in officer could be difficult, as the following examples suggests:

I had a good treatment journey because I was desperate to change. I had a couple of changes because I had moved. But my first officer was the one that I really connected with and I was gutted to lose him. I had two changes and I did not like it. It was not a change from good to bad but I did find the changes difficult.

The use of discretion

In common with responses in the questionnaires, several people in this discussion group suggested that the Probation Service's position on the use of discretion by officers appeared to have changed in recent years. People talked about specific officers exercising discretion and gave examples. However in general in this group there was support for the view that officers were less flexible than they used to be.

One example cited by several people was lack of flexibility about appointment times. Several people gave examples of people being breached for being fifteen minutes late for appointments and it was suggested that the maximum leeway on appointments is ten minutes. However the same individuals cited occasions when they had been expected to wait thirty or more minutes for their officer, suggesting that if a rigid ten minute rule applies it should apply both ways.

Victim focus

Several individuals said that probation officers had described to them that victims were the main focus of concern for the service now. Others suggested that this is also reflected in public opinion which they see as against offenders. One person said:

Society does not want to give you a second chance

Breaches in confidentiality

Five people in one group identified breaches of confidentiality by officers as a serious issue which affected levels of trust and engagement, although this is was not mentioned in the other four groups. In two cases participants suggested that their Probation Officer had passed information about them to other family members, in one case it had been passed to another Probation Officer and in one case someone alleged that an officer had passed their number to the police without permission with a view to being recruited as an informant.

The characteristics of 'good' and 'bad' officers

People sought to distinguish between 'good ones' and 'bad ones'. The former they saw as employing discretion, trying to be on their side and not being too constrained by the requirements of role. The latter they saw as hiding behind the requirements of the role, being more concerned with statistics and measurement and being inflexible, power focused and judgemental. One individual suggested that a PO had made the following statement to them:

We are not here to help you and to wipe up after you, we are here to supervise you.

However some in the group suggested that officers are tired of hearing the same old excuses from clients and it is this institutional dishonesty amongst some users which is damaging relationships.

Discussion group participants defined a 'good' probation officer as:

- Genuine

- Down to earth

- Flexible

- Listen to you in order to understand your situation and get to know you

- Not too quick to make judgements

- Not trigger happy on breach/recall

- Not too constrained by role

Discussion group participants defined a 'bad' probation officer as:

- Restricted by role

- Focused on targets and performance

- Inflexible

- Seem to enjoy the exercise of power

- Don't deliver on promises

4.2.2 User involvement and peer support

Most people in these discussion groups supported the potential value of user involvement and peer support making comments such as:

I'd sooner get advice from people who have actually been there.

However many have a low level of confidence that the service is committed to implementing 'real' user involvement and feel that this current project may prove to be a token gesture. Others are concerned that if they 'get honest' that the service will react badly and this may affect their future relationship with it.

Probation officers always put themselves on pedestals and talk down to you.

When asked 'what sorts of things might act to alter these views' people made the following suggestions:

- Face to face meetings with people at the top (e.g. *telling it to the organ grinder*) to make things happen and see that people are listening;

- Action;

- Seeing change happening;

- A proper process which gives recognition to the issues being brought forward and some accountability of issues, views and actions;

- The development of forms of support initiated and led by offenders for offenders. What one person described as a sort of NA, AA thing for offenders;

- A commitment to something long term or permanent; and

- Seeing the service actually using 'our knowledge and expertise in developing and delivering services, because stopping using (drugs) does not improve the situation but seeing people 10 to 15 years down the line does help.

One person recognised that for user involvement to really make a difference requires a commitment to power sharing and users assuming more responsibility for their own lives and issues:

> *We often blame the other person (the service provider) and this (blaming) is in that nature of the 'us and them' relationships in the criminal justice system. We need to change this (approach) to get people to take responsibility and to do things for themselves, not perpetually wait for others to do things for us.*

4.3 Seminar findings

4.3.1 Four presentations by service users

After the event opening four service users chosen by others in the discussion groups were asked to present key issues under four specific headings. The main issues identified under each of the four headings are presented below. The names of those who presented under these headings have been removed to protect the anonymity of those who took part, from a wider audience although those who attended on the day will clearly know their names.

1.	Problem: Health and Wellbeing
Solution: Need for a health care centre within probation	
Business: DVD's and/or leaflets produced by users alongside healthcare workers	
Incentives: Access to health care improves wellbeing and more productive work with user	

2.	Problem: Employment, education and training
Solution: Support in practical areas which is not time-line based and an out of hours support service which is available for all.	
Business: The provision of practical support and development of buy in from staff and service users.	

Incentives: May act as a form of aftercare and lighten load on officers.

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3.   Problem: Relationships with probation officers and probation programmes

Solution: Support group run by successful ex-offenders alongside the probation service, raise awareness about what's available, employing service user expertise in the delivery of programmes.

Business: Education and training, users working alongside providers, helpline run by ex-users.

Incentives: Less re-offending, increased trust and less complaints

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4.   Problem: Housing – How does the system work? Need for better support and planning.

Solution: Closer cooperation between benefits agency and probation, training for probation officers, list of appropriate landlords, travel warrants and venues for family visits, appropriate accommodation to support move-on journeys.

Business: Better information systems,, advocacy and representation at policy forums and committees

Incentives: Appropriate housing supports move-on journeys

4.3.2 Discussion groups involving service users and staff based on the four themes above

Four discussion groups were convened to bring staff and service users together to discuss the four themes that service users had previously presented on. The main issues emerging from these discussions were as follows:

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1.   Problem: Health and Wellbeing

- There are a lot of shared frustrations between staff and service users

- One example is mental health provision and people identified the need for better links between relevant services and better liaison to stop service users having to repeat their stories on a number of separate occasions. One other idea was for a mental health worker to be seconded to probation

- It was suggested that officers could liaise with relevant services to advocate for people's needs

- A new scheme about to begin which may help in the area is the 'Health Trainers Scheme' in which ex-offenders will be trained and employed as advice workers.

- Access to detoxification services and rehabilitation services is a shared frustration for service users and staff. There is a need for support before and after detoxification.

2. Problem: Employment, education and training (EET)

- People mentioned that some service users seem to need a long time before they are ready for this and for others it is the key thing that makes a difference at the beginning of orders. Hence there is no single agreed time and the availability of EET must be tailored to the individual.

- Many service users have an aspiration for meaningful employment and feel what employment is on offer often lacks interest and challenge

- The group sought to assert that whilst getting a job is important that the point at which this goal is achieved can be stressful and may generate support needs. This may be solved by the provision of some semi-independent support.

