

Decision Making in User-Led Organisations

The aim of the review:

The review was sponsored by the Department of Health, User-Led Organisations (ULO) Development Fund. As part of this review SCIL looked at how it involves its constituents in decision making so that other ULOs could learn from our 25 year experience. SCIL wanted to take forward what it does well, improve on areas we were not doing so well at, to improve upon how we make decisions.

Who are SCIL's constituents (groups of people)?

Having reviewed SCIL's organisational structure and the people involved with SCIL the team identified our constituents as:

- SCIL Membership
- Management Committee (MC) & Treasurer
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Service Users
- Friendship Club & Peer-Support Groups



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How we did the research?

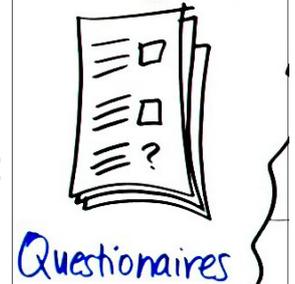
Focus groups with:

1. Management Committee
2. Staff
3. Volunteers
4. Friendship Club



Questionnaires for:

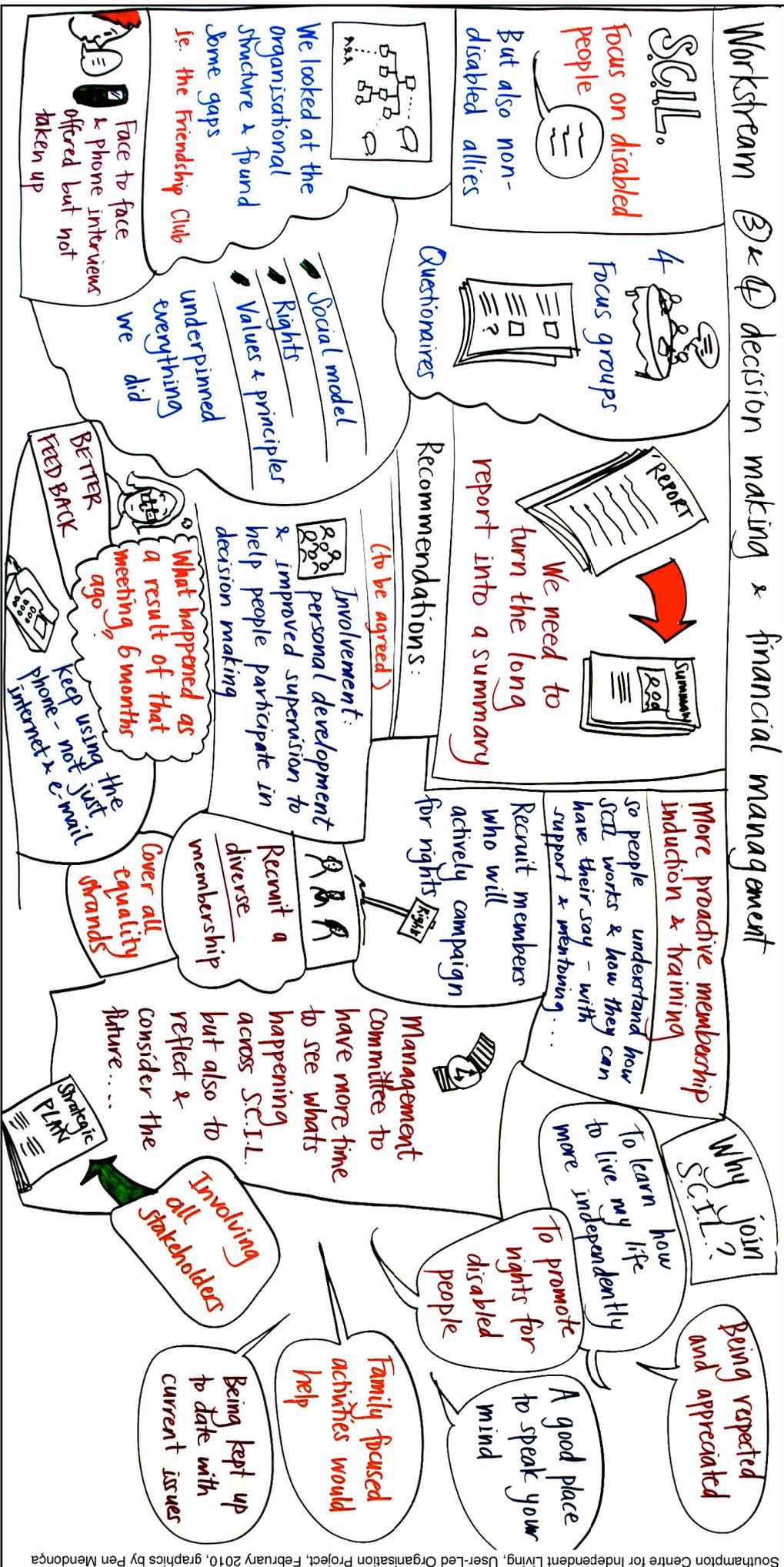
1. Membership
2. Service users



SCIL asked for the experience & views of it's constituents

Graphic Summary of Findings:

We asked a graphic artist to represent our findings and recommendations in a graphic style. We find it makes it easier to understand what our work was all about.



Summarised Findings in Text Format:

Focus Groups—Management Committee, Staff, Volunteers & Friendship Club:

MC— recruit a diverse membership and increase MC numbers

MC—accountability to membership at all stages of relevant decision making

support managers finance work by MC making informed accounting choices

like the idea of joining SCIL membership to receive Newsletter/ invites to SCIL events

outreach: open days, seminars, Newsletter, membership drives etc.

training for all constituents in their areas of decision making

volunteers & Friendship Club— input in decision making when it affects them

communicate information about what the MC does and what serving on MC involves

Friendship Club- importance of SCIL environment and Identify to the group

Why people joined SCIL's Membership:



Questionnaires—Membership & Service Users:

only chance members have to have a say is at AGMs. Not my place to raise debate

information on current SCIL decisions, posted to members to ask their opinion

advance information about nominees for election to the MC to make an informed choice

Learning chances and open days would be useful

both want information about what being on the MC actually involves

service users want to communicate: face-to-face, telephone & letter

service users need more information about SCIL rather than just services

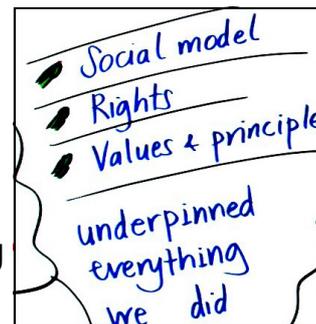
service users want to join MC, volunteer, & join Friendship Club

service users did not know that SCIL was a membership organisation

The Review

- recommendations—Learning & Future

The findings were turned into recommendations using SCIL's underpinning values / principles as a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation, based in the rights movement and working to Social Model principles. The recommendations had to promote Independent Living by Disabled People and empower all constituents in the organisation to be involved in decision making wherever possible.



What happened next?

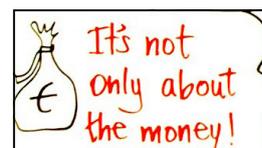
The Management Committee and Chief Executive met with the research team and they prioritised their top 5 recommendations from all the recommendations under the 5 main headings listed below: **(see over page for summary)**

1. Involvement
2. Information/Communication/Outreach
3. SCIL Membership
4. Vibrant Management Committee
5. Making Decisions about SCIL's Finances

What did the Management Committee decide to do after this?

The Management Committee who had actively supported and were involved with the review from the start, were committed to ensuring that the review and the recommendations in particular were not just forgotten once the Department of Health work came to a close at the end of March 2010. The Management Committee wanted to ensure that the review was taken forward to improve SCIL's decision making processes and practices with it's wider organisational implications.

The Management Committee have already committed staff and financial resources into putting the recommendations into practice.



The Management Committee have decided to start this process by considering the drafting of a 3-5 year strategic plan, again involving all SCIL's constituents. In addition the Management Committee have in principle agreed to a provisional plan for resources for membership development and support.

Other Learning:

The review team itself are shortly to review their personal development and skills development from the review itself. Our Project Manager was keen that SCIL's current staff led and participated in the research to improve SCIL's staff skills, and for team members to learn from each other as mentor and mentored; which was successful for this piece of work. This method was employed rather than contracting with external consultants where the money and the skills went elsewhere.

Prioritised Recommendations:

1. Involvement

Offer Personal Development Courses to constituents:

Sustainability through personal development ...

Ensure that the necessary resources are in place to facilitate the active involvement of constituents in SCIL's work and decision making processes.

Improve upon SCIL's supervision procedures & training & development programmes:

BUT: People are the most important part of what we do

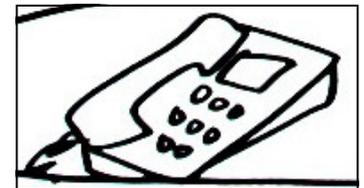
Proactive approaches in ensuring groups facilitated by SCIL are kept informed of SCIL's current work/activities. Ensure groups are made aware of membership availability and the MC role.

