



VOX Business Plan
2010-2012

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Executive Summary

Business description

We are a national mental health service user led organisation and we work in partnership with mental health and related services to ensure that service users get every opportunity to contribute positively to changes in the services that serve them.

VOX supports individuals and works with members to make sure that their views are listened to. Mental health service user led groups are also able to become members of VOX, this ensures that we represent a range of views and work together with groups who have a great deal of local or specialist knowledge and information.

VOX produces a quarterly newsletter which is free and allows individual and group members to have their voices heard and provides weekly updates. In addition we also produce a Diversity e-Bulletin looking at mental health from diverse community perspectives. VOX also arranges consultation events and are constantly developing opportunities to allow people to have their say on specific topics.

Background

The need for a way to bring together the voice of mental health service users in a meaningful way was explored at an Open Space Event which was held in Dundee in 2004. The event was attended by 102 service users from across Scotland and as a result of the ideas shared, a clear mandate was given to the steering group to develop a national service user led organisation to represent mental health service users in service design and delivery matters at a national level.

An interim management group began work to develop a 3 year Development Plan, Business Plan and a Constitution. In addition, funding was sought to provide VOX with a Development Coordinator. The Scottish Government Mental Health Division in recognition of the need to develop a more consistent and representative approach to engaging with those who are affected by Scottish policy and service development, agreed to fund VOX during its development period.

VOX was launched in December 2006, and has since been developing and growing to become an inclusive and sustainable organisation.

We have since then received funding from Comic Relief, which has allowed us to employ a diversity facilitator and a part time administrator.

On the 25th June 2010 the register of Companies for Scotland certified VOICES OF EXPERINCE as incorporated under the Companies Act 1985 as a private company and that the company is limited. Company Number 361753.

Charitable status was given by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, charity number SC040646.

Through its individual and group membership VOX is able to reach approximately 1,500 people who have, or have had, a mental health problem.

Management

VOX is managed by twelve Member Directors;

Board of Directors

Joyce Mouriki	Chairperson, Individual representative.
Francis Fallan	Vice-Chairperson and Lanarkshire Links representative
Dougie Pickering	Company Secretary and Individual representative
Gordon Johnson	Treasurer and Bipolar Scotland representative
Colin Murchie	HUG representative (Highland)
Ross Macphail	Individual representative
Chris Evans	Individual representative
John Sawkins	Individual representative
James McDermott	Individual representative
Tracy Laird	Individual representative
Donna Banks	Augment representative (Tayside)
Pamela Shanks	Individual representative

In addition to the member directors we have Non Member Directors who help to guide how VOX develops.

Non Member Directors

Richard Norris –	Director the Scottish Health Council
Alex Davidson –	Joint Improvement Team, Scottish Government
Dr. Linda Watt –	Vice Chair – Royal College of Psychiatrists

VOX has three members of staff listed below;

VOX staff team

Wendy McAuslan
Mahmud Al-Gailani
John Steel

VOX Development Coordinator
VOX Diversity Facilitator
VOX Administration Officer.

Aims and Objectives

Aims of VOX

- ❖ To advance community development through the facilitation of communication and exchange of experiences, information and support between and among people who have, or have had, mental health problems and other support organisations, to develop the capacity of such people to more fully engage with their communities and to participate in civil society.
- ❖ To promote, establish, operate and /or support other similar projects and programmes which are in furtherance of VOX's charitable purposes.
- ❖ To advance the health and to relieve the needs of people who have, or have had, mental health problems by providing, or encouraging the provision of, services which will improve their conditions of life and also facilitate their full integration into society;
- ❖ To advance education in relation to mental health issues;

Objectives

VOX's objectives are as follows;

- ❖ To continue to develop, support and sustain an accountable national organisation of, and for, people who have or have had mental health problems.
- ❖ To be a source of information, support and guidance in developing the capacity of people who have or have had mental health problems to participate in civil society and in the development of services with which they may engage.
- ❖ To offer a structure for people to communicate with each other, and other organisations, so that they may exchange opinions, perspectives and experiences.

