

A hand is shown in silhouette, holding a bright, glowing sun. The sun is positioned in the center of the frame, and its light creates a vertical reflection on the water below. The background is a warm, orange and yellow gradient, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of hope and change.

A VOICE FOR  
**Change**

Interim  
National Service Users  
Executive

**Strategic Plan**

2007 - 2009

# Foreword

## Definitions

### Service User:

Service users are primarily those who have a mental health diagnosis and/or who have, or have had contact with or are attending a psychiatrist or a clinical psychologist or a clinical mental health team.

### Carers:

Carers are family members, partners or close friends who act as the main support for service users with the latter's consent.

### Psychological/Emotional Distress:

The iNSUE has chosen to use the term 'psychological/emotional distress' where appropriate, in place of the older phrase 'mental illness' as that term does not adequately describe the life experience of those people formally labelled in that way.

### Recovery:

Recovery is the process by which a person with psychological/emotional distress takes charge of his/her unique path towards a full life within their own community.

## iNSUE Members

Ms. Jennifer Kelly  
Ms. Mary Hickey  
Mr. Ronan Browne  
Ms. Tracy O'Dea  
Ms. Evelyn McHugh  
Mr. Domenico Lucheroni  
Ms. Angela Dooley  
Mr. Louie Maguire

And those members who contributed and wish to remain anonymous.

**A** *Vision for Change*, the report of the Expert Group on Mental Health, is a landmark in the development of Irish mental health policy. For the first time in Ireland, mental health policy dictates that service users and carers are an intrinsic part of the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of their own services. *A Vision for Change* acknowledges the unique expertise of the service user, provides a platform for this voice and a mechanism by which it can be heard.

The interim National Service Users Executive is currently mandated to set up the framework, election process and structures for the permanent National Service Users Executive, which will aim to be the voice of service users and carers. The importance of firm foundations for this cannot be understated.

The Strategic Plan defines our vision, mission and values, outlines the tasks and objectives—explicit, as in our mandate and implicit as defined by ourselves. It lays the groundwork for the formation of the National Service

Users Executive.

I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the members of the interim Executive, who were both unstinting in their efforts and brought their own particular expertise to bear, which was crucial in the formulation of this strategic plan.

Special words of thanks are also due to the all the members of our Advisory Committee, in particular John Redican, CEO of the Irish Advocacy Network, John Saunders, Director of Schizophrenia Ireland for the benefit of their expertise, to Martin Rogan and Catherine Brogan of the HSE, National Office for Mental Health and other members of the HSE for their encouragement and support, to Paddy McGowan, to Brid McGrath, who facilitated the process and to Anthony Kelly, our project officer, who wrote it up.

We look forward to a future where all the provisions of *A Vision for Change* will be fully resourced and implemented, to further developing the partnership approach already established with the HSE and, most importantly, where the independent voice of service users and carers is an acknowledged and essential part of the provision of services, at all levels, for those experiencing psychological/emotional distress.

### Jennifer Kelly

Chairman  
Interim National Service User  
Executive

# Introduction

The importance of involving service users and carers in mental health service development and delivery is a well established principle internationally and its importance is acknowledged in *A Vision for Change* (January 2006).

*A Vision for Change* recommends that:

**“A National Service User Executive should be established to inform the National Mental Health Service Directorate and the Mental Health Commission on the issues relating to user involvement and participation in planning, delivering, evaluating and monitoring services including models of best practice; and to develop and implement best practice guidelines between the user and provider interface including capacity development issues.”**

During 2006 voluntary agencies in the mental health sector were asked to nominate members to the executive and the interim National Service Users Executive (iNSUE) was officially launched 31st January 2007.

Currently the interim Executive is comprised of seven service users and three carers. The purpose of the iNSUE is to develop the structures, policies and protocols that will guide the development of the National Service Users Executive.

## Our Remit

- The creation of an electoral system for the establishment of the NSUE.
- The formation of a framework for the development of regional and local fora.
- The development of a policy and a secretariat support mechanism including standing orders about meetings, location, and frequency.
- The creation of formal links with the HSE, Mental Health Commission and other statutory agencies.
- Development of formal links with voluntary Mental Health Associations.

This strategic plan will form the basis for the creation and development of the National Service Users Executive over the next two years.

## Our Values

Respect, Integrity, Choice, Acceptance, Humour, Transparency, Democracy, Patience, Confidentiality, Dynamism, Inclusivity, Openness, Teamwork, Equality, Commitment.

## Vision

Our vision is of a society in which people who experience psychological/emotional distress and their carers and families have:

- The right to equality, respect and acceptance.
- A central role in the design, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of all mental health services and related social services.
- Choices about these services.
- The right to and the hope of recovery.

## Mission

The interim National Service Users Executive (iNSUE) is an independent body composed of service users and carers who are responsible for the establishment of the National Service Users Executive (NSUE) for the Mental Health Services.

