

# NWHN Client Participation Regional Forum

## Workshop Feedback March 29th March

1. What were the most interesting aspects about the presentations you have heard about today?

- Vicky's personal experiences of homelessness and the service system responses that she experienced - some of which were useful and respectful but on the other hand she also was confronted with responses that were insensitive and unhelpful
- All the presentations highlighted the need to actively embed real and meaningful client participation into our practice & all our policies and procedures
- Meaningful client participation can be not only empowering for clients but for staff as well
- I enjoyed all three speakers, they were interesting and had excellent knowledge to share. I most enjoyed hearing from Vicky, her honesty, her determination and spunk was inspiring. I also liked Ian's concept of using the term consumers not clients in that I agree that many people have negative associations with the term client. Consumers sounds more empowering in that they are being provided with a service (a business transaction) and this may help them feel more entitled to participate in giving feedback
- Vicky's presentation was great
- We were very interested in Ian's information about the Consumer Register that the HAS teams are developing and the planned analysis of HAS contacts
- Building in a focus on client participation element into staff orientations
- Provided us with ideas about new ways to collect client feedback not just at the end of the support period but regularly throughout the support experience
- Really enjoyed George's presentation, good to see effective working groups producing tangible resources and results coming out of the NW LASN
- There's a gap in collecting the feedback of children accessing our service system. We need to find ways to better capture the feedback of children
- Prompted us to think about how other sector's may incorporate & support client participation and if there are things we could learn form their practices
- Vicky's presentation was particularly powerful
- The importance of client participation in achieving good outcomes - *doing with not doing to*
- Better utilising the client's own expertise, they are the experts in their own lives

- Finding out about the HAS & PESP programs at CHP was great, we were unaware of their scope. The HAS team do a lot more than deal with complaints
- Can we get a copy of George's PowerPoint presentation?

## 2. How do you think these presentations might impact on your daily work with consumers?

- We were interested in the idea of broadening feedback processes like trialling different methods, increasing the number of opportunities to seek feedback - throughout the support period not just at the end
- The presentations have really made me think about and agree with Ian's suggestion that we use the term "consumer" as opposed to "client" I really do believe that the people I work with are consumers rather than clients. A client to me feels as if they are seen as being more dependant on a service rather than proactive in their own right
- Prompted us to think about the importance of clients having real ownership over their case plans and how we actually do this meaningfully. It would need to happen at the beginning of involvement, as it evolves and at during the exit period
- Need to make more of an effort to actively inform clients about the feedback mechanisms that currently exist in our own organisations as well as those that exist in other agencies like the PESP & HAS teams at CHP
- Would be good to get PESP members to help us facilitate feedback groups with our clients
- A reminder that clients are the experts and how important it is to consult and ensure that they maintain control over the case planning process
- Would like to get the PESP & HAS teams to come to our staff meetings to talk about their work
- Prompted us to think about the value and appropriateness of mechanisms like focus groups - how do we get people together, where, when, will it work for young people for example? Are there other ways to do it?
- It's great to have the Client Feedback Groups' Resource Guide and information on the NWHN website
- We need to find better ways of seeking the feedback of clients from non English speaking backgrounds (NESB) as often the language barrier means that its difficult to convey feedback etc

## 3. How important do you think consumer feedback is and why?

- Very. But it has to be real and meaningful, not tokenistic or a one off event
- Consumer feedback is a source of inspiration & energy
- Consumer feedback should be the fundamental driver of practice development & policies and procedures - we work for them!

- Very. Consumers are experiencing the service from the inside whereas we as workers are standing on the outside.
- If consumers see their feedback is valued there is a good chance that they may feel more willing to engage in a feedback process, make it count!
- Agencies that actively seek consumer feedback often find that the more you do the easier it gets to get interest from the client group in participating in feedback and find ways to build that feedback into better service provision - less problems and complaints as a result. It takes practice and trial and error to get your consumer participation processes right.
- Be open to trying new ways of doing it, focus groups and forms are not the only options, be creative
- Its critical to think beyond just "getting feedback" you have to think about what you are going to "do" with it. How will you analyse it? How will it inform your planning processes? How do you incorporate client feedback & perspectives into specific research and development priorities?
- Consumer feedback help us be agents of social change
- It gives us *evidence* of how we are tracking, what's working, what's not, what assumptions have we been making, are they correct or are they wrong, helps us self reflect both at a practitioner level and at an agency level

#### 4. What are your recommendations for incorporating consumer feedback into your practice and your service? When it works well what are the elements?

- Be really clear about why you are seeking feedback i.e. it's a way that we can improve our services, it's an opportunity for you to tell us what you think
- Emphasis that we value consumers thoughts & expertise and need their help to make sure we are doing things in the right way and if not we need to know what's going wrong so we can fix it
- Ensure that there are ways that people can give feedback in ways in which they feel safe i.e. anonymously. Sometimes clients are reluctant to be critical especially if the support period is still active
- Have a range of methods : surveys, focus groups etc
- Pay clients for their time! We get paid for ours after all
- Be respectful, explain what will be done with the feedback.
- Give consumers feedback on the feedback!
- Our service previously only requested feedback when consumers exited the service. Upon reviewing our policies we now request feedback every six months as well as at the exit stage. We also request feedback after events and in shorter term programs. The important elements are planning, developing and implementing a good process

## 5. What are the challenges in seeking consumer participation & feedback?

- Sometimes the consumer's priorities may differ from organisational priorities  
Inadequate resourcing means that sometimes we simply can't deliver what we would like to deliver in an ideal world so it may seem that we are not willing to change despite feedback when in fact its basically about how much we can do with the funding and staffing that we have
- Many consumers that I have worked with cannot believe that I am even asking them for their feedback. At times it is as if they feel they are not worthy to even have a say. This really surprises me. I think our surveys work well, but many times I question whether such basic issues such as difficulties with reading and writing are preventing our consumers from giving us feedback
- Getting people to give feedback in first place can be tricky
- Seeking feedback from CALD /NESB consumers can be problematic due to language and cultural barriers
- Overcoming suspicion from consumers that its a "pointless tick the box exercise" rather than an opportunity to have a voice - feedback fatigue?

## 6. Are there areas or issues that you would like to further explore / know more about?

- More information about how other agencies deal with the challenges of increasing consumer participation
- How do agencies overcome the barriers?
- When will de identified HAS data be available and in what format? Will it be broken down by region? By issue? Could it be made available to the LASN?
- Will there be a mechanism for the Sector to make suggestions to CHP about how HAS data could be analysed and distributed?
- Keen to hear updates on the progress of the NW LASN Client Participation Group - keep us posted!