Client Engagement Toolkit

A RESOURCE FOR AGED CARE STAFF

Acknowledgments

There are a number of documents and practical guidelines that have been used to inform this framework. The sources used here are listed in the References section at the end of the Toolkit.

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What is engagement?

Client engagement is about how we communicate and interact with clients, and how we involve them in decisions and planning. This can be individual, or it can relate to a whole service or even the whole organisation.

Engagement could involve direct discussion, collaboration, or partnership with one or many clients at any given time. However, it may not necessarily involve direct contact with an individual client. It could involve information sharing through marketing materials or information sheets, or the development of web services that clients may use, or that staff use to engage with clients directly.

If you see, talk to, or interact with clients, or if your role involves providing a service or system that clients use or interact with, then you are engaging with clients.

Engagement is the responsibility of all staff.

Why do we engage?

Clients have an important role in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services, as well as in the direction and evaluation of their own care. Effectively engaging with clients is fundamental to fulfilling the organisation’s mission and values. Good engagement practice values the contribution of clients at every level of the organisation.

There are many important benefits to effectively engaging with clients. These include making sure services are appropriate, inclusive, and innovative, increasing satisfaction and uptake of services, and increasing support for client control and autonomy. Engagement is an investment in relationships, and this is important right from the very first contact with clients and stakeholders to help things go smoothly along the way.

Involving clients in decisions that affect them is required under Accreditation Standards and care legislation. An important part of the role of care services is supporting clients to have a strong voice.

Commitment to engagement

There are many different forms engagement can take. It is important that organisations support innovation and the development of new ideas about the way they engage. All staff are encouraged to be proactive in seeking new ways to connect with clients.

All staff need to be supported to undertake client engagement and participation initiatives, and clients need to be supported to participate effectively in these initiatives. The efforts of staff and clients in contributing to these initiatives must be highly valued. Staff should be encouraged to help identify areas for improvement and to come up with ways to address any issues they see in the organisation.

It is important to provide feedback on what you have learned and how you have responded. This feedback needs to be given to clients and families, other stakeholders, and fed back up through the organisation. Staff need to be supported to learn from and provide feedback to stakeholders.

Care organisations have many different stakeholders. As well as clients and their families, stakeholders may include information services, other service providers, policy makers, consumer groups, or representatives.

Clients and stakeholders are diverse. Different clients and stakeholders may need a different approach and engagement processes must be designed in a way that is inclusive of marginalised or isolated groups.

Engagement initiatives should be documented and evaluated to inform reporting for accreditation and monitoring. This should inform decision making as well as future engagement initiatives.

Care organisations should:

1. Ensure clients have a say in their own care as well as how services are run
2. Ensure participation opportunities for clients who will be affected by decisions are sufficient and appropriate
3. Undertake regular and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of services and care
4. Promote shared ownership and responsibility for decisions, monitoring, and evaluation of services
5. Demonstrate openness to change and to the influence of clients and staff
6. Show mutual respect and ensure the dignity of all involved
7. Respect the diversity of people and their views, needs, and wishes
8. Ensure fairness by making opportunities for engagement accessible to clients in practical ways that cater for varied (dis)abilities
9. Ensure effective, transparent communication that allows all clients to be informed and voice their own opinions, ideas, or needs
10. Openly report on how clients' participation did or did not contribute to changes or decision making

To support engagement, they should:

11. Provide staff and client training and education necessary to participate effectively
12. Maintain on-going evaluation and monitoring of engagement

About the Toolkit

This set of tools is designed to guide you through the process of thinking about what client engagement looks like for you, what is working well, and what needs to be improved. The tools will help you to plan a project to make these improvements, and then implement and evaluate your project.

Your project could be designed to help other staff engage with clients and families better, or you might want to engage with clients and families directly yourself about an issue you know about.

Designing and implementing projects like this can be daunting, especially if you haven't tried it before. These tools are designed to walk you through the process, and to make it simpler.

