



# service user empowerment strategy 2006 - 2016

everybody's mental health matters

service user  
empowerment is an  
on-going journey

# introduction

The empowerment of service users is an essential part of our belief that people must not be excluded from society.

Mental Health Matters (MHM) recognises that people who use mental health services are experts by their own experience and believes that service users must be genuinely involved in the development and running of quality services.

# our beliefs and principles

The following beliefs and principles are essential for a consistent and co-ordinated approach to service user empowerment within MHM:

- **involving service users is central to our continued success**
- **service user empowerment is an on-going journey**
- **service users are equal partners in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of services**
- **ongoing commitment to creating wide ranging opportunities for service user representation at all levels**
- **we believe that real service user empowerment is founded on informed choice and self determination**

# our commitment

Service user involvement has always played an important part in the work of our organisation. This strategy outlines the path we intend to follow over the coming years and demonstrates our clear commitment to ensuring that mental health service users continue to be at the core of our future plans.

“user involvement means that we have a say on how things are run and how we want things to run”

Service User from South Tyneside

“we’ve got a say  
in what happens  
and in how  
decisions are made”

Service User from Wakefield

# our priorities

## representation and involvement

We are committed to ensuring that service users are both represented and involved at all levels throughout MHM. In practice we will:

- **continue to create opportunities which use the expertise of service users**
- **ensure that service user representation, involvement and influence remains an essential part of all our activities**
- **promote a climate at local level where involvement is seen as an integral part of service delivery**
- **involve service users at every level of our decision making processes up to and including the Board of Trustees**
- **continue to strengthen our Membership**

## consultation and information

For us to ensure effective service user consultation, it is essential that we provide clear pathways for accessing and exchanging relevant information. To do this we will:

- **undertake user-led research which will be used to influence the future shape of our services**
- **continue to develop ways for service users to gain and share knowledge and information**
- **ensure that policy decisions within MHM are shaped by the views of service users and other stakeholders**
- **develop creative, user friendly ways to engage service users in all of our communication and consultation processes**

## partnership and equality

Our belief that everybody's mental health matters is built upon the understanding that social inclusion requires a climate of equality. As a result we will:

- **offer service users a range of ways to become involved as equal partners in MHM**
- **lead by example by creating paid employment and voluntary work for service users within MHM**
- **continue to value, involve and use the diverse wealth of knowledge, skills and experience service users have in order to strengthen our organisation's ethos, aims and objectives**

## developing skills and confidence

People using mental health services are often marginalised despite being experts by experience in the field of mental health. We embrace this expertise as a unique quality and are committed to developing and enhancing this further by:

- **continuing to develop a climate in which service users are free to exchange ideas and strengthen their confidence**
- **consulting service users about the best ways to maximise their own development**
- **continuing to create a wide range of training and development opportunities designed to equip service users with the skills they have identified**
- **using the expertise of service users to determine the skills that MHM staff and stakeholders need to promote effective empowerment**
- **making sure that service users are involved in the planning, content, delivery and continuous improvement of these training and development programmes**

## power and control

Self determination is achieved by service users having and **knowing** they have real power and control over their own lives. To promote this we will:

- **respect the rights of service users to shape their own lives**
- **create employment opportunities that pay real wages**
- **work to combat the stigma and discrimination which creates barriers to real lifestyle opportunities**
- **recognise the power and control that having equal rights and responsibilities brings within society**

