

Training case study 17

Training and support for service user researchers

Summary

This is a flexible six-day training course for service users becoming involved in a research project, or to equip them to carry out their own small-scale projects. Run by an independent service user researcher, it can respond to the needs of the project or of the individuals.

What is the aim of the training?

To train a group of service users to be able to carry out their own research or to become involved in an established research project. These tend to be small-scale pieces of qualitative research.

What does the training involve?

The training includes work on the following topics:

- different types of research – qualitative versus quantitative research
- why service user led research is different
- critical analysis of research
- potential for emotional impact of research on participants and user researchers
- different methods, for example running focus groups, conducting interviews

The course can be quite specific and focused on whatever approach is being used in an existing piece of research or more general to help a group of users choose their method and overall approach.

What are the outcomes?

The service users gain skills in research and the research project is completed.

Who developed the training? Were service users involved?

The training was developed and is delivered by Jan Wallcraft, who is a researcher and former service user.

How do you support service users after the training?

Ongoing support is provided to ensure the service users 'learn by doing'. For example, groups meeting are facilitated at key points to help the group learn from their experience and plan next steps in the process. They might meet to review the findings from a pilot focus group, to review the transcripts from interviews and plan how they will analyse the data, or to discuss what they will do with the results once they have the findings. This work is ongoing and is tied into the practical aspects of doing the research, which tends to work better than discussing it in theory.

In addition emotional/psychological support is provided by telephone. Service users know there is someone they can contact if things become difficult for them or if they need to talk to someone after an emotional interview.

When is this training most useful? Who is it most useful for?

Organisations/groups/researchers wishing to support or promote user-led research or involve service users as researchers.

Contact for more information:

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Useful reports/documents

Wallcraft J, Amering M et al. (2009). Handbook of Service User

Involvement in Mental Health Research, Wiley-Blackwell.

Wallcraft J, Read J et al. (2003). On Our Own Terms: Users and survivors of mental health services working together for support and change, Sainsbury Centre.

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