

Feedback from service users

Maximising returns

December 2016

Background

In 2015/16 the IASS Network developed a set of 6 core questions that all IASS have been asked to incorporate into their service user feedback questionnaires. A sample questionnaire with 7 additional questions has also been made available.

In September 2016, and following consultation with a number of young people, the IASS Network also circulated versions of these questionnaires adapted for use with children and young people. These versions use the same questions but are presented in a format that may be more appropriate for young people.

Copies of all 4 versions of the recommended feedback questionnaires are available from the IASS Network.

With effect from 1st January 2017 all IASS are invited to participate in a scheme to build a national database of service user evaluations. This will involve submitting the ratings for the first 50 service users from a given date. Each IASS will only be asked to do this once a year.

The issue

IASS often report that it is difficult to get reasonable return rates from service users who have been asked to complete service evaluation forms.

In the Phase 1 and Phase 2 pilots IASS used email, post, online (e.g. Survey Monkey) and phone calls to elicit feedback, with varying degrees of success. Return rates varied between 6% and 100%, with an average of 50%. The highest return rates were achieved by services that either used direct personal contact or a combination of methods (e.g. mail out with follow up phone call).

Maximising return rates

The IASS Network recommends that IASS give all service users the opportunity to provide feedback, including on the 6 core questions. However experience has shown that unless a considerable amount of time can be given to ‘chasing’ service users for a response, return rates are likely to be relatively low.

Therefore it is recommended that particular effort be invested in achieving higher return rates for the first 50 service users from a given start date (notified by the IASS Network).

Services may wish to experiment with the use of postal, email and online initial requests for feedback. Return rates may be boosted by a variety of techniques:

- **provide advance notice** of the request for feedback. For example after supporting a service user explain that they will receive a feedback questionnaire and stress the value to the service of having the feedback.
- **personalise all requests for feedback**, e.g. use the service user’s name in any email or covering letter.
- **give out the evaluation form in person** and request that it is returned within a short timescale.
- **provide a stamped, addressed envelope.**
- offer to enter respondents’ names into a ‘hat’ and **offer a small reward**, for one randomly chosen respondent.
- **send out a replacement questionnaire to service users that have not responded** within a set time (perhaps with an SAE).
- **make a follow up phone call** to check that service users received the questionnaire and to make a direct request that they return it.
- **publish you results** (while maintaining individual service user’s anonymity) and any action you may have taken to develop the service as a result of feedback.

Finding the time

Simply giving all service users the opportunity to complete a feedback questionnaire need not be time consuming. However the particular techniques described above are likely to require some additional time. By limiting these strategies to the first 50 service users from a given start date the time can be managed more effectively. Administrative staff, volunteers and previous services users may also be able to help, provided that they are appropriately trained or briefed for the specific task.

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