- The group also discussed the importance and value of success stories of people who have successfully moved into employment, education and training as motivational for people still stuck in offending journeys; as one person said, there is the need to 'shout these from the rooftops'. Two of the ex-users at the seminar are in the third year of degrees and one has completed a degree.

3. Problem: Relationships with probation officers and probation programmes

- This group emphasised how the definitions of the probation officers role had changed from 'advice, assist and befriend' to 'supervise'. However service users and staff in this group recognise that the relationship is key to achieving things and that trust is a vital component for successful relationships.

- One staff member mentioned that officers do not get rewarded for making relationships but for helping the service meet targets within its KPI framework.

- One useful way forward mentioned was the idea of joint training with staff and service users to aid, communication, interaction and understanding.

- Both staff and service users accepted that some officers interpret the requirements of role differently to others which can lead to an unequal service experience in important areas such as breach.

- People asserted that some services which offenders are referred to in seeking employment such as 'Working Links' offer a very restricted service and do not seem interested in understanding or helping people's individual situations. As one person put it '*they only seemed interested in getting me to sign the piece of paper so that they could get paid*'

4. Problem: Housing – How does the system work? Need for better support and planning.

- This group suggested that there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for housing and a lack of clarity about how the system works.

- There is a shared feeling that there is a need to communicate better how the system works and what people's rights are within it.

- There is a strong need for better information systems about housing and much better planning for release from prison.

- People talked about a rent deposit scheme which is available locally but there were very low levels of understanding amongst users about the scheme which needs addressing.

- One suggestion moving forward is for a user champion for housing

- Another is for an information pack co-created by users and housing experts.

4.3.3 Next steps from a probation and service user perspective

The final two discussion groups of the event were made up of staff and service users working in single groups to discuss next steps from a staff and service user perspective. The main issues emerging from these discussions were as follows:

Service user and ex-service user next steps

The service users made positive comments about the discussions which were seen as a useful beginning. Ideas moving forward included:

- Developing an out of hours helpline which involves ex-users

- The co-production of pamphlets and DVDs about key issues

- The co-production of successful stories of rehabilitation

- A need for befriending services for service users who are socially isolated

- A possible newsletter to update on current issues

- A continuation of events which bring service users and staff together for a real exchange of ideas

- A need to gauge progress to demonstrate it is not tokenistic

- A need for a structured approach

Staff next steps

The staff also sought to emphasise that this event has been very useful and that the discussions provide many useful ideas for ways forward. These include:

- A need to build on existing strands of activity but also to create a coordinated strategy

- The need to develop an improved approach to aftercare

- A new focus on getting things right at the beginning of orders

- The need to develop some out of hours support

- A plan to institute co-training involving staff and service users

- A plan to use positive stories of successful rehabilitation

- A commitment to developing a full action plan around user involvement

5.   Discussion

5.1 Factors which contribute to the success or failure of probation service journeys

In this consultation service users have identified a large number of issues as relevant to the success or failure of probation journeys. The findings indicate the importance that many people on probation place on establishing a positive relationship with their probation officer and also that a significant proportion of those who took part in this consultation reported that they had a positive relationship with their probation officer.

However, participants also identified a series of issues which they felt have the capacity to interfere with their probation service journeys. The Social Exclusion Unit's report (2002) identifies on the basis of considerable research evidence the factors listed below as those most likely to influence reoffending rates. There is a striking commonality between these issues and the main emergent themes from this consultation, which indicates that service user thinking is in line with established research evidence. What is also striking is that despite some service users engaging in simple and unequivocal blaming of probation service for all problems, the vast majority of those who took part did not, with most seeing offenders own roles and responsibility for re-offending journeys.

> **Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners (2002) Social Exclusion Unit**
>
> - Education
> - Employment
> - Drug and alcohol misuse
> - Mental and physical health
> - Attitudes and self-control
> - Institutionalisation and life-skills
> - Housing
> - Financial support and debt; and
> - Family networks

The issues from this consultation emphasise the extent to which contextual factors such as housing, benefits and employment exert a serious influence on how people can take part in and benefit from what the service has to offer. Maslow's hierarchy of need is a useful way of considering the implications of these contextual factors. This suggests that people who are focused on ensuring the basic means of survival (health, food and housing) find it more difficult to concentrate on other issues and concerns (e.g. personal development or altered thinking).
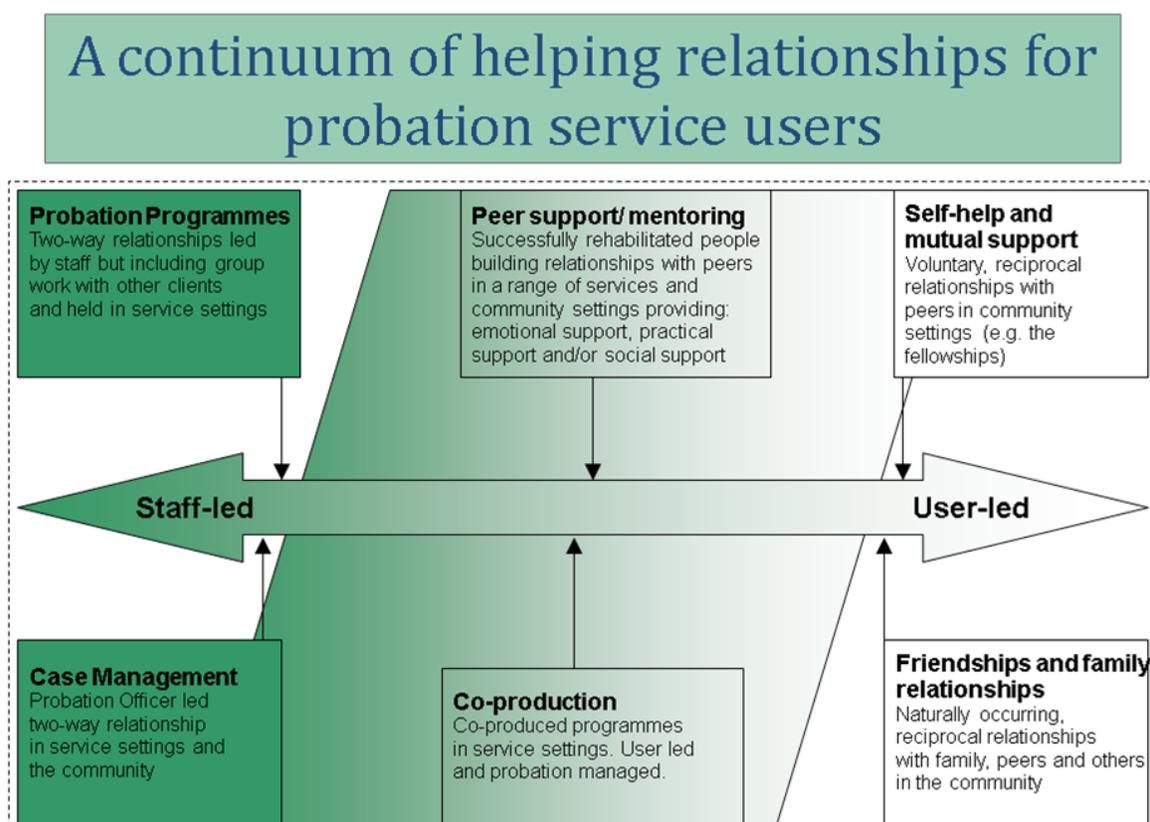
5.2 Developing a continuum of support in Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust

