

# Directive: compliance is mandatory

## A Framework for Active Partnership with Consumers and the Community

**Objective file number:** eA781251  
**Policy developed by:** Quality, Information and Performance  
**Approved at Portfolio Executive on:** 20 December 2012  
**Next review due:** 31 December 2019

**Summary** A Framework for Active Partnership with Consumers and the Community (the Framework) will ensure there are mechanisms in place to actively engage with consumers and the community in order to meet their needs, and develop appropriate services. It also ensures the methods and practice of consumer engagement are guided by current best practice. The principles and standards recognise the importance of partnering with consumers and the community and maintaining high quality and efficient health services. The Framework also outlines the roles and responsibilities for all SA Health staff.

**Keywords** framework, guide, consumer, community, active partnership, partnering, partner, carer, stakeholder, participation, engagement, engaging, inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower, health literacy, tool, toolkit, tool kit, Department for Health and Ageing, SA Health, policy, directive

**Policy history** Is this a new policy? **YES**  
Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **YES**  
Does this policy replace an existing policy? **YES**  
If so, which policies?

- Consumer and Community Participation Policy (D0166)
- Consumer and Community Participation Guideline (G0078)

**Applies to** All SA Health Portfolio

**Staff impact** All Staff, Management, Admin, Students; Volunteers  
All Clinical, Medical, Nursing, Allied Health, Emergency, Dental, Mental Health, Pathology, Other

**PDS reference** D0306

### Version control and change history

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	16/01/2013	22/11/2014	Original version
1.1	22/11/2014	12/10/2015	Updated review date
1.2	12/10/2015	30/05/2016	Updated review date
1.3	01/06/2016	31/12/2016	Updated review date
1.4	01/01/2017	Current	Updated review date

# A Framework for Active Partnership with Consumers and the Community 2013





---

## 1. Statement

- 1.1 SA Health is committed to ensuring consumer and community engagement in health care decisions, and values the positive contributions consumers and the community make in improving health care service quality, equity and management.
- 1.2 SA Health is committed to:
  - 1.2.1 ensuring there are mechanisms in place to actively engage with consumers and the community in order to identify their needs, and also develop appropriate services
  - 1.2.2 partnering with consumers and the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of its service
  - 1.2.3 strengthening responsiveness to the differing perspectives and needs of a diverse range of consumers and community members
  - 1.2.4 providing accessible engagement strategies that are acceptable to a broad range of consumers and the community
  - 1.2.5 developing a culturally responsive health care system
  - 1.2.6 ensuring the methods and practice of consumer engagement are guided by current best practice.

## 2. Purpose

SA Health has developed the Framework to strengthen and improve the practice of consumer and community engagement processes across South Australia. It identifies SA Health's position regarding the significance and value of engaging with consumers and community. It is written for all SA Health employees including Local Health Networks (divisions, hospitals, wards, departments, service and primary health services, and central office divisions). SA Health values a culture of caring and learning and supports employees to actively engage and partner with consumers and the community.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 All SA Health employees or persons who provide health care services on behalf of SA Health must adhere to the standards described in this framework.

## 4. Definition

- 4.1. **Consumers:** patients and potential patients, carers and organisations representing consumers' interests<sup>1</sup>. When referring to consumers, SA Health is referring to patients, consumers, families, carers and other support people.
- 4.2. **Carer:** a family carer is someone who provides care and support for their parent, partner, child or friend who has a disability, is frail aged, or who has a chronic mental or physical illness.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.3. **Consumer advocate:** a person who advocates the consumer perspective and has the requisite experience to speak as an informed consumer.
- 4.4. **Community:** Refers to groups of people or organisations with a common interest, including non-government organisations who represent the interests of health consumers. While some communities may connect through a local or regional interest in health, others may share a cultural background, religion or language. Some communities may be geographically dispersed but linked through an interest in a specific health issue by the internet, or some other means.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Carer Participation Position Statement, Carers SA

<sup>3</sup> Developing a consumer and community engagement strategy: a toolkit for Hospital and Health Services, Health Consumers Queensland, July 2012