Using these tools will help you to plan and implement actions to address issues in your service, but will also help you to document what you are doing to address these problems. This is important for the organisation to be able to track what is happening throughout across the different services, and to show clients and accreditation bodies that staff and clients are involved in service improvement.

Some examples

Wall snippets

A group of staff in residential care identified that their colleagues did not always take their time with residents and communicate clearly. They were concerned that staff did not always prioritise residents because they were rushing, and sometimes forgot that residents may have particular issues such as hearing impairments or dementia, which might affect their communication.

They designed a series of short informative “snippets” in the form of a sentence or poem. These addressed aspects of communication including respect, volume, tone of voice, special needs, and body language. Some gave information about hearing impairments and cognitive impairments to help remind staff about what they had learned in training. These snippets were placed on the staff room and nurses’ station walls and regularly rotated every couple of weeks.

Guide to Care

A group of staff in residential care recognised a need among the family members of their residents for support and ongoing information to help them feel engaged in the life of the service and in the care of their loved one. One of the major issues they identified was that families were overwhelmed with information and emotion when their loved one was admitted to care, and they often were not able to properly deal with all this information. This created issues later on.

The group decided that the existing resident handbook was not appropriate for family members, and that a short dedicated resource for families was needed. They designed a "Guide to Your Loved One's Care" for family members and friends to keep, which provided the information they would need throughout their loved one's time in the service.

Dementia friendly cafe

Staff in community care wanted to provide a safe and comfortable space for clients with dementia and their caregivers to socialise and to receive and share information.

The service held a café day and invited clients and caregivers as well as staff from other dementia services. They served food and drinks and provided space for people to give and receive support and information.

How to use the tools

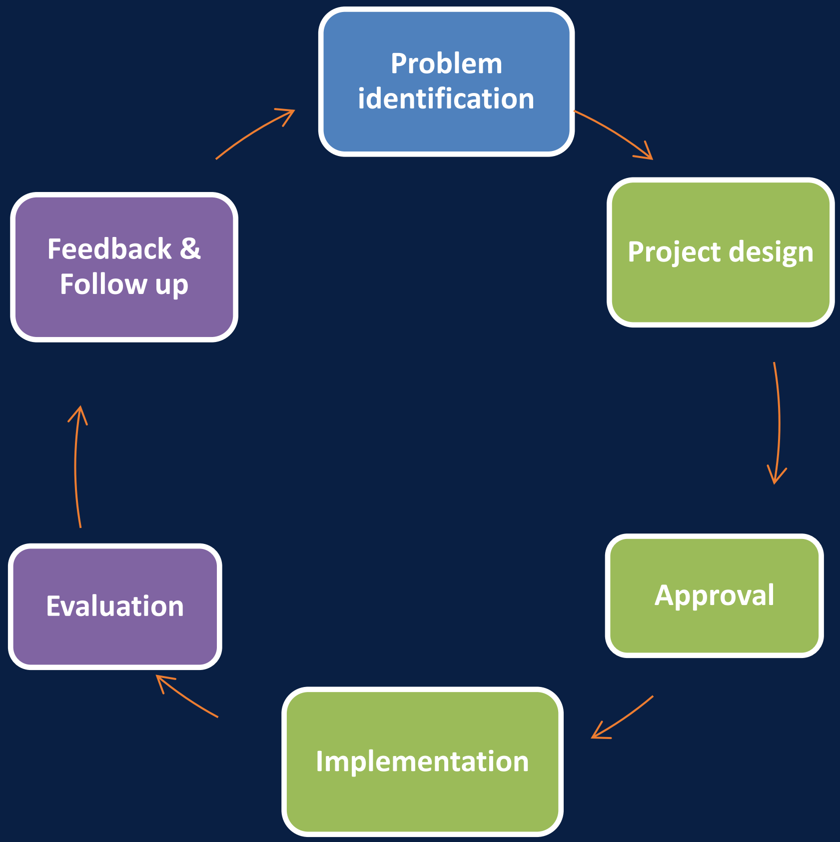
You can use these tools on your own or in a group. You may like to gather a team of people around you who share the same concerns and want to address the issues with you.