Influencing factors, SWOT analysis

There are a number of influencing factors which have emerged in terms of the work of VOX.

These include the following.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>VOX is a membership organisation and its views are valid/ independent for this very reason.</p> <p>We have many opportunities to influence policy makers both within the Scottish Government and out with.</p> <p>We have very dedicated staff, directors and volunteers who help us to progress our aims.</p> <p>We work in partnership with a range of organisations, and have good relationships with a range of partners.</p> <p>We have great relationships with our members, who see how VOX is able to give them a voice and influence.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>We are a small organisation in terms of staff numbers; we can therefore only focus on some of the issues our members would like us to progress.</p> <p>We find it hard to compete with other larger organisations in terms of bidding for pieces of work.</p> <p>Some areas of influence are very difficult, and we aren't always able to measure our influence in an outcome based way.</p> <p>We sometimes have to rely on output measures in order to see what we have achieved.</p> <p>The amount of time involved in the capacity building side of VOX can be overlooked/ misunderstood.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>There are opportunities to encourage organisations to provide funding for us to carry out service user led research/members research to provide them with the views of the service user.</p> <p>There are opportunities to work more closely with other disability based organisations to bid for funding on particular issues which cut across a</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>There is likely to be a reduction in funding from charities, trusts and the government.</p> <p>In times of economic crises sometimes funding is directed more towards service provision.</p> <p>Changes in the focus of government could effect future funding.</p>

<p>range of disabilities.</p> <p>We could further utilise the skills of our volunteers by seeking funding for a volunteer coordinator.</p> <p>We now have partial independence; this means we have a greater range of funding we could apply for.</p>	<p>Reduction in funding for local projects (possibly linked to the concordat) could reduce local knowledge and capacity which in turn could make VOX less able to reflect the views of our group members.</p>
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We aim to ensure that as far as possible over the next couple of years we minimise make use of our strengths and opportunities and try and try and turn and build on some of our weaknesses. We also have a number of threats which we must be aware of in our future planning.

We have included some of our ideas to do this within our strategic priorities.

Strategic Priorities

The work which VOX focuses on is based around the following key areas and principles, we use a, Learning Evaluation and Planning tool (LEAP|) tool to develop our workplan, and include outcomes, outputs, evaluation and monitoring, this is overseen by our training, research and development sub-group.

The areas which we cover in the LEAP model include the following.

- ❖ Members shape our workplans
- ❖ We share good practice
- ❖ We aim to build capacity
- ❖ We try to improve services
- ❖ We aim to raise challenge stigma and discrimination
- ❖ We measure out comes in mental health
- ❖ We undertake research

- ❖ We promoting justice, human rights and social inclusion

We aim to focus on these 8 priorities over the coming two years and build upon these taking into consideration our SWOT analysis.

Strategic Priority 1.

Members views shape how VOX develops

VOX continues to ensure that our members set VOX's priorities, we are clear that its our members organisation.

Our members continuously mention employment, meaningful activity and the benefits system as key priorities, however priorities change and we must always ensure we continue to engage with our members in innovative ways to find out what our members think is important.

We aim to continue to explore new methods of engagement and look at how we can be more effective in reaching consensus on key themes over the next year or so.

Strategic Priority 2.

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

One of the key ways in which we have involved service users in sharing experiences and learning from other countries is through the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership. The IIMHL is a "virtual" agency that works to improve mental health services by supporting innovative leadership processes.

VOX carried out a thorough process to involve people who have or have had a mental health problem, and we were able obtain funding for five people to attend the IIMHL 2010 which took place in Ireland this year.

We hope to be able to offer opportunities like this in the future to our members and continue to share good practice in Scotland, learn from other countries and develop service user leadership. We are connecting with a range of equality groups and aim to develop service user leadership from within these groups to strengthen the work of VOX at all levels, including governance within the board.

In addition to the opportunities which arise we hope to be able to make greater use of IT to share good practice. The communications sub-group shall explore ways to take this forward.

