

Consumer engagement in aged care – Background information June – July 2019

Context

Engaging consumers and their representatives at all levels of your organisation is integral to improving the quality, responsiveness, safety and accountability of aged care services. It also directly supports health and well being outcomes for consumers.

Following a period of consultation with providers, consumers and others, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission) proposes publishing resources that will describe the importance of consumer engagement in delivering better experiences and outcomes for aged care consumers, and how co-design provides an essential foundation for consumer-centred care. Most importantly the resources will:

- draw on experience in the Australian aged care sector, internationally and in other sectors to provide practical tools, tips and case studies for engaging with diverse consumers in different service settings:
 - to understand their life, needs, goals and preferences and how this influences their care
 - to ensure the care and services provided are right for each consumer on a day-to-day basis
 - in workforce planning, recruitment and training
 - in the design, evaluation and improvement of care and services
- describe how co-design and engagement directly links to the new Aged Care Quality Standards, with their focus on outcomes for consumers and engaging consumers across the full spectrum of planning, designing, delivering and evaluating care and services.

Key concepts

This project focuses on the interrelated concepts of consumer-centred care, co-design and consumer engagement. We are mindful that different people import different meanings to these terms, and that there are no universal definitions. We are also conscious that some people prefer different terminology (such as co-production and consumer empowerment).

For the purpose of this work:

- **Consumer-centred care** refers to care and services that are designed around an individual's needs, preferences and background. It includes a partnership between consumers and providers, with the consumer an equal partner in the planning, development and monitoring of care. Consumer-centred care is a key focus of the new Aged Care Quality Standards that are designed around achieving outcomes for consumers.

- **Co-design and consumer engagement** are essential foundation stones for consumer-centred care.
 - **Co-design** means involving all stakeholders (consumers, their families and carers and staff) in the design of care and services to ensure they achieve the desired outcomes for consumers and that their experiences are used to drive improvements.
 - **Consumer engagement** is about involving consumers (and their families and carers) in all aspects of care. This means engaging consumers in day-to-day decisions about their care, as well as in service planning, delivery, setting priorities and identifying improvements to care and services. Engagement can occur in many different ways at different levels – through informing, consulting, involving, collaborating or empowering, depending on the circumstances.