You can use the tools together in order, or you can take just one on its own to help you with your thinking about a project. You can fill in each tool at your own pace.

You should discuss your project idea with your manager before completing a full plan for your project. You should also work with your manager along the way to make sure that what you are planning is possible. Your manager can support and guide you in using the tools to design, implement, and evaluate your project.

Throughout the tools there are hints and tips to help you think through your project.

Tool 1 – Need for Action is designed to help you to think about how you and other staff engage with your clients, and any issues you can see that need to be addressed.



When you have identified something that you think needs to change, you can use **Tool 2 – Action Planner** to help you work out how to achieve it.

Before you implement your plan, you will need approval from your manager.

Once you have approval, you can start to implement your project according to your action plan.

Once you have your project underway, you can use **Tool 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation** to help you think through how it is going, what you have achieved, and whether you need to change something.

You should use it multiple times throughout your project to help you reflect and evaluate and make changes along the way.

Tool 1

Need for Action

This tool will help you to think about how you and other staff engage with your clients, and any issues you can see that need to be addressed. You can complete it by yourself or as a group. This is also a useful tool to use in staff meetings to help facilitate discussion about issues staff are experiencing in their work.

Our current engagement with clients and their families

How we engage with clients and families:

What we engage with them about:

How we find out what they think about how we engage:

Have we asked clients and families what they think? What processes and tools do we already have in place to find this out?

<u>What needs to be changed</u>

What people have told us about how we engage:

Issues we have identified:

What we can do about it

Things we can change:

Things we need to escalate to a higher level in our organisation:

Tool 2
Action Planner

Once you have identified something about how staff engage with clients that you think needs to change, or you have decided you want to engage with clients directly about an issue you know about, you can use this tool to help you work out how to achieve it. You can use this to plan a project to engage with clients, or a project to help yourself and other staff engage with clients better.

The tool is designed to help you think through:

1. what your project is and what you need to do to achieve it,
2. who needs to be involved and why,
3. how they will be involved, and
4. how you will evaluate your project and tell people how it went.

Why we are doing this project

What is the issue about client engagement that we want to address?

What do we want to achieve?

How will taking action on this issue benefit us, other staff, or our organisation? How will it benefit our clients?

Does this issue relate to:

☐ engagement with individual clients about their own wants and needs,
☐ decisions or plans for our whole service, or
☐ decisions or plans for our whole organisation?

Who are the clients, staff, and other stakeholders affected by this issue?

Our ideas for what we can do

It is now time to brainstorm potential ideas to address the issue you would like to focus on. You may like to brainstorm with other colleagues to get their ideas. It helps to get all your thoughts down on paper, even if you don't use them for your project. Remember, all ideas are useful!

As you think about your ideas, consider whether they are possible in your service or in the organisation, whether they will be effective to solve your issue, and whether they are feasible projects for you to do.

You may like to use a whiteboard or butcher's paper for this process, or a mind mapping tool. You could create a mind map, a table, or a series of dot points – it's up to you.

Once you have brainstormed some ideas, choose one to focus on and use the next pages to start developing up your project plan.

<u>What we are going to do</u>

What is our project idea?

How are we going to do it?

Who is going to do it

Who are our team members?

Who are our project leaders?

What will be each person's role?

This should include tracking the project timeline, managing the budget, and scheduling meetings

How often will we meet?

This will depend on how complicated your project is, and how quickly it needs to be finished

<u>Who else needs to be involved</u>

Clients

Which clients and/ or families need to be involved in our project?	Why do they need to be involved?	How do they need to be involved? *Are we just giving them information, or are we seeking their feedback, working with them to resolve an issue and find a solution, or are they being empowered to make decisions and take action themselves?*	How will we invite them to participate?	What methods will we use to involve them? *For some ideas see the What Engagement Methods Could I Use tool*

Staff

Which other staff need to be involved?	Why do they need to be involved?	What will be the roles of these staff in the project? *Are we giving them information, seeking feedback, are we working with them to resolve an issue/ find a solution, are we seeking approval, or are they helping us to implement our idea?*	How will we invite them to participate?	How will we involve them?

