

## The Criterion of User Involvement

This document sets out what we mean by the criterion of user involvement in the adoption of a study onto the network.

There are several ways users can be involved:

1. They may have minimal consultation rights over a project. This may be through individuals or user organisations.
2. They may have more substantial consultation rights. Again, this may be through individuals or user organisations and proposers should explain details of the consultation such as whether consultees have access to supporting documentation.
3. As well as being involved at the proposal preparation stage, service users may be involved as Steering Group Members once the project is underway. If this is the case, it should be made clear in the application.
4. As well as 2 and 3 above, service users may have a role to play in the execution of an investigation. If this is so, the role of service users in carrying out research needs to be made clear in the application. This is particularly the case if service users are to be employed (see also payment below).

The Adoptions Committee would like to see project applications move from 1 to 4 but realise this may be difficult in the short term. However, the aim should be to move from 1 to 4 in the longer term.

### What does not constitute user involvement

1. The inclusion of participants as merely 'subjects' in a project does not constitute user involvement.

### Focus Groups

Running focus groups with consumers is an ambiguous area as sometimes these groups treat their participants as 'subjects' and sometimes the groups constitute the first level of consultation above. The Adoptions Committee takes the view that focus groups are admissible as meeting the criterion of user involvement only when they constitute true consultation. For example, members of focus groups advising on a study should have had the opportunity to read the proposal or a shortened version of it and other supporting documentation (eg pilot schedules). Applications should make clear whether this has been done. If focus groups are convened only to gather opinion in a general sense then this will not count as user involvement.

### Payment

Arrangements should be made for adequate payment for service users involved in applications to the Adoptions Committee. This should reflect the time and effort which individuals devote to a project. Payment may need to be in line with benefit restrictions. If service users are to be employed on a project then they must, of course, be paid in line with national rates.