

Better Care Victoria

Consumer Engagement Strategy

Introduction

Better Care Victoria (BCV) is committed to improving patient outcomes and experiences. We recognise that supporting health providers to innovate — is essential to achieving this. For BCV, innovation means new ways of doing things that improve *access* to and the *quality* of healthcare across the state. This could be anything from improving an existing process or service, to implementing new services or designing a completely transformed model of care.

Defining consumer participation

BCV uses the following definition of consumer participation:

'...when consumers, carers and community members are meaningfully involved in decision-making about health policy and planning, care and treatment, and the wellbeing of themselves and the community...'¹

In addition, we seek to expand this to include consumers in the process of designing and delivering health services.

Levels of consumer participation

There are three main ways consumers can be involved in healthcare:

1. **Direct care level** – consumers take part in their own healthcare and treatment, and that of their family and carers. Health services should support consumers to be equal partners in their care.
2. **Service level** – consumers take part in the design of healthcare services, the way services are delivered and in quality improvement projects. In addition, health professionals and services should partner with consumers in making decisions about the care they receive
3. **System level** – consumers take part in quality and safety improvement activities across the wider healthcare system. Healthcare organisations should partner with consumers in governance, planning, and policy development to co-design and drive improvement in performance monitoring and evaluation.

Levels of consumer participation at BCV

Consumer involvement in the context of BCV is primarily at the **systems level**, with a focus on designing systems in partnership with consumers.

BCV also supports **service level** consumer involvement by encouraging our health service partners and other stakeholders to increase consumer input in the work towards redesigning and improving their services.

¹ Victorian Department of Health & Human Services, *Doing it with us not for us: Strategic Direction 2010-2013 and the Cultural Responsiveness Framework* (2009).

Consumer participation in Victorian health services

Under National Standards, our health services are already required to use systems that support partnering with patients, carers and other consumers to improve the safety and quality of care². These standards require consumer partnership across all stages of the delivery of health services including planning, designing models of care, and evaluation.

In Victoria, the state government's commitment is supported by laws requiring each public health service to establish a community advisory committee³. In addition to this, the newly established Safer Care Victoria (SCV) will be leading the work on redeveloping the strategy for consumer participation in Victoria in 2017.

Why BCV needs consumer involvement

The majority of BCV's activities are delivered in partnership with health services working with clinicians and health managers. BCV promotes the value of innovation as an essential part of healthcare, and seeks to build a culture amongst Victorian health service providers that encourages innovation. BCV cannot deliver on its vision and objectives without understanding what is important to consumers and what 'timely, appropriate access to high quality care' looks and feels like from a consumer perspective. This is why BCV needs consumer participation, and is committed to actively partnering with consumers of the Victorian healthcare system.

The BCV Consumer Advisory Committee

As a first step, BCV established the BCV Consumer Advisory Committee in order to engage consumers directly in its work.

The BCV Consumer Advisory Committee is made up of consumers, carers and consumer representatives who provide the BCV Board with advice on areas in which to focus their investment. In particular, the Consumer Advisory Committee considers the impact that any investment may have on consumer access, experience and safety and quality.

Purpose of the Strategy

The BCV Consumer Engagement Strategy has several functions:

- To ensure that BCV has a practical approach towards consumer participation and input in BCV's work decisions;
- To support consumers, carers and community members' involvement in health service improvement work through guidance and resources;
- To ensure consumer input is used in the development of current and future BCV priorities and activities.

Priority Areas for the Strategy

Inform:

- To provide interested consumers with information on BCV priorities and activities.

Involve:

- To provide opportunities for consumers to contribute to planning of activities across both innovation and improvement capability streams of BCV and to support innovation projects that actively engage and involve consumers;

Partner:

- To develop relationships with consumer-based agencies both within and external to DHHS, and to ensure effective collaboration with these agencies;

² Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards - Standard 2: Partnering with Consumer* (2017).

- To set the standards of consumer engagement with health services involved in innovation and improvement.

Activities under the Strategy

BCV will undertake a range of activities to encourage and enable consumer participation, including activities that are both consumer-led and in partnership with.

To achieve the priority areas of the Consumer Engagement Strategy, BCV will:

- Develop guidelines for health services to include consumers in health service innovation;
- Develop health service capability in engaging with consumers in innovation projects;
- Involve consumers in the assessment of expressions of interest for innovation projects funding;
- Provide advice to partners on opportunities to maximise consumer participation in projects;
- Develop and use consumer stories to support service innovation and improvement (e.g. at BCV events and training programs);
- Provide examples of good practice where improvement has been in partnership with, or lead by, consumers;
- Provide advice on broader consumer partnership work that is under development across SCV and DHHS;
- Ensure active involvement of consumers at the BCV Conference 2017.

Success Indicators

The following markers will reflect whether BCV achieves consumer engagement:

- The number of health services using the innovation guideline;
- The number of health services involving consumers in innovation projects;
- The number of BCV activities that involve active participation of consumers.

Outcomes

The outcome of this strategy is to ensure consumer participation is at the core of BCV-related activities, and that BCV's work has a substantial and meaningful impact on consumers. The Consumer Advisory Committee is BCV's main platform to engage consumers.

This strategy will complement the work of the Consumers as Partners division of SCV. As such, the activities of both BCV and SCV will be examined to evaluate whether consumer engagement outcomes have been achieved.