



LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT, INFLUENCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Ensuring that the lived experience of people with mental health issues or problems drives all that we do.

1. About this policy

This policy sets out Mind in Croydon's principles of Engagement, Influence and Participation for people with lived experience of mental health. Lived experience should inform the strategies, operational activities and work of everybody at Mind in Croydon.

It identifies and explains why lived experience engagement, influence and participation is important and the importance of ensuring that opportunities for people to engage with, influence and participate in Mind in Croydon activities are valuable, valued and accessible to a diverse range of people. The Policy has been coproduced with members of Mind in Croydon's Lived Experience Advisory Panel (see **Terms of Reference for Mind in Croydon Lived Experience Advisory Panel**). The language used and formatting of this policy is directly informed by voices of lived experience.

1.1 We are here to provide support, information and advice to Croydon residents who are experiencing or have experienced a mental health and to campaign to improve mental health services, raise awareness and promote understanding. **We believe that, to be effective, it is essential to foster a deep understanding of the needs and experiences of people with mental health and that this drives everything that we do.** Wherever we can, and as a matter of policy, we actively seek opportunities for people with experience of mental health to lead, guide and contribute to our work.

1.2 We recognise that people's experiences can take many different forms. As we plan, develop and implement our work, it is vitally important that we actively meet with, research, involve, consult, discuss, listen to and understand the views and opinions of as wide a range of people with lived experience of mental health as we can.

2. Definitions

Mind in Croydon defines lived experience Engagement, Influence and Participation as:

The active development and promotion of opportunities in order that a diverse range of people, with lived experience of mental health, can be heard and actively influence and participate in our work. This recognises that people want to take part in a variety of different ways and there is not a 'one size fits all' approach.

3. How we work:

3.1 Lived experience engagement

We will ensure that our operational policies, procedures, and processes are open access, and that we actively manage and promote a range of channels of communication when we design, develop, improve or deliver services. This will include user forums in our services where we will talk together about user feedback and plans, proposals, and changes to services; clear feedback mechanisms on our website; individual user evaluations at key points in the journey; and surveys. Examples of outcomes may be for people of lived experience to inform activities, programmes, timings and delivery of our services.

3.2 Lived experience Influence

We will ensure that people with lived experience have the opportunity to shape and develop

our work and influence decision-making, including what is prioritised and how it is planned, delivered and evaluated. We have set up a Lived Experience Advisory Panel to the Board of Trustees, which meets formally Quarterly with the Senior Management and informs the Board, to influence and lead change and development. Where we are developing a new service, we will ensure that an appropriate number of voices of lived experience are enabled to be part of the development group and their voices will be heard equally with members of the team, commissioners and volunteers to the service or project.

3.3 Lived experience participation

We will maximise opportunities for people with lived experience to work alongside us in a practical way to achieve our aims. This will include volunteering opportunities in service delivery; peer support activities and initiatives; engagement opportunities within services where people can share their experience of mental health. We will seek active engagement of people with lived experience in internal training sessions, recruitment processes across the organisation, and online or other campaigns, marketing and promotion of services.

4. Why is this important?

Influence and participation must be part of our organisational DNA. It is the collective responsibility of all of us. Simply put, if what you do affects people experiencing mental health you can't do it effectively unless you widely engage with and understand the perspectives of people with lived experience of mental health.

Influence and participation not only bring enormous benefits to Mind in Croydon, it also provides benefits to those who work alongside us.

Benefits to Mind in Croydon	Benefits to people with lived experience.
Meaningfully engaging people in our work ensures it is informed by a broad range of experiences and will effectively meet diverse needs.	Validates the experiences people have had and values this in order to makes improvements
Our projects and services will be more effective at meeting the needs of a wide range of people. Mind in Croydon becomes more representative of the diverse audiences that benefit from our work – this can be seen in the way we look, speak, and the methods we use.	Helps people to practice existing skills and develop new ones, such as public speaking, leading and contributing to meetings and editing/reviewing documents.
Our support and advice will be more insightful and more likely to benefit those who receive it.	Taking part helps people to be more effective in their everyday lives and to be more able to contribute and feel connected to their local communities and contribute to other national work.
Our information will be more useful to the people who receive it and easier to understand.	Sharing and talking about experience helps people to meet others with similar experience, to make more sense of their experiences and develop their views.
Our campaigning will be backed by better evidence and will ring true with more people.	Feel valued and respected and challenging self-discrimination.
Our fundraising will demonstrate more clearly how donations transform more lives.	Our projects and services, information, advice and campaigning will more effectively meet their needs.

Our organisation will have more credibility with the general public, government and with funders.	We are able to compensate people who share their expertise to influence our plans or who contribute expertise to the work we deliver.
Our staff and volunteers will be more connected to the everyday issues of people with lived experience Our staff and volunteers will become more familiar with issues of multiple disadvantages and will be more confident in addressing intersectional discrimination.	Black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME) communities, LGBTQ+ people, people with physical, sensory, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, and other minorities feel better represented by Mind in Croydon and more confident in engaging with us and to seek Mind in Croydon's support when they need it

5. Dignity and respect

People with lived experience will be afforded the same dignity and respect in their interactions with Mind in Croydon as any other stakeholders in our services. Our approach to engagement, influence and participation will be flexible and enabling. Where appropriate, we can agree reasonable payment or other compensation for time that people with lived experience give to support our service design, development, and improvement. This will normally be where people are engaged on a regular basis and there is a substantial time commitment to that engagement (rather than, for example, when they take part in a simple or one-off service evaluation survey).

Where people with lived experience incur personal expenses, such as for travel during the course of their engagement with us they will be recompensed in the same way as a paid member of staff under the **Mind in Croydon Expenses Policy** (which requires that the incurring and payment of expenses should be agreed in advance of the activity taking place).

6. Equality and diversity

There will be times when we need the insights of a particular group of people e.g., students, African Caribbean men, women with experience of perinatal mental health issues, in order to understand how to engage with them meaningfully, regardless of whether or not they have a mental health problem. Under these circumstances this policy will also apply. Opportunities for Lived Experience Engagement, Influence and Participation will be offered in line with our policy approach to equity, equality and diversity as set out in the **Mind in Croydon EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**.

7. Wider participation

There are other ways for people to participate in Mind in Croydon's work. These opportunities are open to people who do and don't have lived experience of mental health. Areas of activity include research, volunteering, campaigning and fundraising. These opportunities are offered in line with **Mind in Croydon's Volunteering Policy**.

8. Who takes part

It is very important that we consult with people who have experience across the whole spectrum of mental health. Equally, it is essential that we include people who come from different backgrounds and have different experiences of health and social care, and who may have encountered different degrees of social exclusion, stigma and discrimination. We are here for anyone who identifies as experiencing mental health, which means we must meet the needs and experiences of all.

9. Complaints procedure

If people of lived experience feel that decisions are being made without their engagement, influence or participation, or that they are not being properly involved in the decision making process they have the right to raise this as an issue and or to make a complaint, under the procedures outlined in the **Mind in Croydon Complaints Policy**.

Associated policies:

Mind in Croydon Expenses Policy

Mind in Croydon Equal Opportunities, Equalities and Diversity.

Mind in Croydon's Volunteering Policy

Mind in Croydon Complaints Policy

Associated Documents:

Terms of Reference for Mind in Croydon Lived Experience Advisory Panel

Policy to be reviewed; September 2025