



Health and Disability Providers Partnering with Consumers

Why?

- Quality information provided to consumers improves health literacy, positively influences health outcomes and can reduce costs.
- Active participation in health care encourages self care.
- Hearing about consumer experiences of health and disability services helps providers understand what needs to be done to improve services and the experience for consumers.
- Consumer and provider partnerships develop with more open and transparent communication.
- The expertise of consumer knowledge alongside clinical expertise is enhanced by closer relationships between providers and consumers.
- Consumers are a large untapped resource and by working with them you can enhance services.
- Policies and services are 'fit for purpose' when consumers are involved.
- Open dialogue encourages shared decision-making.

When?

- Ask yourself: why would I not involve consumers in their own care, in decisions about services, and design and delivery of services?
- Ask yourself: will this programme, policy, project or intervention include decisions that impact on consumers? If 'yes', involve consumers at the scoping stage.
- Build in the time needed to recruit and involve consumers so they are 'at the table at the time' – from the outset of your project.
- You may need different consumers with a variety of skills and experience to engage in the work you are doing, at different times. Be clear about what skills are needed, when and why.
- Think about the stages and opportunities for consumers to work in partnership with you – challenge yourself to involve others with lived experience in your work.

Who?

- Consumers are not an homogenous group – be clear about the type of consumer(s) you require. For example, a consumer who has personal experience of a health problem or disability will have a different perspective to a family/whānau/aiga member, so be clear about what experience you are seeking.
- Be clear about the skills, knowledge and experience required of the consumer(s), and that the consumer(s) you involve have those skills.
- Talk to consumer groups to discuss and clarify expectations of how different consumers can be involved.

How?

- Build the resources for consumer engagement into your budget.
- The Health Quality & Safety Commission has developed a policy for paying consumers to participate. This has been adopted by the Ministry of Health for consumers working within its programmes.
- Establish how you will evaluate participation of all group members.
- Remember to ask consumers to provide feedback about their experience – this provides valuable learning and helps new consumers.
- Consumers need to be supported to participate and to learn more. Providing access to mentors and training will build their confidence and develop capability for decision-making.
- Always consider the cultural context of consumers you are working with. Making the effort to acknowledge and understand a person's cultural background can build rapport quickly.
- Some consumers may need support people in order to participate, e.g. a deaf interpreter.
- At times, it is more appropriate to seek consumer input using a focus group/hui approach rather than a survey. Discuss with others the extent to which you require consumer input and the methods you will use.
- If the input from consumers is on a regular basis and requires attending meetings, determine the roles, responsibilities, relationships and expectations early on – use terms of reference to set these out.

