

Guidance for recruiting patient/service user representatives for groups and committees

Characteristics of a successful patient/service user representative

- Have recent experience (generally within 3 years) of accessing health care as a patient/service user or family member
- For specific services specific experience should be sought – e.g. someone with Diabetes on diabetic services, someone who has been through ED on ED or a recent user or family member of ambulance care
- Ideally, where possible, someone who has a reference group or wider community of users to whom they can refer back on their position on any given agenda (i.e. they may come from a patient or community group)
- Respectful of others and their perspectives
- Comfortable speaking in a group and interacting with others
- Good listener
- Able to use their personal experience constructively
- Able to see beyond their own experience
- Non-judgemental
- Positive attitude
- Ability to work collaboratively with other patients and healthcare staff
- Desire to expand their knowledge and skills
- Desire to participate in bringing about meaningful change
- Able to maintain confidentiality of patient and organisational information

Tips for recruiting patient/service user representatives

- Ask healthcare staff/clinicians to identify patients/service users or family members who they think might be interested in participating and meet the above characteristics.
- Ask patients/service users or family members who provided feedback or made a complaint about your area/service if they are interested in participating
- Ask other patients and families who are already involved if they know anyone who might be interested in participating.
- Post notices on information boards in reception areas, clinics and emergency departments.
- Include information about opportunities for patients/service users and families to get involved in appointment letters, questionnaires and other patient information leaflets.
- Place posters in community locations – churches, community centres, citizens' information offices, etc.
- You may interview them to assess their fit with the proposed participation initiative

Information to be provided to patients/service users

- Before patients/service users can make a decision about whether or not they wish to participate on a group, they should be informed of the responsibilities associated with the role
- A fact sheet, containing the following information can be prepared and offered to individuals who are being asked to participate:
 - Terms of reference for the group/committee
 - Role of a patient representative
 - Expectations for their participation
 - Meeting times, frequency and duration
 - Expectations for communication among team members between meetings
 - Time commitment beyond meeting times
 - What are the expected outcomes of their involvement
 - Training and support to be provided
 - Reimbursement of expenses