

Provision of critical friend role for Folk.us Proposal by Bec Hanley

1. What is a critical friend?

Costa and Kallick (1993) describe a 'critical friend' as:

*A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work.*¹

Swaffield (2002) has pointed out that a critical friend sees an organisation from a different perspective from those within it, but also assists them to bring familiar things into a new focus².

2. Aim of this project

The Executive Group of Folk.us has agreed that it would appoint a Critical Friend in order to help Folk.us to reflect on whether and how it is meeting its overall aims and objectives. This role will run from May 2006 to December 2007, with time at the end of the project to contribute to a publication. This proposal sets out:

- My background and relevant experience
- My values
- My understanding of the role of the Critical Friend for Folk.us
- How I suggest this role is carried out
- Outputs
- Support required from Folk.us
- Proposed budget and timetable

This proposal has been refined following feedback from the Executive Group on an initial draft.

3. My background and relevant experience

I have spent the past fifteen years working to promote the involvement of people who use services in health care and health research. I was the director of the

¹ Costa A & Kallick B (1993) Through the lens of a critical friend Educational Leadership 51 (2) 49-51

² Swaffield S (2002) Contextualising the work of the critical friend Paper for 15th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement January 2002

INVOLVE (formerly Consumers in NHS Research) Support Unit for five years. I have worked with service users, carers, community workers, clinicians and researchers. Recent and current clients the NHS Modernisation Agency, Macmillan Cancer Relief, the Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit and Breast Cancer Care.

4. My values

In undertaking this project, I will ensure that principles of good practice for user and carer involvement inform my work. I will therefore seek to ensure that:

- Service users and carers are partners in reflecting on the work of Folk.us and in thinking about how the project could be developed
- The skills, knowledge and experience of service users and carers will be valued and respected
- I am as inclusive as possible

5. Role of the Critical Friend for Folk.us

This is the role description I understand that the Executive Group has given to me:

- To help Folk.us to reflect on where it has been and where it is going, acting as a pair of fresh eyes
- To help Folk.us to think about different ways of achieving its aims and objectives
- To bring in experience and ideas from other areas and organisations
- To promote dialogue – to reflect *with* Folk.us and its stakeholders, not to do an evaluation *to* Folk.us
- To help Folk.us to think about the organisation is doing well and the areas for improvement
- To offer constructive criticism as well as positive feedback
- To record the learning, so that Folk.us and others can benefit

6. How is it best to fulfil this role?

We agreed that the most helpful process would be:

- You will identify a theme for each Executive Group meeting, and give me some information about why you have chosen this theme
- I will prepare a short discussion paper for the Executive Group. For each paper, I will draw on discussions with people who have a useful view that may help to inform and develop Folk.us's thinking. I may also draw from relevant research. Each paper will include questions for discussion. The

- Group could choose to share this paper with other stakeholders and/or to invite other people to the meeting to contribute to the discussion.
- At each Executive Group meeting, I will present the paper and facilitate discussion in response to the paper
 - I will tape record these discussions. After the meeting, I will write a short paper pulling out the key themes and identifying any learning points and agreed actions.
 - In November 2007 I will produce a final report, which will draw together the learning from all of the discussions.
 - In December 2007 I will attend a final meeting with the Executive Group to discuss my report and any actions or issues that it may arise from it
 - In early 2008 I will contribute to a publication resulting from the final report. I do not think it is appropriate that I am a lead author on any such publication.

We agreed that at this stage only the first theme for discussion at Executive Group meetings would be agreed. This is ***the role of Folk.us***. Within this topic, we will think about whether there is clarity about the role, whether there is a need for more clarity, and how the role may have changed over time. In order to inform a discussion about this topic, I will attend the half-day workshop planned in July to re-launch Folk.us.

At the Executive Group meeting in September we will agree the themes for discussion at the next Executive Group. Possible themes we identified were:

- The structure of Folk.us
- Geography – is Folk.us managing to reach all areas in its patch?
- Empowerment – how much are we empowering service users?
- Which values are we promoting? Do these reflect the values of service users and carers?
- Networking and outreach
- Training
- Facilitating collaborative research
- Involving people in an on-going way in the work of Folk.us
- Folk.us as catalyst for involvement
- Impact
- Dissemination
- Adaptability – for Folk.us and for research

7. Outputs

Outputs from this project will be:

- Four preliminary discussion papers about themes identified by Folk.us
- Reports of the four discussions

- A final report, which will bring together the four discussion papers to identify learning
- Contribution to a publication by Folk.us

8. Support required from Folk.us Executive Group and Folk.us coordinator

In order to undertake this role effectively, I would appreciate the following input from the Folk.us Executive Group and the Folk.us Co-ordinator.

- Identification of a theme for discussion at least one month before each Executive Group meeting
- Identification of key stakeholders who could help inform the development of a preliminary discussion paper
- Time from individual members of the Executive Group to contribute to thinking about the themes prior to the meeting (this could be by phone, letter or email)
- Provision of background papers, so that I can keep up to date with the work of Folk.us.

9. Proposed budget and timetable

I charge £300 per day for my time. You have indicated that you have a budget of approximately £6,000 for the Critical Friend role. My proposed timetable and budget is below. I have proposed a budget of £5,750, which will allow any overnight stays to be covered, or additional time to be given to help with the Folk.us publication at the end of this project.

Dates for meetings could be changed to fit in with the availability of Executive Group members. However, it will be important to allow one month between the identification of a theme and the date of the meeting when this theme will be discussed. Notes that travel costs are estimated and may change if rail fares increase substantially.

Date	Activity	No. of days	Travel expenses
May 06	Preparatory meeting	1	£75
July 06	Attend re-launch event	1	£75 ³
Aug 06	Prepare discussion paper 1 for Executive Group	0.5	
Sept 06	Attend meeting of Executive Group	1	£75
	Produce report	1	
Dec 06	Prepare discussion paper 2 for Executive Group	1	

³ I have assumed that the cost of overnight accommodation will be paid separately by Folk.us

Jan 07	Attend meeting of Executive Group Produce report	1 1	£85
March 07	Prepare discussion paper 3 for Executive Group	1	
April 07	Attend meeting of Executive Group Produce report	1 1	£85
Sept 07	Prepare discussion paper 4 for Executive Group	1	
Oct 07	Attend meeting of Executive Group Produce report	1 1	£85
Nov 07	Produce final report	1	
Dec 07	Attend review meeting with Executive Group	1	£85
Jan-March 08	Contribute to publication by Folk.us	1	
	Contingency time	0.5	
	Total no. of days	17	
	Cost	£5100	£650
	TOTAL COST	£5750	

Bec Hanley
May 2006