

Consumer Engagement Policy

Purpose

Early Start Australia (ESA) supports processes which involve consumers to inform the development and evaluation of services. We believe that consumer participation is built on a framework of informing, listening to, responding to, and involving consumers. This policy outlines our approach, aims and objectives in relation to consumer engagement.

This policy is not intended to be exhaustive or include the many informal processes used by clinicians and other staff to engage consumers and stakeholders every day.

Scope

This policy applies to the planning and evaluation of ESA’s services and is not intended to include the many informal processes used by our therapists and staff to engage consumers in their day-to-day interactions. It is applicable to all staff and defines how consumer engagement is incorporated into development and improvement processes.

Definitions

Consumer: a person who has used, or may potentially use, our services. At ESA and for the purposes of this policy, consumer(s) are identified as clients / participants; carers; families; advocates; and support person(s).

Principles

We will

- Create opportunities for consumers to provide feedback about services by telephone, email, online, mail or in forums like focus groups and committees.
- Make sure that incident and complaints and feedback processes allow people to identify issues and raise concerns about our services.

Consumer engagement improves decision making, increases satisfaction with services and brings into focus issues relevant to consumers that might not otherwise be heard.

Policy Statement

ESA engages consumers to ensure opportunities are provided for their views to inform the development of our services. We do this through five levels of engagement of consumers including:

- **Inform** (keeping consumers informed)
- **Consult** (keeping consumers informed and listening to concerns; considering insights; and provide feedback on our decisions)
- **Involve** (working with consumers so that concerns and issues are directly reflected in alternatives developed; and provide feedback on our decisions and how the feedback impacted those)
- **Collaborate** (working together with consumers to agree on what we will implement; incorporating consumer advice and recommendations into outcomes as much as possible)
- **Empower** (implementing what consumers decide and supporting and complementing consumer actions)

Current consumer engagement

Strategy	Purpose
Inform: Provision of information	To provide information to consumers about services and service provision. For example, advising families about telehealth services during COVID-19 shutdown periods.



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Strategy	Purpose
Consult: Online feedback links	To provide opportunity from users to inform service improvements. For example, invitation to provide specific input about our client-facing policies is on our website.
Consult: Complaints / compliments	To manage and learn from feedback and identify issues of concern to consumers
Consult: Annual consumer satisfaction questionnaire	To assess consumer satisfaction and identify improvement opportunities. Results are analysed for trends to identify opportunities for improvement.
Involve / Collaborate: Family Reference Group	To invite consumers to provide specific feedback about relevant ESA issues. See Family Reference Group Terms of Reference.
Involve / Collaborate: Participation in NDIS Audit	To ensure consumers provide specific feedback about relevant ESA issues.
Empower: Individual relationships	Our therapists ensure empowerment of clients and families and provide care that is respectful; share appropriate information; work collaboratively to make decisions and plan care; and support clients in their own care and self management. Refer also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Rights and Safeguards Policy • Privacy Policy • Complaints and Feedback Policy
Empower: Partnerships and collaborations with local community organisations.	To ensure local communities input to the local service delivery at each clinic.

Family Reference Group

Consumers recruited to participate in our Family Reference Group are sought on a volunteer basis. The consent of consumers to be contacted prior to participation is established. Orientation and welcome is provided by the FRG chair, prior to initial participation. A diversity of voices from across Australia is sought. Where required, reasonable adjustments may be implemented to encourage participation from consumers, such as ensuring accessibility for meetings.

Refer also to the Family Reference Group Terms of Reference.

Associated Documents

Consumer Engagement Information Sheet
Stakeholder Engagement Plan
Client Rights and Safeguards Policy
Privacy Policy
Complaints and Feedback Policy
Family Reference Group Terms of Reference

NDIS Practice Standard Outcome 2.1 – Governance and Operational Management



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Document Control

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<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/about+us/about+sa+health/consumer+engagement+and+participation/consumer+engagement+and+participation>

<file:///C:/Users/KateFloyd/Downloads/Consumer%20participation%20policy.pdf> (peninsula private hospital consumer engagement policy)

<https://media.healthdirect.org.au/publications/Consumer-Engagement-Policy-2013-v1-1.pdf>

<https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/publications-and-resources/cancer-australia-publications/consumer-engagement-strategy>

NDS: Involvement of participants in the governance, operations and / or leadership of your organisation.