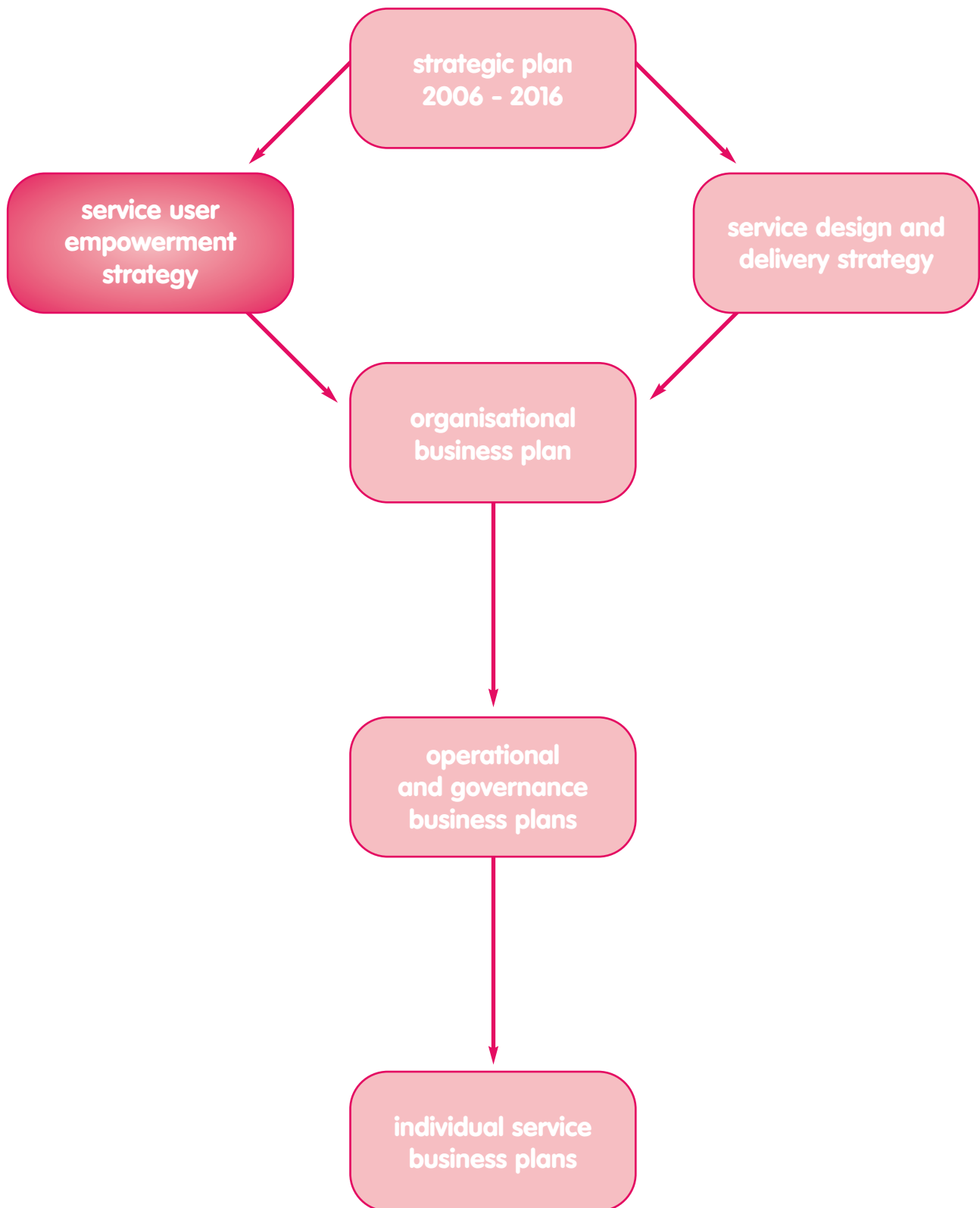
# future of service user empowerment

In view of our understanding that service user empowerment is an ongoing journey, we have identified the following essential elements which will influence and impact upon all of our future work:

- **development of our User Charter**  
working in partnership with service users, we will continue to refine our Service User Charter through a process of regular consultation, communication, involvement and monitoring.
- **advance directives**  
we will actively promote the use of advance directives throughout our organisation and will encourage all external stakeholders to follow our example.
- **service user consultancy**  
we will work in partnership with service users to develop a framework which will enable individuals to market their own expertise both within the organisation and to external stakeholders.
- **direct payments**  
we welcome and support the Department of Health's Policy on Direct Payments. We embrace this initiative and will provide ways for service users to maximise their rights and make choices which are best suited to their individual circumstances.
- **raising the voice of service users**  
by working in partnership with service users and our Members, we will continue to find ways that will strengthen "the user voice" both within the organisation and beyond.

# everybody's mental health matters

# mental health matters strategic plan, supporting documents and business plans



The **dark pink box** denotes the document you are now reading, all strategies are available from our central office by calling 0191 5163500 or from our website at [www.mentalhealthmatters.com](http://www.mentalhealthmatters.com)



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