## Guiding Principles

1. The fundamental principle underlying this strategic plan is that the service user/carer is central to mental health service provision. All agencies and organisations that provide mental health services must therefore work in partnership with service users and carers.
2. Service users and carers must at all times be treated with dignity, respect and as equals.
3. It is essential for all stakeholders to know and to understand the service user perspective. Service users and carers should be represented and involved at all levels of service planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation locally, regionally and nationally, including involvement in the allocation of resources.
4. Service users involvement must be meaningful and collaborative with service users and carers having an equal opportunity to share and participate in decision making in relation to service provision. This will require active participation on decision making bodies.
5. Service users have an unique insight and expertise to contribute to the development of quality mental health services and also to the development of measures which promote positive mental well being. This comes from their personal experience of psychological/emotional distress and recovery and as recipients of services.

# Strategic Priority 1

To establish representative structures at local, regional and national levels.

# Strategic Priority 2

To establish an organisation to implement and manage the support of the representative structures.

## Aims

## Objectives

### Context:

A *Vision for Change* policy document recommends the establishment of a National Service Users Executive to inform the Mental Health Service Directorate and the Mental Health Commission on issues relating to service user involvement and participation in Mental Health service provision.

### 1.1

The creation of an electoral system for the establishment of NSUE.

To design a self selection/electoral process to include an information pack, application form and skills profile. Establish a selection committee/panel.

### 1.2

The formation and composition of an organisational framework.

To determine the number and location of local and regional fora, mapping and scoping exercises to be carried out.

### 1.3

Research/Information gathering.

To research service user/carer involvement as well as International models of best practice on service user involvement.

### Context:

It is acknowledged in *A Vision for Change* that service user involvement costs money, so it is vital that an adequate budget is provided as well as clear policies for involvement, building capacity and identifying personnel responsible for the implementation of these policies and programmes.

### 2.1

To ensure that the NSUE is well resourced with premises, competent personnel committed to the promotion of service user involvement and participation in mental health services.

Locate premises, advertise and recruit for a National Executive Officer, Research/Policy Officer, Development Workers and Administrator. Commitment to ongoing funding.

### 2.2

To provide organisational policies.

To develop organisational and employment policies.

### 2.3

To identify mental health services throughout the country.

To establish and maintain a database of mental health services nationally

### 2.4

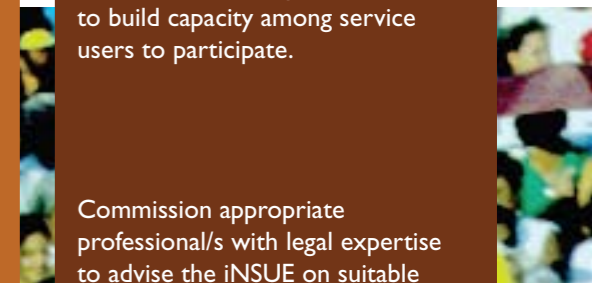
To actively encourage and facilitate the participation of service users and carers in the NSUE through training, education and capacity building

Carry out a training needs analysis and develop a training programme to meet identified needs. Provide information, training and resources to build capacity among service users to participate.

### 2.5

To determine and set up the most appropriate legal structure for the NSUE.

Commission appropriate professional/s with legal expertise to advise the iNSUE on suitable legal structures



## Strategic Priority 3

To create systems to link with voluntary and statutory organisations to ensure service users' and carers' voice is heard and understood.

### Aims

### Objectives

**Context:**

The formal mandate of the NSUE is to inform the National Mental Health Service Directorate and the Mental Health Commission on issues relating to service user involvement and Mental Health service provision.

**3.1**

To link with the HSE, Mental Health Commission and other relevant statutory agencies.

Create formal links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in order to work collaboratively with all stakeholders.

**3.2**

To elicit service users/carers views on mental health service provision and the wider issues affecting their lives.

Provide information to service users/carers on how to become involved at all levels – local, regional and national.  
Consult service users/carers through the established structures.

**3.3**

Provide information to all stakeholders on the identified views/issues of service users/carers.

Develop position papers, reports, etc., on issues affecting the lives of service users/carers such as stigma, discrimination, over reliance medication, choice.

## Strategic Priority 4

To establish formal and informal communication channels with individuals, groups and other stakeholders to elicit their views.

### Aims

### Objectives

**Context:**

Nine principles for service user involvement outlined in *A Vision for Change* include making service user/carer involvement the norm; facilitating service users in making their own decisions about involvement and valuing their expertise.

**4.1**

Accessing the service user/carer constituency.

Hold local, regional and national fora meetings on a regular basis. Identify barriers to involvement/participation and develop a strategy to address barriers.

**4.2**

Develop a public relations/marketing strategy and website.

Ensure that the NSUE is widely publicised by developing and distributing a range of promotional materials in a range of accessible formats.

**4.3**

Provide media training.

Capacity building of the NSUE members to include media and communication training.



Service users have a unique insight into the experience of mental ill health and a greater awareness of the public perception of mental health and the provision of services. Their expertise is very different to the expertise of other stakeholders in mental health.

### **Vision**

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Choices about services.

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### **Mission**

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