

Policy 4	COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT
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Record of policy development								
Version	Date approved	Date for review						
1.4	December 2020	December 2022						
1.3	May 2019	January 2021						
1.2	October 2017	October 2020						
<p>Policy purpose: Coastlink understands and engages with the community in which it operates and reflects this in its service planning and development</p> <p>Policy:</p> <p>COASTLINK is committed to the inclusion of key stakeholders, including clients, families, other agencies and funding bodies. Stakeholders are encouraged to actively participate in the organisation to inform decision making that may affect their lives, or the work that we undertake on their behalf.</p> <p>COASTLINK is committed to engaging appropriately with our stakeholders and recognises that the standard of consultation and engagement should be undertaken commensurate with the nature, complexity and impact of the issue/s involved. COASTLINK will ensure that its engagement processes are appropriate, accessible, well planned and adequately resourced.</p>								
Relevant Standards								
NSW Disability Service Standards:								
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Rights</td> <td style="width: 50%;">4. Feedback & Complaints</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Participation & inclusion</td> <td>5. Service Access</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Individual outcomes</td> <td>6. Service Management</td> </tr> </table>			1. Rights	4. Feedback & Complaints	2. Participation & inclusion	5. Service Access	3. Individual outcomes	6. Service Management
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NDIS Practice Standards:								
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rights and Responsibilities 2. Provider Governance and Operational Management 3. Provision of Supports 4. Support Provision Environment 5. High Intensity Daily Personal Activities 6. Specialist Behaviour Support 7. Implementing Behaviour Support Plans 8. Early Childhood Supports 9. Specialised Support Coordination 10. Specialist Disability Accommodation 								
Aged Care Quality Standards								
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1. Consumer dignity and choice</td> <td style="width: 50%;">5. Organisation’s service environment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Ongoing assessment and planning with consumers</td> <td>6. Feedback and complaints</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Personal care and clinical care</td> <td>7. Human resources</td> </tr> </table>			1. Consumer dignity and choice	5. Organisation’s service environment	2. Ongoing assessment and planning with consumers	6. Feedback and complaints	3. Personal care and clinical care	7. Human resources
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4. Services and supports for daily living

8. Organisational governance

Related Legislation & References

[Aged Care Act 1997 \(Cth\), Schedule 2 User Rights Principles 2014. Charter of Rights and Responsibilities – Home Care](#)

[Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission](#)

[Australian Privacy Principles](#)

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)

[Commonwealth Home Support Programme Guidelines](#)

[Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Provider Registration and Practice Standards\) Rules 2018](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme Code of Conduct](#)

[NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)

[Ombudsman Act 1974](#)

[Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#)

[Public Interests Disclosure Act 1994](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

Related Procedures	
Documents/Forms	
Improvement Plan	Shared Drive
Strategic Plan	Shared Drive
Client Handbook	Shared Drive
Funding agreements and accountability reports	Finance Office
Marketing Plan	CEO

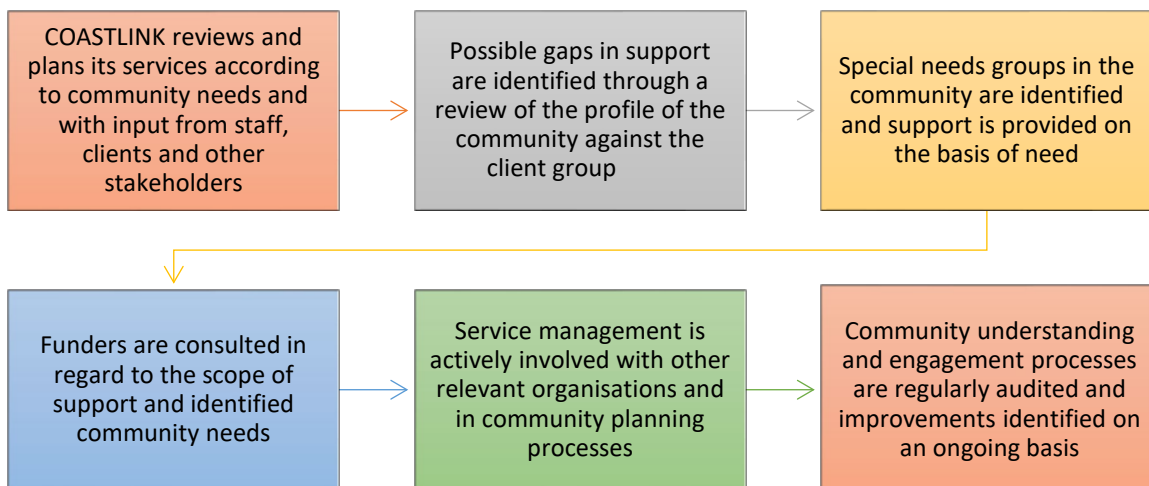
Community Resources Information	Brochures in office, given to applicants at initial interview. People enquiring about our services who are not eligible are referred to at least 2 other services
Corporate Calendar	Shared Drive

Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to: Clients Employees/volunteers	It will be distributed through: Client handbook, Coastlink website, Coastlink brochures Employee/volunteer handbook, shared drive
Policy approval	Board

Definitions
Refer to Definitions list at front of Coastlink Policy and Procedure Manual

COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURE OVERVIEW



COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURE

4.1 Planning COASTLINK Services

COASTLINK planning process includes an Improvement Plan that details all significant improvements in the operations of the community care programs and a Strategic Plan covering longer term directions and changes.

The planning process is described in 1.14 Planning and includes input from clients, staff and other stakeholders and reviews demographic information on community and future trends for the population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) information is sourced and local knowledge of the demographics is used to inform the planning.

Information from continuous improvement and risk management activities feed into the planning process, ensuring ongoing improvements responsive to community and client needs.

4.2 Clients with Special Needs

COASTLINK meets the needs of people with special needs through a range of strategies including:

- Identifying the special needs groups in the community;
- The provision of written information in key languages where required;
- The use of interpreter services when required, at our cost;
- Ensuring family members are aware of key information and have a copy of written information;
- Regular review and explanation of key service information from the Client Handbook, such as the assessment and review processes, services available, user rights, complaints and advocacy;
- Referral to agencies who specialise in assisting particular people, such as people with disabilities for the provision of advocacy assistance or preparation of behavioural support plan; Vision Australia for assistance with blindness or vision impairment, case management and other services;
- Arranging for relevant resources such as iPads and other assistive technologies, i.e., large number key telephones for people with impaired sight or the telephones suitable for people with hearing impairment;
- Training staff in understanding and respecting the special needs of each individual client;
- Using specialist equipment where necessary, i.e., hoists, shower chairs, wheelchairs, electric beds;
- Adjusting staff skills, numbers and staff times to meet client needs.

To effectively understand and meet the needs of clients with special needs, the assessor spends the necessary time to fully explore the above points with the client and/or their carer/representative throughout the assessment and support planning process.

Strategies for engaging with particular client groups include:

4.2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients

COASTLINK endeavors to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with culturally appropriate services and where possible, services delivered by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. COASTLINK works closely with local agencies including the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the hospital to ensure that services are culturally appropriate and that clients are supported whilst accessing and receiving support. COASTLINK regularly provides support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

The assessor ensures that the information regarding the assessment, review, service plan and services is clearly explained and understood by the client and their family.

4.2.2 People Who Do Not Speak English (CALD Background)

If a person does not speak English an interpreter is used. If the person has a family member with them, they are used as the interpreter if this is acceptable to the client, although it is not COASTLINK's preference. Other options for interpreter services include a staff person or the Telephone Interpreter Service.

4.2.3 Clients Who Do Not Read or Write

In cases where the client does not read or write, the assessor will make sure that the information in the Client Handbook and information regarding the assessment, reviews, service plans and services is clearly explained and understood by the client and/or their carer.

4.2.4 Clients with Dementia, challenging behaviours and Other Special Needs Groups

When necessary, the assessor identifies the need for support for clients with dementia or other special needs groups, such as those specific care needs including challenging behaviours. COASTLINK provides training for relevant staff in how to work with people with dementia or people with disability or specific care needs. COASTLINK makes every effort to make sure that services are delivered in an appropriate and sensitive way to all people and in particular, to people with dementia and other special needs.

4.2.5 Clients who are financially disadvantaged

If a person receives Age Care Support and are financially disadvantaged they can request to receive care at reduced cost. Any person who receives Age Care Support and cannot afford to pay for care and support will not be refused service.

4.2.6 Clients who are geographically isolated

Any person living in a rural or isolated area will not be charged more for service including for transport services. Transport will be charged as the agreed framework pricing, this may be negotiable in rural or isolated areas

4.2.7 Prioritising Services

All other things being equal, priority access to services is given to people with special circumstances (see also Section 9: Service Access for details on how services are prioritised).

