

## **Expenses Policy**

### **Background and Principles**

A central role of SUCO is to recruit, support and develop Service Users and Carers to take part in consultation meetings on the development and overview of services and policy. These meetings will include Partnership Boards. SUCO will also present information and training events for Service Users, Carers or professionals.

At times Service Users or Carers may be invited to represent their unique perspective by:

- acting as a panel member at a recruitment interview or selection process to choose a new service provider (Tender).
- being a presenter or facilitator at a conference or training event.
- developing policy documents
- undertaking other tasks for SUCO

Bucks County Council and the Bucks PCT, accept, that Service Users and Carers should not be worse off financially as a result of their involvement in strategic consultation processes. Out of pocket expenses like travelling and parking expenses, a sitting service or Personal Assistant (PA) expenses should be paid.

This document sets out the situations in which expenses payments may be made. It should be noted that SUCO's only current income is quite modest grants and payments from Bucks County Council.

SUCO depends on the County Council providing enough funding to cover the Service User and Carer expenses for the meetings, which they will be asked to attend, This policy document sets out the range of Service Users' and Carers' activities, for which the ULO will provide expenses.

Whenever SUCO quotes to Bucks County Council or other bodies to undertake any tasks, it will include a suitable element for expenses payments, so that it can continue to meet the commitments laid out in this document. It will also factor in sufficient funds to enable disabled service users to attend service user events, from which they would otherwise be excluded.

SUCO's Expenses Policy follows the principles set out in the Department of Health's Reward and Recognition Guidance, which includes the following principles around payment and reimbursement for Service User and Carer involvement.

- Service Users and Carers should not be worse off financially as a result of their involvement with service improvement.
- The terms of any payments will be established before Service Users and Carers become involved.
- The way in which payments or reimbursements are settled should not needlessly create barriers that deter involvement.
- Service Users and Carers in receipt of benefits should be provided with information and signposted to support to prevent breaches of their benefit conditions.
- Payments should be made according to consistent and transparent criteria that take into account the level of involvement, the type of work and the skills and expertise required.
- Records should be kept of all payments made for audit and accountability purposes.

## **Expenses**

Below potential Service User/Carer tasks have been divided into three categories to explain the situations in which expenses will be paid.

### **1. No Expenses Payable**

Attendance at open or public meetings or consultations and giving an individual view

Responding to questionnaires.

### **2. Expenses Payable**

Undertaking training relevant to involvement/ consultation work.

Attending consultations or workshops as a representative.

Representation and participation at agreed meetings including boards and working groups.

Chairing agreed groups or meetings.

Representing SUCO at meetings.

Staff Recruitment, interview or tender panel membership.

Planning, preparing, chairing or facilitating at workshops, presentations, conferences, focus groups and events.

Speaking at events/conferences on behalf of SUCO.

Formal monitoring or Evaluation of Services.

### **3. Discretionary Expenses**

Payment of other reasonable expenses such as postage costs or phone calls may also be agreed - such payments would only be made with the agreement of the Chair or Project Lead:

#### **Expenses Rates**

Mileage allowance 45p per mile and public transport costs or taxi costs with agreement

Up to £5 allowance for lunch on agreed occasions

Whenever possible, expenses payments will be made to Service Users and Carers as laid out above. Whether such expenses will be payable should be agreed and clearly communicated to the Service Users and Carers before they commit to take part.

If expenses are offered, it is the Service User's and Carer's own decision whether or not to accept them. People can opt to receive no expenses at all to avoid affecting their benefits. Advice should be sought from a body such as the Benefits Agency to check if accepting such payments is acceptable under benefit rules.