

Consumer Advisory Team Handbook

North West Hospital and Health Service
NW0036–V3–03/20

Introduction

Welcome to the North West Hospital and Health Service (NWHHS) consumer advisory team.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the future of NWHHS services. Your participation as a consumer is incredibly valuable to us, and we are very grateful for your time and willingness to be involved.

This handbook is designed to help you understand your role and the expectations of this role within the health service. It will also give you some practical help to get the best from the experience of consumer engagement.

Why Consumer Engagement?

NWHHS is committed to fulfilling our mission and priorities contained in our Strategic Plan. To assist us to do this, we intend to partner with our consumers in a meaningful and purposeful way, and to consult with them on every aspect of our business.

Who are our consumers? Anyone who has had anything to do with the HHS, whether as a patient, a carer or guardian, or as a health professional, or a concerned member of the community.

Research has shown that effective consumer engagement improves clinical outcomes, patient safety and the type and structure of the services provided to communities.

Engaging with our consumers will allow NWHHS to:

- Ask our consumers how we are performing
- Share their stories with our staff
- Listen and learn from their experiences
- Improve cultural competence, and reach those consumers who do not normally engage with us
- Build trust, respect and understanding between NWHHS and our communities and consumers
- Provide the best services possible to our consumers

North West Hospital and Health Service Strategic Direction

The NWHHS Strategic Plan –2017-2021 (Revised 2019) outlines:

Our mission:

To be Queensland's leading Hospital and Health Service, delivering excellence in remote healthcare to our patients

Our purpose:

To embrace change, to forge close partnerships, and to work closely with our communities to improve the health of people across North West Queensland.

Our values:



Our principles:

- Safe delivery of high quality hospital and health services
- Strong partnerships with other health providers to improve health care for our communities
- Highly skilled and committed staff who drive quality patient care
- A culture that embraces innovation, technology and research
- An accountable and flexible Hospital and Health Service that leads change

Our objectives:

- We will provide our patients with high quality health care which is well-coordinated, efficient and sustainable. We will work with our health partners and local communities to ensure our people can access the health services they need.
- We will support our staff and develop their skills so they can perform at their best.
- We will support new thinking and fresh ideas that help us achieve our vision.
- We will effectively meet the Government's requirements through good governance.

The role of a Consumer Advisory Team member

Your role is to help us to make sure the services we provide are safe, appropriate and meet the needs of our consumers, and also to help us plan for the future. This may be in a number of ways, for example:

- Providing feedback on our services
- Providing feedback on information we give to our patients
- Sharing your story with our staff
- Participating in committee meetings to provide a consumer's perspective

- Providing your opinion on policy, protocol or procedure documents that we use in the health service
- Helping us to analyse feedback data such as compliments and complaints, and giving a consumer's view on potential quality initiatives
- Helping us to train our staff in people centred care, by sharing your experience of our services

We may ask you to take part in these activities once, or on a regular basis. If you are selected to represent consumers on a NWHHS committee, we may ask you to be a part of a particular committee for a specified length of time.

Eligibility

To be eligible to take part in these activities, the consumer should be:

- Over 18 years of age
- Willing to sign an agreement of confidentiality, to protect sensitive information which you may receive

We welcome participation from consumers in our rural and remote areas, and we will arrange teleconference and videoconference facilities if required.

You are not eligible to take part if you are:

- A current employee of the health service
- An elected official of local, state or federal government
- A lobbyist

Your knowledge will help us

This is how you can help:

- Contribute your knowledge and expertise as a consumer of our services
- Understand that you are giving us your personal opinion, not that of any other organisation
- Think about the whole service, and the impact that our services have on other people in the community, not just your personal circumstances
- Provide honest feedback
- Abide by the Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Agreement for consumers

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest may occur when a consumer's private interests conflict with their duties as a consumer. This conflict may be real or may be perceived. While conflicts of interest often do occur, it is important that you tell us if you think there may be a conflict of interest with an engagement activity.

What to expect from us

- We will ask for your opinion and we will listen to you

- We will treat you as an equal member of our team
- We will understand that you bring a unique perspective, and that you may have a different opinion to others in the group
- We will give you information in a clear and simple form, and will help you to understand anything you may not understand
- We will support you through the engagement process

Agreeing to participate in consumer engagement activities will mean that your personal details will be added to a register of interested consumers. This information will remain confidential and will only be used by NWHHS for the purposes of consumer engagement activities.

You can accept or decline any offer to participate in consumer engagement activities, and may have your details removed from the register at any time.

Insurance and Indemnity

As a consumer involved in a consumer engagement activity, you are covered for personal accident through the Queensland Government Insurance Fund provided you are not found to be negligent in any actions that led to an accident.

Consumers are responsible to ensure that their personal possessions, including motor vehicles, are adequately insured while on NWHHS grounds.

Any theft must be reported to security immediately.

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about an engagement activity, another consumer, a patient or a staff member, please contact the person who organised the engagement activity.

Reimbursement

Consumer Representatives are entitled to participate voluntarily; or they may claim reimbursement of expenses. NWHHS will generally provide any out of pocket expenses the consumer representative may incur when involved in activities. These include:

- Travel to and from meetings or activities, on a flat rate per kilometre, paid to a maximum of 100km for a return journey
- Taxi fares

Refreshments will normally be provided if you are required to attend any of our facilities to take part in engagement activities.

If expenses are to be claimed, the Consumer Representative must complete the appropriate declaration forms for the Australian Tax Office. They must also submit a tax invoice after completing approved activities. We will then set up a payment process from our accounts office directly into the Consumer's bank account and provide them with a remittance receipt.

Skills

Many people feel uneasy when they first begin consumer engagement activities. Some of the language used may be unfamiliar and the things discussed may be new to you.

Some consumers feel scared of saying the wrong thing, or making a fool of themselves. We will make sure you feel part of any engagement activity and that you feel comfortable with the situation before we include you. You should never feel afraid or anxious before or because of any engagement with us.

Remember, your strength, and the reason we have invited you to help us, is your experience and knowledge.

Be prepared for any meetings we ask you to attend. We will provide all the information you need, but please contact us if you do not understand the information or need some more help. We will always give you a contact person who you can call.

Write down any questions you may have, and any thoughts that come to mind when you read the papers you have been sent. This will help you to respond.

Communication skills

There may be times when we will ask you to share your story with others. You will need to feel confident and relaxed to be able to do this and our communications staff are happy to help you prepare.

Storytelling can help us to bring the theory of patient care to life. It can be extremely effective for staff to listen to the stories, and helps them to understand the effect of their actions on people.

Sometimes telling your story can be difficult and may even be painful for you. This is not our intention. You can tell us as much or as little of your story as you want to, remembering that you should get your message across to staff about how the experience felt to you, and the impact it had on your family or your carer.

We will help you to try to give us a “solutions focused” approach. This means that we will ask you if there is anything we could have done better, and we will involve you in finding ways we can improve.

If you don't feel comfortable sharing your experience, please let us know.

Training

We will provide induction training for you. This will be held at your local hospital and will include:

- an introduction to the NWHHS and to Queensland Health
- Queensland Health Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality

Additional training may be provided to those consumers who are invited to sit on committees within NWHHS.

To ensure you get the most from the experience of being a part of our organisation, we will arrange meetings with other consumer representatives to give you additional support when you need it. We will also ensure that for the larger, more influential meetings, we will invite two consumers to attend, so you can support each other.