4.3 Client Participation and Integration Policy

Integration means that a client is part of the community and is involved with other community members. People with a disability and the frail aged will be provided with the same opportunities and choices to be supported to participate and integrate into community activities of their choice.

Community integration occurs when people are seen in places where other community members gather, join in the same activities and share the same experiences, interact and become interdependent.

COASTLINK will provide services that promote the meaningful participation and integration into the community of clients accessing services.

We will ensure that participation and integration occur in ways that meet clients' individual needs.

We believe that all clients' have the right to access the community and to join in activities which take place there, just the same as other community members if they so choose.

We believe that clients' have the right to be provided with age-appropriate community access opportunities whilst at COASTLINK.

4.4 How COASTLINK Staff will Integrate Clients into the Community

All COASTLINK activities, across all programs, will be aimed at integrating clients into the community and encouraging them to participate in community activities.

Variety will be key to the range of activities on offer across all programs. Staff will support clients to choose and try new community access activities and will encourage all clients to suggest activities they would like to see on programs.

COASTLINK aims to encourage clients to blend into the local community. Activities will be undertaken on an individual basis or with small groups wherever possible.

Whatever activities and venues are available for the able bodied in the community, will be deemed to be suitable for all people with disabilities and for people who are frail aged.

Activities will be conducted in local youth centres and community centres, clubs, pubs, pools, gyms, and other venues that are frequented by everyone in the community.

Staff will check the accessibility and safety of all venues before placing them on the agenda or calendar.

4.4.1. Implementation

Coordinating Staff Responsibilities:

It is the responsibility of all coordinating staff to provide community access activities for all of their clients, through a Person Centred Plan as part of the individual planning process.

Clients should be presented with a range of interesting and varied activities from which they are able to choose. Client's hobbies and interests will be taken into account when activities are being sourced.

This can be done through the provision of regular calendars or other information sheets – the important objective which must be met is that all clients are given choice.

Permission will not be sought to use any venue – people with disabilities and the aged have the same right to use any venue as other community members.

Support Staff Responsibilities:

Support staff have a very important part to play in ensuring all clients are well integrated into their local community and, just as importantly, into the group of COASTLINK clients and staff with whom they access the community.

Support staff will not sit separately from clients on any activities but rather the staff will be integrated with the clients so there is a mixture of clients and staff sitting or communicating together rather than separately.

Clients will be supported to develop social networks in the community by support staff and will be encouraged to make their own decisions, i.e., which club they want to attend and whether to go bowling or to the movies.

Support staff will assist clients to develop friendships with others in the community, not only others with disabilities or who are frail aged.

Where possible, clients will be encouraged to join a community group of their choice with COASTLINK support which will gradually be withdrawn so the client is able to attend independently and be accepted as part of the group.

Staff will support all clients to attend community activities and facilities which are not specific to people with disabilities and the frail aged but are used by other community members.

4.4.2 Valued Status

COASTLINK will ensure that the service we provide, observes and promotes a positive image of people with disabilities and people who are aged.

This will include:

- Always communicating with openness and honesty;
- Focusing on producing good outcomes for the people we support including increased independence, integration into the community and employment for younger people with disabilities;
- Promoting the abilities of the people we support to other services, programs and people in the community;
- People we support will be encouraged to learn and practice life skills that promote independence;
- Assisting the people we support to understand and practice good grooming, appropriate dress and behaviour;
- Supporting people to maintain and enhance good social skills;
- Encourage and support people to develop and maintain social relationships with other people in the community;
- Supporting people to enjoy a range of age appropriate community activities and programs of their choice;
- Supporting people to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens;
- Valuing the opinion and initiatives of the people we support and their families;
- Providing services in ways that observe and promote a positive image of the people we support;
- Using brochures, publications, website and social media to portray a positive image of people we support;
- Focusing on positive outcomes for people including greater confidence, resilience and independence;
- Employees and volunteers will use appropriate language when talking about people with we support to other staff and members of the general community and to people with disabilities and people who are frail aged;
- Promote clients as members of the community who are making a contribution;
- Providing people opportunities for choice and control in their lives and opportunities to express their needs;
- Respect for people who comment on services or make a complaint about the services they receive;
- Support people to reach their full potential.