Introducing the continuum

Despite the low level of awareness about the terms 'user involvement' and 'peer-mentor' exhibited in this consultation, in the discussion groups people clearly articulated that they grasped the concepts. They also perceived value in service users contributing to the design, evaluation and delivery of services and other forms of support. These discussions continued at the seminar where both staff and service users recognised that developing this agenda will require investment, time and commitment from both users and service providers and commissioners.

In articulating our ideas for a way forward in Leicestershire and Rutland on the basis of the findings from this consultation we have adapted a model developed by Davidson and Rowe (2008) who have examined peer support in criminal justice settings in the US (the adapted model is presented in figure 1). The findings of the consultation indicate that a range of different relationships are important to probation service users in move-on journeys from crime. These will be considered individually before considering the implications of gaps in certain areas.

Figure1

A continuum of helping relationships for probation service users

Probation Programmes
Two-way relationships led by staff but including group work with other clients and held in service settings

Peer support/ mentoring
Successfully rehabilitated people building relationships with peers in a range of services and community settings providing: emotional support, practical support and/or social support

Self-help and mutual support
Voluntary, reciprocal relationships with peers in community settings (e.g. the fellowships)

Staff-led ————— User-led

Case Management
Probation Officer led two-way relationship in service settings and the community

Co-production
Co-produced programmes in service settings. User led and probation managed.

Friendships and family relationships
Naturally occurring, reciprocal relationships with family, peers and others in the community

Adapted from a model developed by Davidson and Rowe 2008

Relationships with probation officers

One to one relationships with probation officers are one important component of the continuum. Despite the change in definition of the probation role from 'advice, assist and befriend' to 'supervision' both staff and users agree that the relationship is one of the main ways in which things are achieved. Chart 3 (p.19) emphasises 'more one to one time with officers', 'improving the quality of 'relationships with officers' and 'increased flexibility from officers' are the three things identified as most important by service users as ways to improve the way they relate to the service. In the seminar both staff and service users shared concerns about relationships, although it was recognised that within the wider probation staff team there were a range of different views about the style and quality of relationships which are most appropriate to the probation function. It was also mentioned that staff do not get credit from the performance system for this area of work.

Our findings also suggest that however good or bad the relationship with a specific officer may be there is a limit to the amount of support that can be gained from it. This is because many people will only see their officer once a week, once a fortnight or once a month. Service users recognise that officers have large case loads and are constrained by the requirements of role, this means there are understandable limits to regularity of support which can be provided. This means good relationships with officers are seen as necessary, but insufficient to support move-on journeys in isolation.

Probation programmes

Participants in this consultation gave probation programmes mixed reviews. Although some valued specific programmes others cited examples of programmes they had been referred to which did not seem relevant to their offences nor to their specific needs and issues. This said many of the questionnaire sample (29%) also suggested that preconceived attitudes held by offenders were the main reason why some did not go to programmes. This indicates that service users recognise the responsibility for non-attendance at programmes is not merely one that lies with the service. Hence, as with relationships with officers, good programmes can be seen as necessary, but insufficient in isolation.

Friends and family

Many people in this consultation identified friends and family as central to their wellbeing, stability and vital to move-on journeys. This said large numbers also reported being estranged from their families and to complicate matters further some of those who saw their family as vital were also estranged from them which could be quite upsetting. Those who were trying to recover from drug and alcohol problems in particular had often left entire friendship networks behind. This created a situation in which many reported feeling very isolated. We came across several individuals in this project who had not used drug or alcohol for more than a year and in sustaining recovery journeys and had deliberately chosen to move away from their home areas. Whilst this allowed them to stay away from some situations which might lead to a relapse, it also often meant that they were often very isolated which created its own vulnerabilities. What the findings emphasise is that this aspect of helping relationships is severely lacking for some probation clients.

Self-help and mutual support

The next avenue of support in the continuum is that provided by independent self-help and mutual support networks (e.g. the fellowships). However many people suggested that there is not a strong recovery culture in Leicestershire and Rutland leaving this area of support also under-developed.

Current peer mentoring and service user involvement locally

There are two groups currently operating in Leicestershire and Rutland, a peer-mentor group developed by the Criminal Justice Drug Team and a service user group developed by MAPPOM. In the course of the consultation we met with those who set these programmes up, examined the literature and spoke to most of the current mentors. Hence we have examined, but not specifically evaluated the programmes. Our view is that the current programmes are at an early stage of development, have mainly been developed and managed by staff, that recruitment to the CJDT programme is managed by staff and that there are currently quite low number of active mentors and/or members in each programme. This said the CJDT programme is about to undertake a new round of recruitment and this programme appears well balanced in terms of its dual focus on consumer feedback and personal development and the MAPPOM programme has tried hard to develop a user orientation.

If our observations are true, the current style and focus of activity limits the potential impact of these programmes in a number of ways:

- Given the overall number of people under probation supervision in Leicestershire and Rutland the numbers involved are currently small; although the completion rate for the CJDT programme in phase 1 seems reasonable (three out of twelve as we understand it) it is low compared to the completion rate of probation programmes generally.

- Some service users view the current peer mentors with a level of suspicion due to the staff ownership of the programme

- Staff sometimes choose different user representatives than service users might; this reflects that staff and service users often prioritise different elements of user involvement and benefit in different ways from user involvement activity

- The current schemes are mainly likely to exert their influence within the probation system; influence here is necessary but insufficient in isolation to support move-on journeys for some.

Moving forward around User Involvement and peer-led support

The user involvement and peer-led support agendas are not about a simple move from service control to user control. This would be an anathema in criminal justice services; although as one person pointed out at the seminar 'ex-users are already delivering some of the best drug treatment programmes in the country'. Neither is it about 'the customer is always right' as one person put it, but about users assuming both rights and responsibility and about staff and users making a commitment to the exchange of ideas

in an open way. Addressing these issues locally will take time, commitment and coordination and a process of building on successes; this is worth noting lest some service users anticipate that a lot of change may come very quickly.

