



Family Advice and Information Resource

Report on User-led Review

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Introduction

In October 2006, FAIR (Family Advice and Information Resource) piloted the User-Led Review Model provided by SAIF in the publication Guide to User-Led Reviews.

The aim of the review was to find out whether the FAIR newsletter was being appropriately distributed, what articles people with learning disabilities were interested in, and what information was being used.

Method

Recruitment of the team

A team of 5 people with learning disabilities were recruited from E&P Links Agency, a social enterprise run by Enable and Pefferbank Day Centre. The team was led by Marianne Barr, an information officer with FAIR. Kerry Ramsay of Enable and support workers accompanied and supported the team members throughout the review.

First meeting

At the first meeting the group discussed the aims of the review and what would be the most effective way to carry it out. Other items which were discussed were:

- Timescale and plan of meetings (see table below)
- Team member's roles
- Who to interview
- Questions for the questionnaire

	Date of Meeting	Purpose of Meeting
1.	October	Questions for questionnaire
2.	October	Write final questionnaire Where interviews to take place
3.	November	Group practices interview techniques
4.	December	Group interviews
5.	December	Group discusses answers and decides what should be written in the report
6.	January	Report agreed by team members and presentation to FAIR board discussed
7.	January	Presentation devised
8.	February	Presentation practised
9.	February	Presentation to FAIR board

It was decided that each meeting would take place on Wednesdays between 10am and 12noon, with the exception of the interviews and final presentation.

Questionnaire

First the group had a discussion about FAIR's newsletters and what type of information they normally contained. This was done as a warm up to thinking about what type of questions should be in the questionnaire. Possible questions were discussed by the group and all of them were written up on a board. Possible answers that each question would give were discussed by the group. A lot of support and guidance was needed for this from the team leader and support workers. From this discussion the group chose 5 questions. It was decided at a later point to ask if the person interviewed would like to receive the newsletter at home.

Interview practice

The members of the group had never interviewed before and were quite nervous about doing this. In order to feel more confident about it, the group decided that they would prefer to interview in pairs with one person asking the first set of questions and the other person the second half.

The group practiced interviewing through role play. Firstly, the team leader and one of the support workers did the role play in front of the rest of the group a couple of times. Next, each member interviewed another member as the others looked on.

From this it was quickly realised that most members of the group felt uncomfortable with the initial introduction. They went straight into the questions with their heads down looking at the questionnaire. To remedy this we decided to come up with a short script for the beginning and end of the interview. This was written on a board for the first practice session and then at the beginning and end of the questionnaires for the second practice and the actual interviews.

The team leader and support workers went around each pair as they practiced. For the actual interviews, the team leader and support workers acted as scribes.

Organising the interviews

It had been decided in the first meeting that people with learning disabilities would be interviewed. Taking into consideration time constraints, suitable interview rooms and the need for a varied age and background, it was decided that one of the classes at Stevenson College would be a suitable group to interview. Stevenson College receives bulk copies of the newsletter and it was known that the newsletter would be available to students who attended their classes. Marianne contacted David Scott at Stevenson College and organised to visit one of his extension classes to do the interviews. 10 people in total were interviewed of varying age and abilities. Recent newsletters were sent on ahead of the interview and the people interviewed had a pre-interview briefing from their tutor before the team members arrived.

Analysing the information collected

The team leader listed the answers to each of the questions and summarised them. This was then presented to the group. The group discussed the summary of each question and what this could imply. These were listed on a board. Together the group drew conclusions which were later put into the report written by the team leader.

Presentation

The findings of the review were presented to the FAIR Board of Directors in April 2007. To make the presentation more comfortable for the group, cards were made up with pictures and symbols which represented the summary of answers to the questions. This allowed each member to have something in their hands and information in front of them to make them more at ease. Each question and its summary of answers were read out by a member of the team. These were written on the back of the cards. The team leader presented the review's conclusions to the committee.

Results

- Team members acquired new skills (interviewing people and giving a presentation) and felt more confident about speaking in public.
- Through discussion of the newsletter and what they thought about it personally team members were able to formulate questions with support and guidance from support workers and team leaders.
- Interviews were relaxed and most people interviewed were happy and confident enough to answer the questions.
- The review identified which aspects of the newsletter that people with learning disabilities valued and suggested what changes needed to be made on how the newsletter was distributed.
- Some of the team members found it difficult to remember what had happened at previous meetings. Minutes were sent to each team member's home but not read at home perhaps due to lack of support to read them. All minutes were reviewed at each meeting along with a pre-meeting briefing.
- When analysing the information some team members found it difficult to contribute even with support. Most of the opinions given were by only two members.

Conclusion

Overall the user-led review went well. The review offered the team members the opportunity to learn new skills and gain new experiences. The members said that they had a great deal more confidence in interviewing and giving their opinion during meetings. Although they were initially very nervous about the interviewing and giving the presentation they did extremely well. In retrospect, I would have liked the team members to have interviewed more people as they coped very well with the people that they did interview.

The interviewees were happy with the interview and were keen to be involved. They had a pre interview briefing which allowed them to discuss the newsletter before the team members arrived. Everyone interviewed said that they were very happy to help FAIR with reviews in the future. The face to face interviews worked very well. The experience contributed to a growing confidence in the team member's abilities and self-esteem. The interviews re-introduced FAIR and its services to many of the people interviewed who had not been in contact or read the newsletter for some time. All those interviewed who did not already receive the newsletter at home asked for it to be sent to their home.

The review findings suggested that people with learning disabilities were mostly interested in finding out about leisure activities, college courses and work opportunities from the newsletter. From discussion with those interviewed it became clear that some people did not read the newsletter as they did not have support to read it. This drew attention to things that should be included in a future and larger review of the newsletter.

The SAIF Guide to User-Led Reviews was extremely helpful. I feel that FAIR and its service users would benefit immensely from a larger scale review of its services and newsletter using the same model in the future.

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