External stakeholders

Does anyone outside of our organisation need to be involved? If so, who are they?	Why do they need to be involved?	What will be the roles of these other stakeholders in the project?	How will we invite them to participate?	How will we involve them?

Practical Issues to Consider

Time

How long will our planned project take?

Is there a time limit by which we need to be finished?

How much time will we need to allocate in our schedules to complete this project?

How much time will we be asking clients, staff, and stakeholders to give to participate in the project?

Make sure what you are asking people to do is reasonable.

Getting people there

Are the people we want to involve close enough to us to participate in person? Do we need to find a way to involve them by telephone, internet or post? Are we, or they, going to need to travel?

Are any of the people we want to involve particularly difficult to reach? If so, what is our plan to address this?

What are the potential costs of participation to clients, staff, or stakeholders?

Consider service hours, travel etc.

Do we need to reimburse them or provide an incentive?
☐ No
☐ Yes

If so, what will this be?

Keep in mind that offering incentives can be costly and can affect who participates

<u>Making sure people can do what we're asking of them</u>

What knowledge and skills do we need to complete this project?

Consider specific skills and knowledge needed to involve clients and staff from different cultural and language backgrounds and to involve clients with physiological or cognitive issues (e.g. knowledge about their decision making capacity and rights)

Do we have these skills and knowledge?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Do we need some training or extra support?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If so, what do we need and how will we access this?

Do we need special resources such as interpreters, communications aids, or special technology?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If so, how will we access these?

What knowledge and skills do our clients, staff, or stakeholders need to participate in this project?

Consider skills and capacity needed to participate in formal committees, issues with speech or hearing, other communication issues, literacy etc.

Do they have these?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Do we need to provide some training or extra support?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If so, what do we need to provide and how will we provide it?

Troubleshooting

This checklist is to get you thinking about some things that can create problems for effective engagement. You may not find they are all relevant to your project; however, this list will help you ensure you have considered all the potential problems you might encounter, before you start.

You can tick them off as you deal with them, and there is space below each for your own notes.

Being open and responsive

☐ What do we believe about clients' views, and how they should express them? How will we make sure we are open to their contributions?

☐ What are the power differences between clients, other staff and ourselves that might affect our project?

☐ How can we make sure clients and other staff feel empowered to contribute?

☐ How will we make sure we are open to other staff members' views and contributions and properly respond to these?

☐ How will we make sure we and our clients share an understanding and expectations about their participation and its outcomes?

Making people comfortable

☐ Do we know what attitudes and beliefs these clients and staff hold about participation?

They might not think they can make a difference, might lack confidence, might not trust organisations, or have specific preferences for how they like to participate. This may be a result of their past experiences in life even past interactions with staff.

☐ Do the people we want to involve have a good relationship with each other, or with our organisation?

It is important to be aware of any tensions that might affect people's involvement or have an impact on your project.

☐ How will we address these issues to make sure everyone feels comfortable contributing?

E.g. There may be some good existing networks and relationships among fellow staff or with clients, or with external stakeholders that we can use to help make sure everyone is included

Being inclusive

☐ How diverse are the clients, staff, and stakeholders we want to involve? How well do we understand these differences?

Consider cultural and linguistic diversity, religious diversity, sexuality, health status, mental health, disability and capacity.

☐ How might these differences affect participation in our project?

☐ What is our plan to address these issues?

☐ Is there more we need to know about our clients, staff, or stakeholders before we can involve them effectively?

Ethics and legalities

Are there any potential ethical or legal issues (e.g. consent, privacy)?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If so, how will we deal with these?

Evaluation and reporting plan

How we will evaluate our project

Ongoing assessment of activities is important to contribute to performance monitoring and reporting. There are a number of key things to think about.

1. It is important to consider why you are evaluating your project. Think about who will use the findings, and what they will be used for.
2. Your evaluation can include both the effects of the project, and the process of the engagement you have undertaken. Your evaluation should also consider whether the engagement has been real and meaningful for the people you have involved.
3. It is important to be clear about what change you expected to see, and who you expected it to affect. You might be interested in outcomes in areas such as: care; quality and safety; communication; efficiency and resources; appropriateness of services; health literacy; service accessibility; and timeliness of services.