It may also need to address the fact that staff will understandably seek to defend programmes which they have taken time and effort to develop and will emphasise positive initial results and the explicit benefits to those who have taken part. We feel that despite the lack of user involvement in the design and implementation of the existing programmes it is conceivable that an ambition to user ownership and a user-led model could be implemented over time, although people should anticipate that such changes may well alter the offering of these programmes. In the CJDT programme the employment of service user involvement coordinators in the programme goes some way to supporting this, although as these roles are line managed within probation their independence is limited.

The purpose of advocating independence is that it may strengthen the programme and diversify those who take part and complete the programme. We think it is important to see an ambition for independence in the context of what is currently missing from the lives of many service users in terms of 'self-help and mutual support' and the support of 'friends and family'. When things at one end of the continuum are severely lacking, it may well place additional pressure of expectation at the other end, making the model look more like figure 2.

Figure 2

A continuum of helping relationships for probation service users

Probation Programmes
Two-way relationships led by staff but including group work with other clients and held in service settings

Self Help and Mutual support
Voluntary reciprocal relationships with peers in community settings

User-led

Staff-led

Case Management
Probation Officer led two-way relationship in service settings and the community

Friendships and family relationships
Naturally occurring, reciprocal relationships with family, peers and others in the community

Adapted from a model developed by Davidson and Rowe 2008

It is worth reminding ourselves of why peer support and peer mentoring are seen as valuable. This is because they allow people to share experiences and gain support from people they see as facing and/or having faced similar challenges to them. Participants in the seminar sought to emphasise that peer support should not only be provided by those who are successfully rehabilitated but can also be provided jointly by people who are moving on together. This said, many recognise that great motivation can be drawn from those who have successfully moved on.

Peers are often described as 'trusted messengers' and the types of support that they can provide have been summarised as:

- **psychological and emotional:** which improves self-esteem and confidence;

- **social:** which helps develop a crime-free and drug-free social life and reduce isolation; and

- **practical:** support such as training opportunities, escorting people to services and advocating for people in contact with statutory and voluntary services .

This does not suggest that peer-mentoring has not got a vital role to play in services, it has. It simply argues that it has a much larger role to play in supporting move-on journeys both within and outside services and will benefit in this endeavour from appropriate independence of role and function.

In addition to moves towards independence the limits in 'self-help and mutual support' and the support of 'friends and family' experienced by many in this consultation articulate a clear need to widen the sphere of influence of peer-support locally. Some examples of how this might happen include:

- Forums – which offer a social and emotional support and also a consumer orientation

- Training and employing ex-service users to provide telephone and out of hours support

- Developing links to established self-help networks such as Narcotics Anonymous (include local examples);

- Developing a new overarching structure for user involvement, peer-support and representation such as a probation council. This will help make sure that change happens more systematically and across the system not simply within silos.

- Supporting the development of new self-help/peer-led approaches for specific groups of offender (e.g. women) who are not happy about attending general groups. This is because no one model of peer-support is suitable for everyone and offenders are not an homogenous group of individuals who always treat each other with decency and respect.

The Co-production

Co-production has been defined in the following ways:

- A recognition that services do not drop off the conveyor belt
- Active involvement by people who use services in the production and delivery of them.
- Service users as active asset holders not passive beneficiaries
- Valuing and utilising the assets and expertise of users more explicitly (Needham, K. 2009)

Co-production is now a clearly articulated requirement in health and social care. In criminal justice it will build on a recognition that stable, recovered service users have skills and expertise which can positively support the probation function. It is a transformative agenda which looks to support service users to deploy these skills and expertise in the delivery of successful programmes.

Naturally this agenda will bring several areas of concern in a criminal justice arena. Concerns are likely to include:

- An appropriate approach to risk management
- Addressing staff concerns about loss of status and loss of resources and taking staff on a journey from anxiety and concerns to understanding the benefits.
- How co-production fits in with performance indicators.
- How can co-produced programme be approved

Many staff and users at the seminar held shared frustrations about the service. Co-produced programmes such as training and information products were seen as viable ways of developing the co-production agenda.

5.3   Strengths and limitations of this consultation

The main activity for this consultation was undertaken over a two month period. During this time over 200 service users were engaged and n=156 took part in the consultation either completing questionnaires or taking part in discussion groups and the final seminar. Given the resources available for the project this is considered a good number and the data provide a rich picture of views and opinions.

This said, the data from the questionnaires are subject to a number of limitations. These are as follows (i) The thematic analysis process used to create the table is based on coding of qualitative narrative. This involves human interpretation and hence is fallible; (ii) the sample size does not reach the required level for statistical significance; (iii) the sample is not necessarily representative of those who are supervised by the probation service. Hence limited weight should be attached to the statistics presented below.

Women are underrepresented in the sample as a whole. Two explanations are offered for this; (i) the research team was entirely male which may have deterred some women from attending; and (ii) women may have been less happy to attend discussion groups where males were attending.

Both staff and users communicated positive ideas about possible ways forward during the seminar, although outside of the main forums some staff members privately communicated to the team displeasure with certain aspects of the consultation process. The overall positive picture emerging from the seminar should be tempered by the possibility that those who attended (both staff and users) may have been those most positively minded to this agenda which may create false optimism about future prospects.

5.4   Summary

Despite the low level of awareness about the terms 'user involvement' and 'peer-mentor' exhibited in this consultation, in the discussion groups people clearly articulated that they grasped the concepts. They also perceived value in service users contributing to the design, evaluation, and delivery of services and other forms of support. These discussions continued at the seminar where both staff and service users recognised that developing this agenda will require investment, time and commitment from both users and service providers and commissioners.

The experience of health and social care is instructive here, where many forms of user involvement have been developed over many years and in which the journeys towards cooperative working and user independence have often been political, difficult, disjointed and far from smooth. However involvement of users from the outset in the design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of programmes is now seen as an essential prerequisite of strong modes of user involvement in health and social care. This is not least because in some cases users articulate that the gap between user involvement policy and what people experience on the ground is significant.

The work has begun in Leicestershire and Rutland but there is a need for more ambition. The development process will take time, patience, determination, and the explicit investment of human and financial resources. It will also require the development of an overarching strategy, the explicit communication of an action plan and of achievements in order to dispel levels of suspicion about tokenism.

If the agenda is to benefit the service and the lives of those who use it, it cannot be developed and controlled by one group in isolation. Developing this agenda requires an equal balance of two sets of champions: a) ex-users as catalysts of projects and key to support provided; and b) professionals and organisations, key to their ongoing development and stability (Home Office 2005).

6. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Develop an overarching strategy and action plan for the development of User Involvement and Peer-Led Support locally

Commentary

One of the commitments made by staff at the seminar event was to develop a comprehensive action plan. This is very encouraging because it speaks to anxieties expressed by some service users throughout the consultation that staff may not be serious about developing this agenda. Service users at the seminar also made a specific request that a process will be instituted which gauges progress and demonstrates that the approach is not tokenistic.

Addressing these issues locally will take time, commitment and coordination and a process of building on successes. This is worth noting lest some service users anticipate that a lot of change may come very quickly.

An action plan should set both short term and long term objectives for the development of UI and peer-led support. These should include an investment strategy for user champions and aims and objectives around the development of appropriate levels of independence.

Recommendation 2: Contribute to the development of a continuum of helping relationships for probation service users to support move-on journeys

Commentary

The development of a continuum of helping relationships is about service users and ex-service users assuming both rights and responsibility for the support of those still in the probation system. It is important to see the need for a continuum in the context of what is currently missing from the lives of many service users in terms of 'self-help and mutual support' and the support of 'friends and family'. These issues may add additional pressure of expectation on service providers.

Peer support and peer mentoring is valuable because it allows people to share experiences and gain support from people they see as facing and/or having faced similar challenges to them. Peers provide psychological and emotional support, social support, and practical help. The value of forms of support which help people to develop crime free and drug-free lives and reduce isolation should not be underestimated.

Recommendation 3: Develop a set of user-champions capable of contributing to UI and co-production locally and developing different models of peer-led support

Commentary

Developing this agenda requires an equal balance of two sets of champions:

> a) ex-users as catalysts of projects and key to support provided; and

> b) professionals and organisations, key to their ongoing development and stability.

It also requires recognition that no single model of support suits all individuals or groups.

This project has identified a number of individuals locally who could take on roles as user champions. The Trust should seek to maintain engagement with these individuals and develop and investment strategy which supports their individual and collective development as a resources which can support UI, peer-led support and co-production (e.g. staff training, probation programmes and information resources for service users).

The value to probation service journeys of forms of support which help people to develop crime free and drug-free lives and reduce isolation should not be underestimated.

Recommendation 4: Consider implementing a pilot probation council for the development of the above agendas

Commentary

Probation Councils aim to democratise engagement with service users by providing a structure for service users select other service users to represent them across a range of issues (e.g. housing, employment, training, education, resettlement and community) in a council also attended by senior probation management. Councils provide a structured and effective means by which service users can voice their problems, concerns and solutions to issues and provide a point of reference for the design, delivery and evaluation of new and existing services.

The council provides a clear structure for service user representation. The two way dialogue at the council aims to make programmes and policies more relevant to the needs of the recipients and therefore more effective. This can ultimately lead to a better use of public funds and a reduction in re-offending.

This process of implementing the model will provide Leicestershire and Rutland Probation with a group of service users credible to both staff and their peers who are able to take forward the recommendations set out above in partnership with Probation services. The focus on two way exchange helps meet the needs of both service provider and service user.

Appendices

Appendix 1: User Voice

Our Mission: User Voice exists to reduce offending by presenting the voice of the most marginalised people in and around the criminal justice system to decision makers.

Why we're effective: User Voice is a charity led and delivered by ex-offenders. This gives us the unique ability to gain the trust of, access to, and insight from offenders within the criminal justice system.

Our impact: User Voice delivers a powerful rehabilitation experience for offenders, better criminal justice services and institutions, and policy change that will mainstream the inclusion of the user voice.

The principle behind User Voice can be applied to other areas, including:
- Children and young people
- Drugs and alcohol
- Homelessness
- Mental health

User Voice was founded by Mark Johnson, bestselling author and Guardian columnist.

Mark has a history of serious crime, homelessness and drug abuse. He went through rehabilitation at the age of 29 and ran a highly successful and award winning tree-surgery business which employed ex-offenders and those in recovery.

He has since become a leading figure in the criminal justice reform movement. He was formerly adviser to The Prince's Trust and National Probation Board and continues to advise local, central and senior government bodies. He is endorsed by HRH The Prince of Wales and is a winner of the Pride of Britain Award. His auto-biography 'Wasted' is a best seller, and he is a regular key-note speaker and monthly Guardian columnist.

Appendix 2: The International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion

The International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion (ISCRI) is a new and dynamic body at UCLan which has absorbed the principal functions and expertise of the Centre for Ethnicity & Health (CEH), and brought them together with those of the Centre for Professional Ethics (CPE), the Centre for Volunteering and Community Action (CVCA), the Institute for Philosophy Diversity and Mental Health (IPDMH) and Islamic Studies.,

The School builds on the success and innovation demonstrated by CEH over the last decade in its extensive work with diverse groups who experience discrimination and/or disadvantage[1]. The guiding ethos that has underpinned CEH's community-based research, now managed within ISCRI, is that the process should benefit those who are being researched. Through this approach acclaimed models of community engagement and organisational change have been developed.

The model of community engagement pioneered by CEH is distinguished by the way it dynamically engages community groups and individuals through their direct collaboration with a wide range of service providers and planners. This model has previously been implemented successfully across a wide variety of communities. These have represented some 35 different ethnic groups and nationalities with programme funding of over £12 million provided by central government and regional and local agencies for engaging over 300 community groups. More than 1,500 individuals have been recruited: consulting and engaging over 40,000 community members. These programmes have been commissioned specifically to address recognised gaps in the engagement of marginalised and excluded communities in meaningful and sustained ways in the design, development and delivery of a range of public and voluntary sector services (e.g. policing, criminal justice, problematic drug use, mental health, regeneration, sexual health and education).

CEH now finds a home within the new international school at UCLan which will dynamically develop its work in key areas. The new School combines four existing Centres with a number of subsidiary Institutes and programmes into a cohesive arrangement.

ISCRI has a newly established partnership with the British Muslim Heritage Centre in Manchester bringing important networking opportunities for academic collaboration and development in the Gulf and Middle East, in South Asia, and across the world. ISCRI's focus also revolves around community action, social enterprise and with the strengths of CPE and IPDMH will create an international Institute of Mental Health.

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[1] These have included Black and minority ethnic communities; refugees and asylum seekers; offenders; people with disabilities; mental health service users; lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered people; older people; and young people at risk of developing health and social harms.

USER
VOICE
ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE−OFFENDING

Service User Consultation for Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust

Information sheet: Phase 1

November 2009

Invitation to participate
You are being invited to take part in a consultation exercise. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the consultation is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information – our contact details are at the end. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this information sheet, which you should keep if you decide to take part in the study.

