

Additional Resource 2: Sample service specification for Community Links Service (Individual services)

1 Introduction

This document specifies the quality and standards of the services required by XXXXXXXXXXXXX Commissioning Agency for the provision of a Community Links service. The standards set out in this document are the minimum requirements.

The aim of the service is to provide individually tailored, one-to-one, and ongoing support for individuals to engage in and sustain mainstream activities, in ordinary community settings, alongside other members of the community who are not service users.

2 Philosophy of the service

Everyone who experiences mental health problems has the right to individually tailored one-to-one support to engage in mainstream social, leisure, educational and cultural activities, in ordinary community settings, alongside other members of the community who are not service users.

The service will be underpinned by the philosophies of recovery and social inclusion.

It will provide support into a range of life domains:

- Faith, spirituality and cultural communities
- Education and training
- Employment (should an Individual Placement & Support programme be unavailable)
- Volunteering
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Healthy living, sports and leisure

Users of the service must be able to set the type, pace and direction of support received from the service, and to choose their activities.

Users of the service will be considered full and equal partners in the running of this service. Users shall receive support to participate in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the service.

It is essential that the service is available on a seven days a week and evenings basis, in order that mainstream activities that take place at weekends and in the evenings can be accessed.

Services will be provided to everyone regardless of, but responsive to, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation religion, past history, level of disability or diagnosis.

The service shall seek to provide a service for individuals with challenging behaviours, including those with forensic history, personality disorder and those with drug/alcohol dependency problems.

3 Service objectives

- To provide individually tailored, one-to-one, and ongoing support for individuals to engage in and sustain mainstream activities, in ordinary community settings, alongside other members of the community who are not service users.
- To work in partnership with the full range of agencies and groups in the community to develop opportunities for users of the service for participation in mainstream activities, alongside other members of the community who are not service users.
- To work closely with these community partners to ensure that these opportunities are available within welcoming, relaxed, supportive and safe environments and where people can participate without pressure or discrimination.
- To assist people to achieve their personal goals by offering support to develop their skills and gain new skills in line with their interests and through their participation in the design and running of activities in the Community Links Service

4 Service outcomes

- Increased numbers of people with mental health problems receiving individualised information, advice and support
- Increased number of people with mental health problems volunteering in mainstream settings
- Increased number of people with mental health problems participating in local community activities
- Increased number of the service reporting an improvement in the size and range of their social networks
- Increased number of people with mental health problems accessing education and training opportunities
- Increased number of people with mental health problems attaining qualifications
- Improved physical health for people with mental health problems
- Increased number of people with mental health problems taking regular exercise
- Improved quality of life, confidence and self-esteem for people with mental health problems
- Increased ability to manage own mental distress amongst people with mental health problems

- Increased number of people with mental health problems receiving appropriate welfare benefits
- Opportunities being provided by the service for all members of the community, particularly those groups that are under-represented in current provision, for example – young people, people from rural areas.
- A service responsive to the diversity of need among the population of people with mental health problems
- An increasing number of mainstream organizations offering a welcoming supportive environment for the participation of people with mental health problems in the activities they provide.
- Increased levels of involvement of service users in the design, delivery, management, review and development of services
- Improved access to the service by groups currently under-represented within provision, those with special needs and those who live in localities where access to day services is problematic for them.

5. Key elements of service delivery

a) Referrals and information

The service provider will accept referrals from the Hub, CMHTs, drop-ins.

The service provider will provide information on what the service can provide to all potential service users.

b) Physical environment

The Community Links service workers (sometimes known as ‘bridge builders’) will work peripatetically, thus allowing access to the service from Hubs, drop-ins, mental health organizations and any other venues appropriate for the service user and provider.

c) Privacy

Services will safeguard service users’ privacy in line with their personal choices and in compliance with the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, the Mental Capacity Bill and the Department’s confidentiality policy.

