CollectiveVoice

The National Alliance of Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Charities

A call for people with lived / living experience of substance use to get involved in Collective Voice

This document should give you all the information you need to get involved in our review of how we engage with people with lived and living experience - but if you'd prefer to watch a video introduction by one of our trustees, Vicki Beere, then just click here to see it on YouTube.

Our Director, Will Haydock, introduces the review of lived and living experience we are undertaking within Collective Voice, and how you can get involved...

What is Collective Voice?

Collective Voice is the alliance of charities that provide drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services across England. We bring together a range of staff across our member organisations and beyond to: support policy making; improve practice in treatment; and build public awareness and understanding of issues around alcohol and other drugs. You can find out more on our website here.

We are reviewing our approach to lived and living experience

The organisation had its own strategy that ran from 2022 to 2025, which expired in March this year, so we've been reflecting on the ways we work and how we can improve as we take the organisation forward.

As part of that process, we're conducting a review to develop how we engage and work with people with lived – and, crucially, living – experience. We're bringing together people from across the sector to think about how we can weave the perspectives of people who use(d) alcohol and other drugs into our work. Clearly that process itself has to involve people with lived or living experience.

When we say 'lived or living experience', we're using the Department of Health and Social Care definition, which states:

> *Where people are currently affected by their own or a family member's problem alcohol or drug use, we describe this as living experience. Where people and families are in recovery from problem alcohol or drug use, we describe this as lived experience. This is distinct from learned experience, which people can get through studying, practicing or exposure. People can, and typically do, have a mixture of both living or lived experience and learned experience.*

We are looking for people to join the steering group for this review

We're looking to engage a range of people as part of the steering group for this project. To give an illustration, we think this could be:

- people who use alcohol or other drugs;
- people currently in treatment for substance use issues;
- people with previous experience of substance use issues and/or treatment;
- staff working for substance use treatment and recovery organisations with lived or living experience;
- an organisational lead for lived/living experience; or
- another relevant role or experience.

If you have lived or living experience of substance use issues and would like to be part of the steering committee running this review, please let us know.

Just send us an e-mail to admin@collectivevoice.org.uk and we will be in touch to discuss how you can best get involved.

Alternatively, send a text, WhatsApp message or voice note to 07552 613081.

Why get involved?

By getting involved in this review you will have the opportunity to help shape the processes which will set the future priorities of Collective Voice to help support and improve treatment and recovery services across England.

We believe Collective Voice has a key role to play in ensuring treatment is accessible and delivers positive outcomes for everyone who needs it.

But we need your help to do this work and get it right. If you're passionate about improving policy and services, we would love to hear from you.

We're keen to make sure we have a range of people involved, from different backgrounds, geography and with different experiences – so please do get in touch.

We want this to be a great experience for those who get involved, and we're committed to doing what we can to make it so. Recognising that people have different needs and circumstances, we'll work to make sure those involved can participate in a way that works well for them.

We've listed some questions below that we think people might have about the process, with our initial responses. We hope this helps you make a decision about whether to get involved.

If you have any other questions or comments about the process, please don't hesitate to get in touch via admin@collectivevoice.org.uk

What will I bring?

Your lived or living experience of drug and alcohol treatment and support is the most important thing, and a desire to improve the work of Collective Voice and substance use services. Additionally, those involved will need to be able to consider the views of others and work in a collaborative way.

What sort of commitment would I have to make?

Being part of the steering group is likely to mean:

i. attending several online (and potentially in-person) meetings to plan the process for engaging with the field;
ii. contributing to analysis of feedback from that engagement

iii. contributing to a report for the Collective Voice Board of Trustees.

This final report would include a set of recommendations on how we can best embed and develop lived experience voices in our work.

Would I get paid for my time and expenses?
If you couldn't be part of this panel as part of your day job, then we will ensure you are appropriately compensated for your time and any expenses.

One of the first pieces of work this group will need to do is to co-create a payment policy for Collective Voice for involving people with lived/living experience.

For this initial piece of work, while we're working out a longer-term approach, we plan to pay the current real living wage (which is £12.60 per hour) for time spent on the project, plus relevant expenses.

There's good guidance available on how to balance payments like this with receiving benefits, but we'll support people with this if they do end up sitting on the steering group. As a starting point, take a look at https://www.nihr.ac.uk/payment-guidance-researchers-and-professionals

What if I can't or don't want to be part of the steering group?
If you have views to contribute but you don't feel you could commit to being part of the steering group, don't worry. There will be opportunities for everyone to feed in their thoughts as we go through the review. And without anticipating the recommendations, there will be – there already are – opportunities for people with lived and living experience to get involved in our work on an ongoing basis.

This is an exciting time for Collective Voice, as we look to broaden the range of people who are involved with our work. We hope you will feel able to get involved in this process in whatever way suits you best.