Ensure SCIL identifies in their induction procedures what all staff and volunteers need in terms of baseline skills i.e. IT skills.



2. Information/Communication/Outreach

Ensure the continued use of the telephone, letter writing/ audio transcription and personal contact etc. as not everyone has access to computers and high technology communication methods.



Proactively 'outreach' to service users about the work of the organisation (services and activities), any support available to access them and how they could get involved.

SCIL to make information provision more effective throughout the organisation and externally, by knowing its constituents, and offering a range of communication options, leading to a 'culture' of good information provision.

For SCIL to always feedback to constituents when they have been asked to be involved with any work of the organisation. This values their work and informs them of how their views have led to change.

BETTER FEED BACK

Regular seminars for constituents on current issues/policy changes

Prioritised Recommendations:

3. SCIL Membership

Use the Unity 12 building more effectively by holding open days and inviting the community in to visit us.



For the membership secretary to be more than an administrative role but a proactive role that seeks to increase the membership and deal with membership issues and communications.

Membership 'induction' process from telling people about the work of the organisation in the first instance to what SCIL has to offer them and then the organisation.

More proactive membership induction & training

At Annual General Meetings (AGM), ensure the members have all the relevant information to elect the Management Committee. Provide 'pen picture' with biography and picture prior to the AGM and enough information to make an informed decisions about the potential nominee.



To hold regular open meetings on specific topics to encourage membership consultation on important issues of the day affecting SCIL.

Recruit members who will actively campaign for rights



Recruit a diverse membership



Prioritised Recommendations:

4. Vibrant Management Committee

Recruit more people onto the Management Committee with the skills to undertake the role. Consider recruitment process rather than whoever wants to join the Management Committee can approach.

For SCIL to review the whole structure of Management Committee meetings i.e. timings and length of meetings.

For the Management Committee to identify training opportunities in relation to their specific duties of governance, Leadership and Management.



For the Management Committee to draw up a strategic plan for the next 3-5 years, involving all its stakeholders, set priorities from the plan for all the organisation to follow so that the organisations future direction is mapped out. Bearing in mind that interim plans would need to be an option.



Ensure members actually know what the Management Committee role entails so that they can make an informed decision about joining or not i.e. produce a fact-sheet/leaflet outlining the role of the Management Committee and its responsibilities and circulate to members.

5. Managing SCIL's Finances

Need a proactive Treasurer to guide the organisation and the Management Committee in particular in making financial decisions.

Ensure the membership in the Annual General Report are given clear information about the current sources of funding and how money is being spent.

Management Committee and relevant staff to take responsibility to inform those working on the accounts for the specific information they require to make specific financial decisions.

Training to relevant staff on generating financial reports from the current software.

Consider using the Treasurer or other trainer to teach constituents the principles of understanding the accounts information.

Southampton Centre for Independent Living

SCIL
9-19 Rose Road
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 6TE



Phone: (023) 8033 0982
Fax: (023) 8020 2648
Minicom: (023) 8020 2649
Email: Info@SouthamptonCIL.co.uk
Website: www.SouthamptonCIL.co.uk

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SCIL is an organisation run by and for Disabled People. Believing that everybody has the right to lead independent lives.

We aim to support Disabled People to achieve this by providing consumer-led services and by campaigning for the rights of Disabled People.

Independence is not doing everything for yourself but having control over your life and making your own decisions.

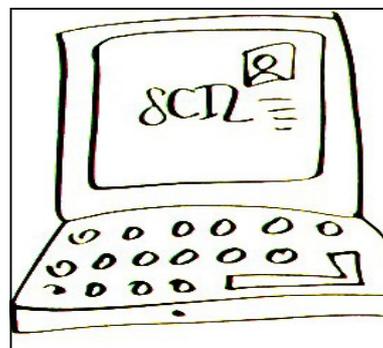
The review – what's in it for you?

The report that you have just accessed is a 'summary' of the main report.

If you would like a copy of the 'long' report please contact us using our contact details above.



This report along with all the other reviews that SCIL and the other ULOs undertook will be available on the: National Centre for Independent Living's website: www.ncil.org.uk
As well as ours which is: www.SouthamptonCIL.co.uk



All information is available in other accessible formats on request
Braille Large Print Audio Tape Computer Disk