

# Language in user involvement



✧ When you start discussing and reading about user involvement you will find different terms used in:

★ different countries

★ different government departments

★ even in different areas of health and social services

# Arguments for patient



- ✧ Meanings for words change over time – we can make patient mean something different if we want
- ✧ Any word you choose has problems – it will never be perfect
- ✧ You need to do more than change the language if you want patients to be more respected – you have to **change the way people act**

# Arguments against patient

- ✧ Emphasises **unequal power** between the person gaining the service and the person providing it
- ✧ Makes the person gaining services sound **passive**, as if they contribute nothing of value to the situation
- ✧ People also use services when they are well by getting advice on:
  - ★ preventing problems
  - ★ staying well
  - ★ other life issues
- ✧ **Excludes** carers

# Arguments for layperson



- ✧ Describes anyone who does **not** have professional knowledge and experience in health and social services
  
- ✧ Can include:
  - ★ members of the public
  - ★ users **and** carers
  - ★ organised patient or user groups
  - ★ patient/user advocates

# Arguments against layperson

✧ The term is easily criticised - for example:

★ If a layperson develops a real interest in the experiences, interests and rights of patients they might be told they are no longer an 'ordinary layperson'

# Arguments for customer



- ✧ Suggests you can pick and choose what you want
- ✧ If you are unhappy you leave – you are not obligated to stay there
- ✧ If the service is worried about its reputation, they will do something to bring you back
- ✧ Includes patients and their carers

# Arguments against customer



- ✧ It is often OK if unhappy people quietly exit via the back door
  - ★ There are always new customers who need and want to get in the front door of a health or social service
- ✧ It does not encourage health and social services to change

# Arguments for consumer or user



- ✧ Suggests people have a **voice** and can express their concerns and opinions directly to health and social service management
- ✧ If there is not a good response, they can lodge official complaints or go more public – this is political action
- ✧ Emphasises **both** action and involvement
- ✧ Providers need a reason to exist, e.g. having consumers or users for their services so they need to respond to them
- ✧ **Includes** patients and their carers

# Arguments against consumer or user



✧ The word might suggest a one-way process:

★ consuming services like you consume bread and milk

★ using services like you use petrol