

# Partnering with Consumers Case Study: South Western Sydney Local Health District

## Person-centred approaches and consumer partnerships

Person-centred approaches and strong consumer partnerships are critical for delivering care that meets people’s needs, achieving better health outcomes for communities and ensuring better value for health services. They also underpin the Partnering with Consumers Standard of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. However, each health service organisation is on its own journey and must determine what strategies work best for their local communities and service delivery contexts.

This case study is one of eight, designed to assist other health services working to embed person-centred care. It highlights the person-centred approaches and strategies that the South Western Sydney Local Health District (LHD) uses to partner with consumers, including:

- A. Implementing service-wide strategies to build a culture that values partnering with consumers**
- B. Engaging consumers in governance structures at many levels**
- C. Providing the right resources to effectively support and engage consumers**
- D. Actively working with and supporting families and carers**
- E. Creating a welcoming environment that meets the needs of all consumers**
- F. Working with consumers to redesign services and support the delivery of person-centred care.**

These themes and good practice examples have been aligned with the four criteria of the Partnering with Consumers Standard, and the seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations (the attributes), which are detailed below.






### Partnering with Consumers Standard criteria

- 1** Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers
- 2** Partnering with patients in their own care
- 3** Health literacy
- 4** Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance

### Seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations



## Snapshot of the South Western Sydney Local Health District

Where	What	Whom
 <p>One of the largest public health districts in NSW</p> <p>Covers both rural and suburban communities</p>	 <p>6 acute public hospitals</p> <p>14 major community health centres providing prevention, early intervention and community-based treatment, palliative care and rehabilitation services</p>	 <p>Supports approximately 1.1 million people</p> <p>Among the most rapidly growing populations in NSW</p> <p>Almost one-third of the community speaks a language other than English</p>

**Overview**

The South Western Sydney LHD is one of the largest LHDs in New South Wales, and about 30% of its consumers speak a language other than English. The district-wide Consumer and Community Participation (CCP) framework – currently in its sixth version – strengthens and encourages the LHD’s approach to partnering with consumers. The LHD supports consumer representatives to ensure they are confident and empowered to engage effectively. A Consumer and Community Participation Unit has guided respectful and meaningful consumer governance and partnership since 2002.

### A. Implementing service-wide strategies to build a culture that values partnering with consumers

<p><b>Criterion</b></p>  <p>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p>  <p>People, capability and culture</p>
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The Transforming Your Experience (TYE) strategy is a five-year road map to transform how consumers, the workforce and communities experience the South Western Sydney LHD and its services. It provides a clear direction for working together to deliver safe and high-quality health services and build the health of local communities.

- The strategy is underpinned by four focus areas:
1. Consistent delivery, quality and safe care
  2. Personalised, individualised care
  3. Respectful communication and genuine engagement
  4. Effective leadership and an empowered workforce.

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Transforming Your Experience is really great – it outlines how and why we partner with consumers, and it guides everything that we do.

– Executive team member

“



Consumer engagement is an expectation about how we go about doing things. It’s ingrained in our day-to-day work.

– Executive team member

The TYE strategy was developed collaboratively with consumers, the workforce and broader community. It involved consultation with more than 1,200 patients, consumer representatives and members of the workforce. Views were gathered through interviews, online surveys, focus groups and workshops.

Executives, senior managers and the clinical workforce said the TYE strategy was effective in creating a culture that valued consumer feedback. The LHD's workforce also said that this culture was encouraged at all levels of the LHD. For example, senior members demonstrate the importance of partnering with consumers through activities such as executive rounding.

## B. Engaging consumers in governance structures at many levels

<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <p> <b>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</b></p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <p> <b>Governance</b></p>
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The South Western Sydney LHD uses many mechanisms to engage consumers in governance, including:

- Ensuring that members of the LHD, facility and service executive teams meet with consumer representatives, and work closely to discuss ideas and plans. This gives the workforce experience in working alongside consumers
- Inviting consumer representatives to peak governance committees and key project teams, which embeds consumer involvement in key planning and decision-making
- Ensuring that consumer representatives are involved in critical projects and initiatives, such as capital works projects within mental health services, co-designing sites and services to be consumer friendly, and designing safe ward and emergency department projects
- Involving consumers in workforce recruitment panels at all levels, especially on interview panels for all senior executives.

The LHD considers its program of engaging consumers in governance to be a success, while acknowledging that many challenges exist. Some challenges include ensuring diversity on committees, supporting consumers to participate and providing appropriate remuneration. These are areas of continued focus for the LHD.

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**One of our challenges is diversity – you can't make people want to be on a committee. We have people who go out into local communities and make connections through community groups and try to identify new members.**



– Consumer representative

“

**Directors and staff will come to our meetings to seek advice and help on different projects they have in mind. They also take up projects that we suggest, like our suggestions about wayfinding.**

– Consumer representative

## C. Providing the right resources to effectively support and engage consumers

<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <p> <b>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</b></p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <p> <b>Governance</b></p>
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The South Western Sydney LHD uses Consumer and Community Participation Networks (CCPNs) at each major LHD facility, as well as for services such as community health, mental health, oral health, drug health and youth health. This provides many opportunities for the LHD to hear consumer voices, and ensures that facilities and services connect with their unique local communities.

Recognising that fully engaging with consumers requires time and effort, the LHD employs a district-wide manager of the CCP Unit who oversees all CCPNs and groups. There are also CCP managers who support individual CCPNs.