What is User Voice?
User Voice exists to reduce offending by presenting the voice of the most marginalised people in and around the criminal justice system to decision makers. User Voice is an organisation led and delivered by ex-offenders. This gives us the unique ability to gain the trust of, access to, and insight from offenders within the criminal justice system.

What is the purpose of the consultation?
The aim of this consultation exercise is to gain an insight from people who use the services of Leicestershire and Rutland Probation about the effectiveness of these services in helping them rehabilitate into successful living. The findings will be documented in a report. The aim is to use this report to improve the services offered by Leicestershire and Rutland Probation. It will also be used as the foundation for the future involvement of offenders and ex-offenders in Probation.

Why have I been chosen?
Participants have been chosen to participate in this consultation exercise as a result of your experience of the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation services.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care or the service you receive.

What do I have to do if I decide to take part?
If you decide to take part you will be asked to take part in a discussion about services locally and user involvement activity. You can have this discussion in a group or one to one as you prefer.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?
There are two main benefits of taking part:
- The insights given and views expressed by participants will be used to make recommendations to the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust about how it can make improvements to the services it offers.
- The consultation exercise also has the potential to showcase the benefits of involving offenders and ex-offenders more in Probation in the future.

What if I have a complaint about the study?
If you are unhappy with how you have been treated at any point in this consultation and wish to make a complaint please contact one of the following people:

Daniel Hutt
Head of Policy
User Voice
19 Buckingham Street
London WC2N 6EF
Tel: 020 7968 2740
Email: daniel@uservoice.org

Debbie Duxbury
PA to Head of School
International School for Communities Rights and Inclusion
University of Central Lancashire
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 2HE
Telephone: 01772 895129
Email: dhduxbury@uclan.ac.uk

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
I can assure you that everything you tell me is completely confidential. You need not give me your name and no information which can identify you will be passed on to anyone outside the research team. Only members of the research team will have access to the information collected during this study.

Notes from the group discussions and individual interviews will be taken. Only members of the research team will have access to these notes, and they will be destroyed after 5 years. Until then, the notes will be kept in a locked cupboard at the University. When we write the final report and any other publications, we will not use your name and nothing that can identify you will be contained in it.

Please think about what information you are happy to share with us given that the information may be included in a report for the probation service. You should consider that it may be possible that some comments could only have been made by you and hence may be recognisable in any report.

What will happen to the results of the consultation?
The results of the consultation will be used to write a report that will be presented to the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust and published in early 2010. Participants will not be identified in the report and views will remain anonymous. If you want to receive a copy this can be arranged.

Who is organising and funding the consultation?
The consultation is being funded by the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust.

Who has given permission for the consultation to go ahead?
The Ethics Committee of the University of Central Lancashire has reviewed this research.

Contact for further information
For further information please contact either:

Daniel Hutt
Head of Policy
User Voice

19 Buckingham Street
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Telephone: 020 7968 2740
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Email: anroy@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this consultation

Appendix 4: The MAPPOM group

The group was formed with the objective of generating and using ideas of people being supervised by MAPPOM, on how we as a service, can improve the service we offer, in order to help people make the most of their supervision.

The group has been running for nearly four months and meets on a fortnightly basis.

We've began a few separate projects, some that have evolved from, but are not totally in keeping with the original objective. Its hoped these projects will still be beneficial for the members of our group and motivational to service users who do not attend the group. Some are intended to change the public's perception of people on probation and one is aimed at preventing children from ending up on probation to begin with.

At the moment it's all a bit hit and miss! Some projects are at more advanced stages than others!

One of the first things the group did was to create a questionnaire (which I've attatched to this email) that was distributed to the majority of people under MAPPOM supervision. As stated at the top of the questionnaire, its aim was to get a better understanding of people's views on being supervised by MAPPOM and suggestions for improvements.

The results were then discussed by the group and suggestions made as to what improvements could be made. Ideas included:

making changes to the induction process – use less jargon so that people are more aware as to what is expected of them & what they can expect from their officer, what to do if things go wrong and so on. In the hope that a clearer understanding of these issues would improve confidence and thus compliance--- this has already been done.

making changes to the way people are informed they are a 'PPO' – there were concerns that sometimes the manner in which people are informed they are now classed as a 'PPO' leads to demotivation; as it is often not fully explained nor accompanied by information on how you can be declassed and leaves people feeling hopeless.

There were also concerns that the timing isn't always the best as some people said they just had a letter given to them at start of sentence or when people are at their lowest ebb and it is felt that this can also be highly demotivating, especially when its done in the manner mentioned above with no declass info.

- **decorating reception**
- **making certain interview rooms child friendly**
- **having a vacancy board in reception**
- **offering more flexible appointment times (**to improve compliance and make relationships between officers and service users better, as at the moment different officers have different rules regarding things like this).

Other activities the group have looked at doing are;

Going to a community art session-- We have not set a date for this yet, the aim is for group members to create pieces of art to put up around various buildings.

Having a photography day – the idea is that people who have made changes to their lifestyle already can make a collage that includes the places, people and things that they

feel helped them to overcome their obstacles and make those changes. We're thinking that these can then be used in reception areas or interview rooms to help motivate others.

Have a story printed in the Leicester Mercury- this would be part of their tackling crime campaign, it would include tips from the service users on how to avoid becoming a victim of certain crimes such as car theft & burglary and also include sonme 'success stories' of people on the group. ----This is in its early stages, I believe that Tim scotson our Strategic Director is already talking to the Mercury about this. Its hoped that the article will be printed before Christmas. --- the reson for doing this is to change the public's perceptions of people who have offended and also offer some good news stories for once as well as give the people who have made these changes some recognition.

Have two group members visit local schools-- in order to talk to youngsters already identified as being at risk of offending in later life about the dangers of drug use and offending. ----One school has been identified and a date arranged for group members Ashley May and Darren Brown to visit the school. It's hoped that once one visit has been successful more schools will be visited.

Write to MP's about the state of prisons ----this is in it very early days as we only thought about doing this last session after having a discussion about prisons, how they're run, the type of people they employ, who should be put in them and how they could change.

At the moment we have three group members that attend regularly and another three or four that attend sporadically. Our current group is full of people who are already pretty compliant and have ceased drug use. We spoke to the group about allowing people who are currently using onto the group and they felt that this would not be the best idea.

As a result of this we are to begin another group that will allow people who are currently using to attend and share their ideas. This group will still be full of people that are pretty compliant

With regard to barriers to engagement I cannot perceive any major barriers. I think that given a little more time, and more co-operation from officers in telling people about/instructing people to attend; the groups size and diversity could be pretty wide ranging.

