

the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased in the UK, and the number of people with a mental health problem who are in contact with mental health services has also increased (Mental Health Act 1983, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2003, 2007).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with a mental health problem, and to reduce the stigma and discrimination that they experience. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the development of mental health services that are more user-centred and that involve people with a mental health problem in the design and delivery of services (Mental Health Act 1983, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2003, 2007).

One of the key challenges in the development of user-centred mental health services is the need to involve people with a mental health problem in the design and delivery of services. This is often done through the use of user groups, which are groups of people with a mental health problem who meet regularly to discuss their views on mental health services. User groups can be used to help to identify the needs of people with a mental health problem, to develop user-centred services, and to evaluate the effectiveness of services.

There are a number of factors that can influence the effectiveness of user groups. These include the size of the group, the frequency of meetings, the quality of the facilitator, and the degree of involvement of people with a mental health problem. It is important to ensure that user groups are well-run and that they are able to make a real difference to the lives of people with a mental health problem.

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