Strategic Priority 3.

Capacity Building for Individuals, Groups and Organisations

VOX continues to build the capacity of individual service users, groups and organisations. By building capacity, improving career options and engaging in rewarding meaningful activity it is hoped that we can support individuals in their recovery, in addition to influencing positive change. Furthermore we hope to improve the effectiveness of groups and organisations.

We aim to seek funding for a volunteer coordinator who would be able to provide more capacity for VOX to be able to work with volunteers who want to get involved and would work in partnership with the Diversity Co-ordinator to expand volunteering opportunities with minority ethnic communities.

We also aim to support local groups to share from each other in order to place themselves in a good position in terms of future funding.

Strategic Priority 4. Improving Services

VOX sits on a range of groups whereby collaborative working helps to ensure that service users' views are taken account of. The Mental Health Cross Party group in the Scottish Parliament, for example, which provides opportunities to ensure that we are able to voice any concerns raised by our members. We are also involved in the Mental Welfare Commission's Principles into Practice group.

Other ways of improving services include working with the Royal College of Psychiatrists by representing service users on the Scottish Division's Executive Committee and on the Service User Recovery Forum in London. Also, one of our members delivered a presentation on service users views of psychiatrists at the International Congress of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Edinburgh.

We also maintain links with the Scottish Government's Disability Policy Officer's meetings, the Mental Health Law Reference group and many, many others. Diversity Co-ordinator is a key member of the NHS Race Equality programme advisory group, which works to improve practice on race equality throughout NHS services in Scotland. Diversity Co-ordinator also works closely with our host organization to support the development of the Race Equality Special Interest Network, which brings together, academics, equality groups and practitioners to develop the evidence base on mental health and race equality. Diversity Co-ordinator has connected with key later life strategic initiatives through Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland, with the aim of ensuring equity in services for older people (eg. National Dementia Strategy and National Later Life Action Plan). This work will continue through the period of this plan.

We aim to continue to focus on ensuring the services provided to our members are influenced by how our members experience those services. We would also like to consider whether funding opportunities could exist within some of these partnerships for us to carry out research on behalf of these organisations.

Strategic Priority 5. Awareness Raising

VOX shall continue to seek opportunities to deliver awareness raising, this shall include our continuing involvement with the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film

Festival (SMHAFF) and new projects shaped by our members. VOX will continue to play a key role in facilitating the diversity programme within SMHAFF – Moving Minds.

In addition to the (SMHAFF) VOX will consider new awareness raising programmes as identified by our members at previous members meetings.

Strategic Priority 6.

Measuring Outcomes in Mental Health

VOX members have continued to be involved in developing and updating a self assessment tool called the Avon tool, this work has been carried out alongside Quality Improvement Scotland (QIS) and other partners, and the tool has now been completed.

VOX is also continuing to be involved in the strategy group for the development of the Scottish Recovery Indicator.

It is anticipated that this involvement shall remain as it is felt important that the service user is at the heart of how we measure outcomes.

Strategic Priority 7.

Undertaking Research

Service User Research Network

VOX (in partnership with a range of organisations) has been supporting the development of the service user involved research network, a network which brings together service users, academics and other professionals to explore service user involved research as a way to positively change the direction and ethos of mental health research.

The group now has a position paper which it has developed on service user research, and is developing an action plan to take forward the work of the network. VOX plans to continue to be involved in service user research and build on some previous pieces of work it has been involved in to ensure we have a clear understanding of members' views on particular topics.

VOX shall also over the next few months consider how to share ideas and provide a point of contact for service user research.

Strategic Priority 8.

Promoting Justice, Human Rights and Social Inclusion

VOX is continuing to develop its diversity work where we ensure that groups of individuals, who are sometimes not having their voice heard, are able to input into the work of VOX.

VOX shall focus on minority ethnic, LGBT, faith and older people issues over the coming months, and shall continue to develop the diversity bulletin and equality update to a range of stakeholders.

We shall seek opportunities to seek further funding with other disability based organisations to further the aims of our members.