1.   Introduction

Service User Involvement is a key priority for the Criminal Justice Drugs Team (CJDT) and this reflects the priority of this area for the National Treatment Agency and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Drug and Alcohol Action Teams (DAAT).

CJDT already has an established mechanism for Service User Involvement, with a dedicated Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and a fortnightly Service User Group. Service Users are also involved on an individual basis in their treatment and care plans.

CJDT aims to continue to develop and embed Service User Involvement to ensure that; Service Users are consulted about CJDT services to make continuous improvements; that the skills of Service Users are developed; that Service Users are represented at events and meetings and are supported to do so; and to aid compliance with treatment and positive outcomes. Developments are also being made in line with the Leicester City DAAT User Involvement Strategy and in line with the intentions of the Leicestershire and Rutland DAATs.

Part of these developments is the establishment of CJDT Peer Support, which involves a combination of Peer Mentoring, Service User Consultation and Service User representation at events and meetings.

2.   CJDT Peer Mentors

2.1   What is a CJDT Peer Mentor?

CJDT Peer Mentors are service users or ex-service users who are, or who have been, positively engaged in treatment and are motivated to help other service users to do the same.

2.2   What is the role of a CJDT Peer Mentor?

(1) To act as a positive role model: The role of a CJDT Peer Mentor is to act as a positive role model in groups and induction sessions, both during sessions and before sessions. This will include positively participating in groups, talking to service users before groups and encouraging them and assisting group work staff setting up groups etc.

(2) Developing their own skills and confidence: Through the CJDT Peer Support programme, Peer Mentors will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills in a variety of settings. This will help to develop skills and experience for employment.

How does this happen? What are mechanisms to support it?

(3) Influence and Comment on CJDT Services: CJDT Peer Mentors will also have the opportunity to influence the way CJDT services are delivered through being part of a Service User Consultation Group. New ideas or changes to CJDT services will be brought to this group on a monthly basis to gain views of the Peer Mentors.

(4) Represent CJDT Service Users at meetings and events: CJDT Peer Mentors may also have the opportunity to influence the treatment system in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland by attending DAAT level meetings and forums. There may also be conferences or other external events which CJDT Peer Mentors may have the opportunity to attend.

3.   Support Structure for CJDT Peer Mentors (see Appendix 2)

Involvement in the CJDT Peer Support programme will be a significant development opportunity for CJDT Service Users, but is recognised that an additional support structure is required.

3.1   CJDT Peer Support Group

A fortnightly Peer Support Group will be provided to support and develop CJDT Peer Mentors. This will be facilitated by a Group worker, the Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and Probation volunteers. This group will have three primary functions.

- Half of the session will aim to provide additional training and development to assist the Peer Mentors to undertake their role
- Half the session will act as Peer Support for Peer Mentors to share experiences of their mentoring and user involvement and learn from each other.
- On a monthly basis part of the CJDT Peer Support Group will act as the Service User Consultation Group where new ideas or changes to CJDT Services will be brought to the group for comment and consultation. This will be minuted to evidence Service User consultation.

3.2.   Fortnightly 1-2-1 Supervision

The CJDT Peer Support programme also includes the provision of fortnightly one-to-one supervision/support to Peer Mentors (on the weeks between the Peer Support Group). This will be provided by the Service User Engagement Co-ordinator and Probation volunteers.

3.3   Additional Support when attending meetings, forums, conferences and events

CJDT Peer Mentors may get the opportunity to attend additional meetings, forums, conferences and events, within CJDT, at DAAT level or externally. It is recognised that additional support may be required to ensure that the Peer Mentors know what to expect, what will be discussed and feel supported and empowered. This additional support will be provided when required by the Service User Engagement Co-ordinator.

4.   Recruitment to CJDT Peer Support and Training Provided

CJDT Peer Mentors are recruited via a referral from their Treatment Worker, Probation Officer or Group worker. They will be assessed for suitability by a Group worker or the Service User Engagement Co-ordinator who will complete a CJDT Peer Support Assessment form. Service Users will be assessed on an individual basis. They will need to be motivated, positively engaged in treatment (or no longer in treatment but previously positively engaged) and relatively stable in relation to their substance misuse. A lapse would not necessarily preclude them from being involved in CJDT Peer Support, but this would need to be assessed on an individual basis in conjunction with the Probation Officer and/or Treatment Worker.

CJDT Peer Mentors will firstly be required to attend "An Introduction to Peer Support" which is a full day training event. They will then be required to attend continuous training and development through structured sessions at the fortnightly CJDT Peer Support Group. This will involve standard training topics in addition to individually designed sessions to meet any particular needs of individuals in the group. Certificates will be provided for all training sessions and transport costs will be reimbursed. Peer Mentors will also receive a certificate for every 5 groups they act as a Peer Mentor for, and for every 3 sessions they are involved in the Service User Consultation Group.

5. Benefits of CJDT Peer Support

5.1 Peer Mentors – The Peer mentors will benefit from personal development, including training and support. This will aim to develop their skills and experience and would aim to increase employability. Peers will also benefit from the support and motivation of each other which will aim to assist them to continue to make positive progress in their treatment.

5.2 Other Service Users – Peer Mentors will be acting as positive role models to others in treatment which would aim to improve compliance and positive engagement in treatment. Other Service Users will gain the support from those who have also themselves been personally involved in substance misuse treatment. Service Users will also benefit from increased representation at meetings and increased consultation via the Peer Mentors.