   You may want to include feedback from both those you involved and others who weren't involved in your project.
4. You need to decide how best to measure the change you expect to see. You might, for example, be interested in people's verbal or written feedback about your project, or you might like to use service data, existing client survey data, clinical information, or specific measures designed for particular quality indicators.
5. You need to consider whether you are looking for short term outcomes, long term outcomes, or both. This will affect then how you want to measure your outcomes.

   Monitoring and evaluation should occur a number of times throughout the project.
6. You need to think about who will conduct the evaluation. Consider what skills they will need, and what resources are needed. Power differences between the people involved – such as between clients, care and nursing staff, managers, and families – can affect how open people will be in their feedback. It may also be useful for different people to be responsible for different aspects or different stages of evaluation.

Why do we need to evaluate our project? How will the findings be used, and by whom?

Who will conduct the evaluation?

What do we want to know about how our project went? What results or outcomes from our project do we want to measure? *This might include, for example, clinical outcomes, service outcomes, or the experience of clients, families, or other staff.*	How will we measure these outcomes? *This will depend on what outcomes you are interested in. Think about who is likely to be most affected by the change, and what benefits you are hoping to see. You might look at service data, give people a survey, or ask people directly.*	When will we measure these outcomes? *Some outcomes might be short-term, and some might be long-term. It can be useful to measure your outcomes or gather feedback from clients or other staff along the way to make sure things are going to plan.*	How will we document what we find?

How we will report back about our project

How will we report back to clients, staff, and external stakeholders?

Consider multiple options, such as newsletter articles, wall posters, staff meetings, resident's/ clients' meetings etc.

How will we report back to the organisation?

When will we report back on the results of our project?

What resources do we need to provide this feedback?

Budget

Direct costs

What will our project cost?

Consider travel, catering, printing of information, workshop materials, telephone calls, venue hire, interpretation or translation, training etc.

Budget item	Estimated or quoted cost
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
	$
Total	**$**

How do we plan to access the funding we need?

Other resources

What other resources do we need?

How do we plan to access these resources?

What other “in kind” contributions will the organisation need to make?

This includes staff time, printing and consumables, other resources without direct cash costs

Who needs to approve our budget?

When will we review our budget?

You should do this a number of times throughout the project to make sure you stay on track.

Our plan

Steps we need to take to complete our project	**When it will be completed** *You may also like to create a chart or calendar, if you prefer a visual timeline.*	**Who is responsible**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Approvals

☐ Have we checked the organisation’s guidelines and policies and is our project in line with the organisation’s position about clients and their contribution?

☐ Have we talked to our manager about our project and obtained their support?

Do we need any additional approvals?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If so, who do we need to ask?

Once you have made a plan and have all the approvals you need, you are ready to start your project!

Follow your plan, and remember to monitor your progress along the way.

You can use **Tool 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation** to help you monitor your progress.

Tool 3

Monitoring and Evaluation

Now that you have implemented your project, you can use this tool to help you think through how it went, and whether you need to change something. Evaluation is an essential part of your project, to help you see what you have achieved and what isn't working.

It is also important to evaluate along the way to see what you have achieved and to celebrate what you've accomplished. It is important to celebrate your achievements during your project so that you can feel confident you are making a difference.

You can use this tool at multiple points in your project to help you reflect and evaluate and make changes along the way.

The tool is designed to help you think through:

1. What happened and what you have achieved
2. What you found out from what happened
3. What you might need to do differently and what you should do next

Date of review

What we did

What happened

What we have achieved:

What didn't go to plan:

What other people told us about how our activity went:

What we learned

New issues we identified:

New actions we need to take:

Budget review

Are we successfully sticking to our budget?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If not, what additional expenses do we need to include?

Revise your budget table to include any new expenses

<u>**What we are going to do next**</u>	**When it will be done**	**Who is responsible**
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.		

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