CCP managers support partnering with consumers and consumer representatives in many ways, including:

- Working to understand the skills, interests and experiences of consumer representatives
- Matching consumer representatives with committees and roles that align with their skills, interests and experiences
- Partnering new consumer representatives with more experienced ones through an informal buddy system
- Meeting with consumer representatives before and after committee meetings to provide a briefing on topics, talk through data and answer any questions they might have
- Offering opportunities for consumer representatives to develop and build their skills, such as presenting at conferences, speaking in meetings and conducting workforce training
- Creating opportunities for representatives from multiple CCPNs to share their experiences and learn from each other.

“

**Within the Community and Consumer Participation Networks, we get a lot of support. There is a lot of appreciation from staff for the work that we do and the value that we bring.**



– Consumer representative

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**We don't just stick anyone on a committee. We really take the time to understand their skills and interests and where they will have the most impact.**

– Clinician

## D. Actively working with and supporting families and carers

<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <p> <b>Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance</b></p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <p> <b>Partnerships</b></p>
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The South Western Sydney LHD Carers Program uses local initiatives to give professional support to carers across the public health system. It:

- Helps the healthcare workforce to recognise the practical needs of carers and respond in a professional and friendly manner
- Educates the workforce about engaging with carers as partners in care, and the supports and services available to them
- Promotes carer participation in the planning, design and delivery of services

- Provides the workforce and carers with information and resources to improve their knowledge and promote carer wellbeing
- Supports carers to understand an illness – for example, in mental health there is a dedicated carer peer worker who helps carers navigate the healthcare system and access referrals to appropriate services.

There are many ways the LHD engages carers (Table 1).

**Table 1: Practical ways the South Western Sydney Local Health District (LHD) engages carers**

Method	Description
<b>Collaboratively redesigning spaces to meet the needs of carers</b>	Liverpool Hospital turned a former lift lobby into a sitting area for carers visiting the hospital’s aged care ward. The idea for Carer’s Corner came from a former patient who was a member of the local Consumer and Community Participation Network. Their wife noticed there was nowhere for her to relax away from the bedside. Feedback from carers on the redeveloped space has been universally positive.
<b>Involving carers in bedside handover</b>	The LHD recently completed a review of clinical handover processes. It resulted in handover moving from the nurses’ station to the patient’s bedside, to better involve patients, carers and families. The LHD also developed a handover support document that clearly states that carers should be involved in handover.
<b>Using patient bedside communication boards</b>	The boards provide a space for patients, families and carers to write questions to members of the workforce and highlight any concerns. The workforce said that carers often refer to the boards during bedside rounds.
<b>Gathering input from carers</b>	Carers are interviewed on their experience with health services. This identifies areas for quality improvement.
<b>Formally planning for carer involvement during patient hospitalisation</b>	A carer information tab was built into the patient administration system in 2020. This allows members of the health workforce to record carer’s details, and work with them as partners to personalise patient care.
<b>Implementing the TOP 5 initiative</b>	The TOP 5 initiative engages with carers of patients with impaired memory and thinking. The information gathered can help personalise care. It also helps members of the workforce understand cues given by the patient, improving communication between them.

## E. Creating a welcoming environment that meets the needs of all consumers

### Criterion

**4**

Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance

### Attribute



Technology and the built environment

The South Western Sydney LHD has worked closely with consumer representatives and community members to review and redesign facilities. The aim is to meet the needs of diverse groups of consumers. This includes:

- Adding signage with multiple languages at Fairfield Hospital
- Improving wayfinding for people with blindness and low vision at Bankstown Hospital Emergency Department; representatives from a non-government organisation supporting people with blindness and low vision gave advice on lighting, colours and signage
- Creating a palliative care balcony garden at Liverpool Hospital that offers a peaceful space for patients
- Introducing sensory rooms in mental health services where consumers can go when they are feeling agitated; consumer representatives from mental health services advised on the aesthetics of the safe space

- Adding Aboriginal-designed spaces, including gardens
- Providing carer spaces at Bowral Hospital that have amenities and items useful for longer visits or stays, including fold-out beds in patient rooms, and kitchens.



The consumer groups have done some wayfinding audits, particularly thinking about how someone from a multicultural background would experience the service.

– Clinical team member

## F. Working with consumers to redesign services and support the delivery of person-centred care

### Criterion

**4**

Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance

### Attribute



Comprehensive care delivery

The South Western Sydney LHD has engaged consumer representatives to redesign services to meet the needs of patients, their families and carers. Examples of how services are being adapted include:

- Introducing patient-voiced handover at Camden Hospital, which allows patients to lead handover with the clinical workforce and share information about their healthcare journey, ask questions and provide feedback
- Recruiting an aged care clinical nurse consultant following consultation with the community
- Providing patient experience officers in all emergency departments across the LHD who focus on patient needs, ensuring they feel welcomed, safe, comfortable, informed and empowered

- Establishing the District Transfer of Care Committee, which has introduced a broad range of consumer-suggested initiatives focusing on consistency and access to care; for example, improving patient communication using patient care boards and follow-up calls after discharge.



The consumers identified that an aged care clinical nurse consultant was needed. They gathered the data, they spoke to people and they made it happen.

– Clinician

## Find out more

Further information and resources on the attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations, the Partnering with Consumers Standard and the development of the case studies include:

- [Person-centred healthcare organisations](#)
- [The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)
- [South Western Sydney Local Health District](#).

## Acknowledgements

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