Privacy will include service users having control over who has access to personal information held about them and being able to discuss their needs in confidence and in privacy. Policies and procedures should reflect the need to support an individual’s privacy.

d) Safety and risk

The Service Provider will ensure that they recognize the service user's right to take risk in order to extend opportunities and in doing so ensure that they are given support to help them understand the implications of any risk taking.

e) Social needs

- Users of the service supported to formulate their goals for participation in mainstream activities (in any or all of the life domains) in individual plans
- Up to date information and advice - on education, sports, leisure, arts, cultural activities within the local community - is provided
- Community Links staff work with service user to identify suitable opportunities within the local community that mirror the service user's aspirations and offer a 'safe space' for the person to enjoy education, sports, leisure, arts or cultural activities.
- Community Links workers are domain specialists – experts in one or more life domains.
- Where appropriate, Community Links workers broker suitable opportunities with agencies or groups delivering mainstream agencies to ensure a welcoming supportive environment.
- Community Links workers provide tailored and ongoing support for individuals within mainstream activities as appropriate
- The service is available to users on a 7-day week and evening basis
- Support will be made available for as long as the service user needs it
- The opportunity to acquire recognised qualifications will be supported
- The service will provide a service to all members of the community, particularly those that are under-represented in current provision, for example – young people, people from rural areas.
- The service will provide effective pathways for users of the service to vocational and other day services as appropriate
- Regular reviews will be carried out between service user and Community Links worker to ensure changing individual needs and aspirations are being met

6 Service levels

Each whole time equivalent Community Links worker in post would provide a service to a minimum of 50 individuals per annum.

Each whole time equivalent Community Links worker in post would provide a service to a minimum of 25 individuals at any one time.

7. Partnership

XXXXXXXXXXXXX Commissioning Agency wishes to work in partnership with all service providers.

The service itself will work in partnership with a wide range of local organisations and agencies in order to develop social inclusion.

8. Staffing

Staff will need training in:

- Disability Discrimination Act
- Health and Safety
- Operation and principles of the service

A range of staff with individual expertise in, or knowledge of one or more of the life domains, is essential, as would be understanding of mental health issues. The service should develop and support “buddy” Community Links workers or bridge builders to work as part of the team.

All staff would be required to have CRB checks.

9. Quality standards

Quality assurance procedures will be in place and will reflect performance against contract and regular assessment by service users.

10. Monitoring service users' views

A 6 monthly survey of service user views should be carried out. Questions asked should cover the following areas:

- Have you had the opportunity to formulate your plans for personal, educational, social, and cultural goals in the form of an individual development plan?
- When was your individual development plan last reviewed/updated?
- Have you had support to achieve what is in your plan?
- Have you been treated with respect by staff?
- Have you experienced improved quality of life, confidence or self-esteem?
- Do you have an increased ability to manage your mental distress?
- Have you had information about vocational services?
- Have you had information about benefits?

- Have you had opportunities to become involved in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the service?

The survey must be evaluated and the results made available to service users in a suitable format.

In addition, consideration should be given to using the 'social inclusion web' tool developed by the National Development Team to measure improvements in each individual's level of social inclusion.

11. Performance indicators

- Number of people supported to undertake volunteering placements within mainstream agencies
- Number of people supported to access mainstream sports/exercise groups/facilities
- Number of people supported to access mainstream health promotion activities
- Number of people supported to access mainstream arts or cultural groups/ activities
- Number of people supported to access other mainstream social/leisure opportunities
- Number of people supported to access mainstream education/training programmes
- Number of people attaining educational or vocational qualifications
- Numbers of people referred to vocational services
- Number of people reporting improvement in size/range of social networks
- Number of people reporting improved quality of life/confidence/self-esteem
- Number of people reporting increased ability to manage mental distress.
- Evidence of service users' participation in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the service.
- Caseload numbers and service user profiles supplied in 6 monthly reports
- Service user profile: age, gender, ethnicity, length of time using service, needs profile (i.e. social support, housing, training, vocational).
- Number of mainstream community organisations providing placements or offering a supportive environment to users of the service.
- Details of outreach and marketing work with mainstream organisations

12. Review and evaluation

- Quarterly or 6-monthly reports from service provider to commissioners
- Production of any documents, policies or procedures as required by the commissioners.