

# BRISTOL INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

## BRANCH CONSTITUTION

<b>NAME</b>	The name of the branch shall be: <b>BRISTOL INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK (BIMHN)</b>
<b>Principal Office</b>	<b>“To Be Confirmed”</b>
<b>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To promote, organise and support a collective, independent and diverse voice of people who have used or are using services or groups in the planning and development of mental health services.</li><li>2. To proactively influence the advancement of mental health services in Bristol by working collaboratively with commissioners, service providers and other agencies to identify innovative health solutions.</li><li>3. To create a unified voice and community for people with lived experience of mental health issues.</li><li>4. To represent the needs and interests of the diverse community of people who have used mental health services, or are using mental health services in Bristol, or are in need of access to mental health services, irrespective of diagnosis and providing an equal voice for each of them.</li><li>5. To challenge and act against stigma and discrimination and promote a positive understanding of mental health through education in the community, increasing parity of esteem between physical health and mental health.</li><li>6. To uphold the human rights and dignity of users of mental health Services in Bristol.</li><li>7. To develop a community that provides a network of support to people who have used or are using services and also individual concerns, including sharing information where appropriate.</li><li>8. Assertively campaigning for change by holding Mental Health service providers in Bristol to account to ensure the continued advancement of Mental Health services.</li><li>9. To advance such charitable purposes (according to the law of England and Wales) as the trustees see fit from time to time.</li></ol>
<b>POWERS</b>	<p>In furtherance of the above Aims and Objectives but for no other purpose <b>BIMHN</b> shall have the power to do all things as are lawful, conducive and charitable to the attainment of those Aims and Objectives.</p> <p>All people who have lived experience of Mental Health within the defined boundary area are welcome to attend.</p>
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>In line with the IMHN Constitution and Bye Laws, BIMHN</b> shall have a full membership and an associate membership.

In addition to this, to be a full member, an individual must be registered with a GP Practice within the county boundary of Bristol.

As per the IMHN Bye Laws (and in specific application to BIMHN):

### **Full Membership**

Criteria:

- (a) This can be through a group membership or an individual membership.
- (b) There will be **2 places as full members for every Service User-led group and User –led Self Help Group within the defined boundary area**. The representatives will be decided by each group through a democratic process, with evidence of this being provided to the IMHN committee, or its nominee upon request. It is the responsibility of these representatives to feedback between their group and IMHN.
- (c) People who meet the criteria in sub-clause (e) **(who are not representing a group) can, if they wish, apply to become full members**.
- (d) Application to be decided by a majority vote of the committee for individuals. For an application from a group, this will be decided by a majority vote at a general meeting of a branch of IMHN and after a minimum of two attendances at the monthly meeting.
- (e) Criteria for individual membership are:
  1. The individual will usually be registered with a GP practice or accessing Mental Health Services within the defined boundary area that the branch has been formed in; and
  2. Are over the age of eighteen; and
  3. An individual who has ever used Mental Health services; or
  4. An individual who is currently using Mental Health services; or
  5. An individual currently trying to access Mental Health services; or
  6. An individual who self-defines as having had or currently having Mental Health issues.
- (f) Carers and staff of Mental Health services may apply to become full members if they meet the criteria outlined in **sub-clause (e)**; but must be attending meetings in the capacity as outlined in the aforementioned section.
- (g) **Full membership** will allow speaking rights and a vote at meetings, including Annual General Meetings, and the potential to stand for election as officers.

### **Associate Membership**

Criteria:

- (a) This can be through an individual membership only.
- (b) People who do not meet the criteria to become full members can apply to become associate members. Application to be decided by a majority vote of the committee for individuals.
- (c) Associate members will also not be allowed to stand for election as officers or vote for those standing for election as Officers.
- (d) Associate membership will allow a vote on general matters at meetings; however this will not include any changes to the branch constitution, role descriptions of committee posts, or the policies and procedures of IMHN.
- (e) Associate membership will allow for speaking rights at meetings.

### **Expectations of Membership**

- (a) All attendees and members are expected to contribute to information and debate about mental health services.
- (b) All full members and associate members are expected to adhere to the policies and procedures as laid out in the IMHN Policies and Procedures document.
- (c) People who do not meet the criteria to be members, including carers and mental health staff, can be invited to attend part or all of a meeting, but will not be able to vote.

### Conditions of Membership

The above benefits of all members are conditional on the proper conduct of members and such benefits may be suspended or withdrawn in accordance with IMHN policies and procedures.

### CANCELLING MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with the Bye Laws of IMHN:

- (a) A member may cancel their membership from BIMHN by writing to the branch Secretary.
- (b) A member will have been assumed to have cancelled their membership if they do not attend meetings of the branch and there is no contact from them for a period of twelve months.
- (c) **BIMHN** shall have the power to end or suspend membership in the event of direct contravention of its Aims and Objectives or its policies.
  - (i) There shall be an offer of a right of appeal before membership is ended, in accordance with the constitution.
  - (ii) The group will have policies and procedures to deal fairly and transparently with this which will include the option of independent mediation.