4.4.3 Community inclusion

Our Coordinators coordinate and liaise with key community service providers, attend client coordination meetings and work to maintain local connections to:

- Exchange information on community needs and gaps in services;
- Explore areas for improvement in client coordination and the delivery of services;
- Promote our services to other organisations to ensure all people in the community who would benefit from the services know of them or are referred to them. (See 4.7 Marketing Plan);
- Understand the range of services and resources in the community available to our clients, particularly people with disability, their families and carers and establish referral links. (See 4.6 Community Resources);
- Obtain information about other supports and services in the community to enable people with a disability to achieve their goals and to minimise barriers to participation;
- Maintain referral networks;
- Promote opportunities and active and meaningful participation in the community for our clients, particularly people with disability (See 4.7 Marketing Plan);
- Increase options for our clients, particularly people with disability, to be included and valued
- Work with other service providers and community groups to expand the range of service options, particularly for people with disability. (See 4.7 Marketing Plan);
- Work with other agencies to provide a seamless service for clients, i.e., a DP client lodges her/his funds with Coastlink and attends DP 2 days per week, goes to a LWB activity 1 day per week and attends Fairhaven Employment Service 1 day per week;
- Identify connections with the community for people exiting the criminal justice system where required;
- Ensure all clients receive effective services that meet their needs.

Ongoing liaison and consultations include:

- Central Coast Disability Interchange
- Central Coast Aged and Disability Association
- Centralised Respite Committee
- Disability services including speech pathologists, dieticians, behavioural clinicians and more
- Local dementia services and health providers;
- Community Health
- The ACAT team
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- Local Area Coordinators (LACS – are NDIA representatives)
- National Disability Services
- Other health professionals and
- Medical practitioners
- Disability service providers and Aboriginal managed organisations.

4.5 Consultations with Funding Providers

If changes in community needs are identified through ongoing monitoring processes or through the planning process and these changes cannot be accommodated within the current funding agreement, negotiations are initiated with the appropriate funding providers to vary the scope of the contract. Negotiations involve the CEO and any changes to the contract are approved by the Board.

4.6 Program Planning and Community Involvement

4.6.1 Program Planning

COASTLINK staff participate in the following community care planning activities:

- Regional network meetings;
- Central Coast Council;
- Program Forums; and
- CC Aged and Disability Services.

We also provide regular feedback to the funding provider's Project Officers on any program issues that impact on community care clients or the management of our service.

4.6.2 Community Involvement

COASTLINK coordinates with key local community service providers and attends client coordination meetings as appropriate and when required in order to deliver effective services. Services include:

- Other aged and disability services including Centacare, Sunnyfield, BCS;
- Doctors and allied health professionals;
- Hospitals;
- Community Health;
- The ACAT team;
- Carer Respite Services;
- Primary Dementia Team.

The CEO and/or Coordinators regularly meet with key service providers to:

- Promote the service;
- Exchange information on community needs;
- Discuss any issues;
- Explore areas for improvement in client coordination and the delivery of services;
- To allocate joint respite more equitably.

COASTLINK hosts a Support Coordinator support group every two months to assist Support Coordinators from across the region through peer discussions and presentations from subject matter experts. Increased community understanding of issues affecting Support Coordination of people with disability will improve outcomes for people with disability on the Central Coast.

4.7 Marketing Plan

COASTLINK engages with an external marketing organisation to ensure Coastlink activities, direction and information exchange is undertaken on an on-going and consistent basis. This includes provision of regular communications through social media and Electronic Data Media operations and brochure development. This contract is reviewed annually. Key contacts throughout the organisation provide input to the contractor for positioning and advising clients and the general community. The Coastlink web site content is also updated regularly through the contractor.

4.8 Community Resources Information

COASTLINK maintains community resources information to ensure:

- Appropriate agencies in the community are identified;
- Agencies are provided with information on COASTLINK; and
- Staff have access to information on available resources to facilitate effective referrals.

The CEO, the leadership group and Coordinators, through their networking activities and liaison with funding Project Officers, are responsible for ensuring that the community resources information is complete and up to date. The Coordinators are responsible for ensuring adequate supplies of current brochures, community information booklets etc. See also 13.2.3 Referral Process for Existing Clients.

4.9 Monitoring Community Understanding and Engagement Processes

Community understanding and engagement processes are regularly audited as part of the COASTLINK audit program and staff, clients and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback on issues and areas where improvements can be made (see Section 5: Continuous Improvement and our Tell us What you Think forms and spreadsheet).