5.3 CJDT and DAAT - CJDT would benefit from increased Service User Involvement and consultation to gain the views of Service Users on services offered. The CJDT Peer Support programme also aims to improve compliance, particularly with the structured day programme and contribute towards positive treatment outcomes. The DAAT would also benefit from the consultation with the CJDT Peer Mentors and it is likely that the Peer Mentors would be put forward as Service User representatives at DAAT meetings.
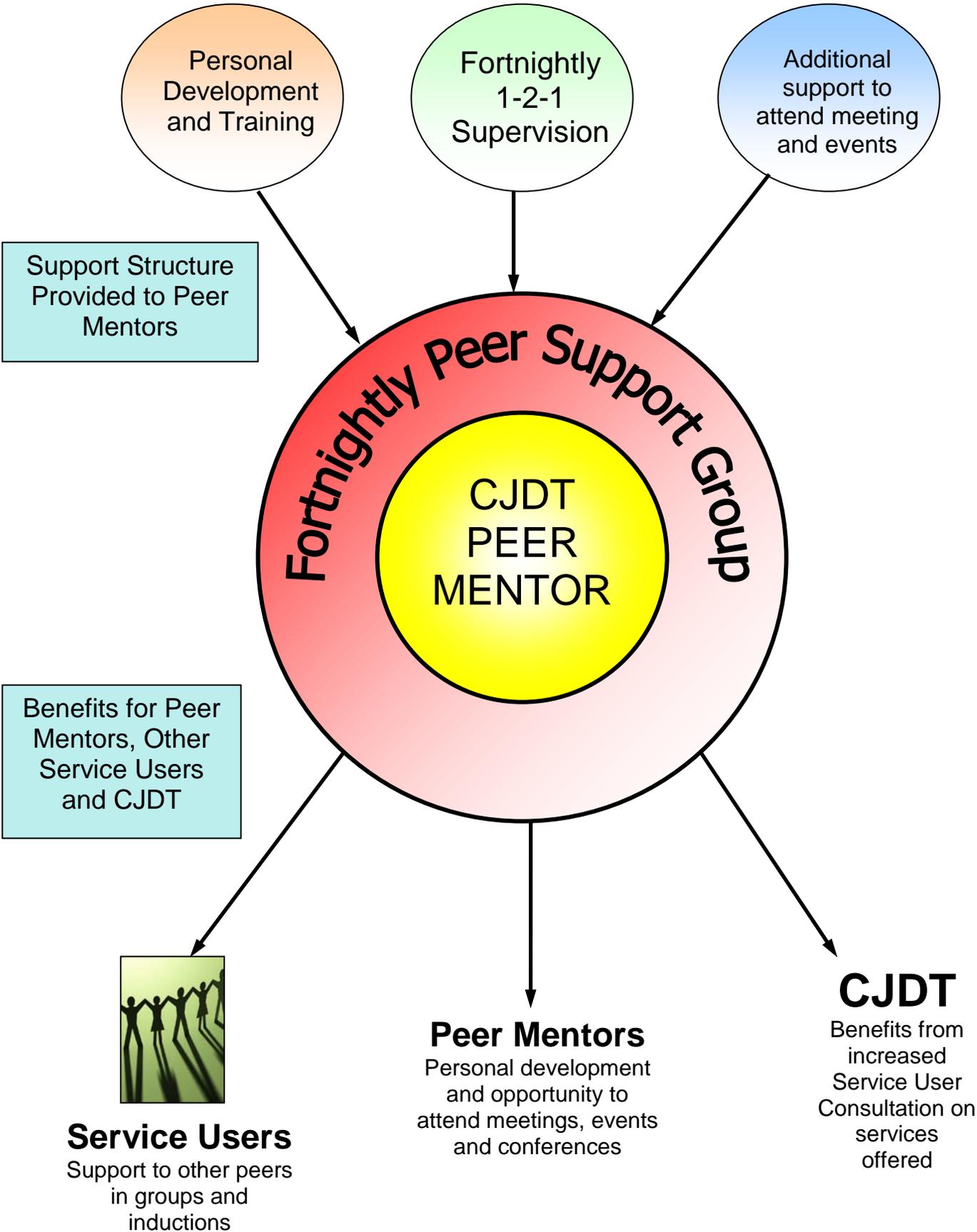
6. Ongoing development of CJDT Peer Support

The above structure is an outline plan for the implementation of CJDT Peer Support in June 2009 taking into account consultation with Service Users in Leicester and those involved in a Peer Education Project in Liverpool.

Ongoing developments will involve continued consultation with Service Users. Ongoing training and development will be provided initially through the CJDT Peer Support Group. Future developments for CJDT Peer Support may include the development of one-to-one mentoring (with appropriate training), the development of a Peer Education Programme, and developing links to other initiatives which would aim to develop qualifications for Peer Mentors and improve employability.

Sarah Smith – June 2009

CJDT Peer Support Structure

Personal Development and Training

Fortnightly 1-2-1 Supervision

Additional support to attend meeting and events

Support Structure Provided to Peer Mentors

Fortnightly Peer Support Group

CJDT PEER MENTOR

Benefits for Peer Mentors, Other Service Users and CJDT

Service Users
Support to other peers in groups and inductions

Peer Mentors
Personal development and opportunity to attend meetings, events and conferences

CJDT
Benefits from increased Service User Consultation on services offered

Appendix 6: The probation council model

Why?
In criminal justice, offenders and ex-offenders have invaluable insights to offer on the causes of crime, the effectiveness of the system, and the barriers to successful resettlement that result in failure to prevent significant numbers from re-offending. However, their unique skills generally remain unvalued, unexplored and unheard.

In the Community there are not many effective forums for the ideas and views of service users to be heard and acted upon by decision makers and service leaders. Where such structures do exist they are often very localised and isolated and although on the face of it are run for ex-offenders, the reality is that the methods used are at best unevaluated or evaluated in such a way that they reflect the views and positions of the service providers rather than the recipients.

Probation Councils can provide a structure, acceptable to society, for the user voice to be heard in an organised, sustained and replicable way throughout the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Area.

What are they?
The underlying aim of Probation Councils is to **democratise engagement with service users** by providing a structure for consulting those with direct user experience of the criminal justice system across a wide range of issues. Probation Councils provide a structured and effective means by which offenders and ex-offenders can voice their problems, concerns and solutions to these issues and provide a point of reference for the design, delivery and evaluation of new and existing services. Councils can vary in their structure depending on local areas and user defined arrangements that provide varying degrees of power or consultation.

Benefits
User Voice believes that through giving offenders and ex-offenders representation, by listening in a credible way to the 'user voice', and by empowering service users, programmes and policies will be more relevant to the needs of the recipient and therefore more effective, ultimately leading to a better use of public funds and a reduction in re-offending. The main benefits of Councils are:

1. Service Improvement
2. Inclusion
3. Personal and Skills Development
4. Evaluation

The role of User Voice
The key to successful implementation of Probation Councils is the development of the model. User Voice has undertaken extensive research of existing methods both in prison and the community and is currently piloting the model in a number of prisons in the South West. User

Voice believes through the work it has done to date it is best placed to deliver and can add significant value to the model in the following ways:

1. Good practice/lessons learnt – through a number of visits, observations and interviews with key personnel involved in Councils, User Voice has compiled a toolkit to support the successful implementation of Probation Councils.
2. Training – this research highlighted a vital missing link is the training which helps Council members understand what their role entails, the likely skills they will need and how these skills are transferable. User Voice has a number of Associates (see Appendix 2) – people with experience of social exclusion who have gone on to be experts in their field – who can support the Councils by providing relevant training.
3. Support from a national network – as the number of Councils in the country grows there are benefits to ensuring this wider network is joined up. Furthermore, Councils enable outside agencies such as employers or members of the public, see the best side of offenders.

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