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The network will not discriminate on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, disability, religious or political belief, marital status or age (in line with the rest of the provisions as outlined in Bye Law 1). It will aim to actively engage with all communities.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

**BIMHN** will hold an AGM within 6 months of the end of the financial year. Notice shall be given by the Secretary at least 4 weeks in advance. At this meeting:

1. The officers will present Annual Reports, including the Treasurer's report.
2. New officers will be elected.
3. Resolutions may be put.
4. Minutes will be taken.

**Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)** - The Membership Meeting or 10% of full members may call an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss issues of special concern. Proper notice must be given for an EGM and minutes must be made by the Secretary.

A quorum at the AGM or EGM will be 10% or 8 members of the recognised full membership, whichever is the greater.

### RESOLUTIONS: Change to policy, Constitution or suggestions for action

There will be an opportunity for resolutions to be put to the AGM. The procedure for putting a resolution shall be as follows:

1. Full members may put resolutions.
2. Resolutions should reach the Secretary one week before the AGM

3. It will be possible for full members to put emergency resolutions before the Annual General Meeting itself, provided 90% of members present at the Annual General Meeting agree to this.
4. Resolutions will be considered to have been passed if they are supported by a simple majority vote by full members present at the Annual General Meeting.

## **VOTING PROCEDURE**

Voting will take place at the Annual General Meeting. Eligibility to vote is covered under **MEMBERSHIP**.

Voting will be by a show of hands, unless a request for a secret ballot is supported by a majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting.

The Chair(s) of **BIMHN** will have a normal vote and not a casting vote.

The election of Officers at an AGM or EGM will normally take place by secret ballot.

For a vote to count it must be cast by a full member representing themselves or a group that is in attendance at the meeting. Therefore it will not be possible to vote by proxy or by postal vote.

## **BRANCH COMMITTEE**

This will be made up of the following:

- Chair
- Secretary;
- Treasurer;
- Membership Engagement Officer
- Campaigns Officer
- Other officers as decided by the group and full members of **BIMHN** who can make a contribution.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Officers will be elected at the Annual General Meeting. All officers will be elected for a period of one year and can be re-elected at the end of each year. Any one person may only serve as an officer for a continuous period of four years.

Each nominee must have one nominator and one seconder, who must be full members of **BIMHN**.

Nominations may be sent in writing or email to the Secretary, or made known to the Secretary (or the person acting in that capacity, or their nominee) by the start of the election process at the Annual General Meeting. Nominees should be at the Annual General Meeting if possible.

In a contested election a nominee will have the option to make a brief written or spoken statement and ask for secret ballot. (See voting procedure above)

If an elected officer resigns during the course of the year, the Organising Group shall have the power to appoint a replacement until the next Annual General Meeting.

The Network meetings will conduct business on the principle of gaining a majority agreement on every possible occasion. The Chair will have a normal vote but will not have a casting vote at Meetings.

**BIMHN** will meet regularly.

## **MEETINGS**

The Secretary *or their designated nominee* will be responsible for calling general meetings and business meetings, if they have not been arranged at a previous general meeting. In an emergency or in the absence of action by the Secretary to call meetings, it will be possible for 10% of full members to call a meeting.

At least **two weeks' notice** of a Network Meeting must be given. This notice should include: location, date and time of when the general meeting is taking place. An agenda will be circulated five days in advance of the meeting.

The Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that the minutes are taken and made available for all members of **BIMHN** to read on request. The minutes may be circulated by e-mail or post. If the minutes are circulated, they should be sent to all members who have attended or sent apologies to that meeting and the previous meeting.

Meetings may also appoint sub-groups to carry through particular activities.

## **FINANCES**

All moneys raised by or held by or on behalf of **BIMHN** shall be used to further its Aims and Objectives and for no other purpose.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring proper accounts are kept and shall report to the Membership Meeting as they require the group may ask somebody who may not be a member to keep and manage the accounts but this must be agreed by the membership and they should have the skills to do this. The accounts shall be audited by an independent auditor to be agreed by the network.

## **DISSOLUTION OF THE ORGANISATION**

If the Membership Meeting by a simple majority at any time decides it is necessary to, or advisable to, dissolve **BIMHN**, it shall call an Extraordinary General Meeting.

If a resolution for dissolution is carried by two thirds of members voting at that meeting, the powers to dispose of any assets held by the group and apply any assets remaining after payment of debts towards those of **a similar group or return to the funding body will become the responsibility of the Board of Trustees.**

The branch will respect all rules as outlined in the IMHN Constitution, Bye Laws, and its policies and procedures.

The branch constitution should be reviewed regularly and at a minimum at each AGM.

August 10<sup>th</sup> 2015