- 
- 4.5 **Consumer engagement:** informs broader community engagement. Health consumers actively participate in their own healthcare and in health policy, planning, service delivery and evaluation at service and agency levels.<sup>4</sup>
- 4.6 **Community engagement:** refers to the connections between government, communities and citizens in the development and implementation of policies programs, services and projects.
- It encompasses a wide variety of government-community interactions ranging from information sharing to community consultation and, in some instances, active participation in government decision making. It incorporates public participation, with people being empowered to contribute to decisions affecting their lives, through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and experience<sup>5</sup>.
- 4.7. **Consumer Advisory Group:** an advisory group established by a health care service which comprises of consumers and / or carers including those from diverse and hard-to-reach groups who use the organisation's services. The consumer advisory group provides a structured partnership between consumers and / or carers and the health care service on safety and quality issues, patient experiences, consumer centred care and other issues identified in its terms of reference.
- 4.8 **Consumer group:** group of consumers, carers and / or healthcare providers with experience and / or expertise relevant to your health care service. The group is convened to provide advice and feedback to your healthcare organisation on specific issues, including safety and quality improvement activities, patient experience and consumer centred care.
- 4.9 **Consumer nominee:** a person nominated by a consumer organisation or group for consideration for appointment by the requesting body.
- 4.10 **Consumer representative:** a person who represents a consumer organisation or group and is authorised to speak on behalf of that organisation or group, making them accountable to and responsible for reporting back to that organisation or group.
- 4.11 **Consultation:** a method to engage early with consumers and/or community to obtain feedback on issues, analysis, alternatives and decisions being considered by SA Health. It should be considered as part of an engagement process.
- 4.12. **Patient and consumer centred care:** Patient and consumer centred care is healthcare that is respectful of, and responsive to the preferences, needs and values of patients, consumers and the community, with dimensions including respect, emotional support, physical comfort, information and communication, continuity and transition, coordination of care, involvement of family and carers, and access to care<sup>6</sup>
- > treating consumers and/or carers with dignity and respect
  - > communicating and sharing information between consumers and/or carers and healthcare providers
  - > encouraging and supporting participation in decision making by patients, consumers carers, families and the community, as equal partners
  - > fostering collaboration with patients, consumers, carers, families, the community health care professionals in program and policy development, and in health service design, delivery and evaluation.
- 4.13 **Health Advisory Councils:** under Part 4 of South Australian Health Care Act 2008, the Minister for Health may establish Health Advisory Councils to undertake an advocacy role on behalf of the community, undertake consultancies with the community and provide advice to the Minister and the Chief Executive in relation to health matters, amongst other functions.

4, 5 [Developing a consumer and community engagement strategy: a toolkit for Hospital and Health Services, Health Consumers Queensland, July 2012](#)

6 [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care – Patient Centred Care: Improving quality and safety through partnerships with patients and consumers.](#)

- 
- 4.14 **Governance:** the set of relationships and responsibilities established by a health service organisation between its executive, workforce and stakeholders including consumers. Governance incorporates the set of processes, customs, policy directives, laws, and conventions affecting the way an organisation is directed, administered, or controlled. Governance arrangements provide the structure through which the objectives (clinical, social, fiscal, legal, human resources) of the organisation are set, and the means by which the objectives are to be achieved. They also specify the mechanisms for monitoring performance. Effective governance provides a clear statement of individual accountabilities within the organisation to help in aligning the roles, interests and actions of different participants in the organisation in order to achieve the organisation's objectives. SA Health's definition of governance includes both corporate and clinical governance and where possible promotes the integration of governance functions.<sup>7</sup>
- 4.15 **Health literacy:** is the extent to which consumers can obtain, process, and understand information about health care, services and the health system. It also refers to a consumer's capacity to use that information to make decisions about their health care. This includes, but is not limited to, consumers with limited English proficiency, those from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background, a cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, and children and young people.
- 4.16 **Partnership:** working together collaboratively to make decisions, sharing responsibility for decisions and collectively owning outcomes.

## 5. Rationale

The purpose of this framework is to:

- 5.1 describe governance that clearly outlines individual and health care service responsibilities for consumer and community engagement
- 5.2 promote consistency in the approach to consumer and community engagement across SA Health
- 5.3 ensure consumers and the community are aware of their rights including their right to access health and community services, their right to be safe from abuse, their right to high quality services, their right to be treated with respect, their right to be informed, their right to actively participate, their right to privacy and confidentiality and their right to comment and / or complain
- 5.4 ensure consumers and the community are encouraged and supported to participate in relevant and accessible activities and processes, where decisions will impact on them.
- 5.5 facilitate a high level of consumer and community engagement and positive experience of health care
- 5.6 ensure compliance with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

## 6. Principles

The principles below recognise the importance of partnering with consumers and the community to improve health outcomes and maintaining high quality and efficient health services. It incorporates the [Australian Safety and Quality Framework for Healthcare](#) that is consumer centred, driven by information and organised for safety.

### Principle 1 – Partnership

Partnering with consumers and the community to design the way care is delivered to better meet patient needs and preferences. Consumers and the community engage with the health care service organisations in the strategic and / or operational planning for the organisation, as equal partners.

<sup>7</sup> National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, 2011

---

## Principle 2 – Engagement

Consumers and the community are actively encouraged in decision making about improving the consumer experience, safety and quality and service improvement.

## Principle 3 – Patient and consumer centred care

Patient and consumer centred care is healthcare that is respectful of, and responsive to the preferences, needs and values of patients, consumers and the community, with dimensions including respect, emotional support, physical comfort, information and communication, continuity and transition, care coordination, involvement of family and carers, and access to care<sup>8</sup>. This means:

- > treating patients, consumers, carers, families and the community with dignity and respect
- > encouraging and supporting engagement in decision making by patients, consumers, carers, families and the community
- > communicating and sharing information
- > fostering collaboration with patients, consumers, carers, families, the community and health professionals in program and policy development, and in health service design, delivery and evaluation.

## Principle 4 – Diversity

Partnerships are reflective of the diverse range of backgrounds in the population served by the health service organisation, including those people who do not usually provide feedback. The health service engages with individuals and groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, older adults, young people, people with a mental illness and people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Principle 5 – Feedback and consumer experience

Consumers and the community provide feedback about their experience and participate in the evaluation of patient information data and develop action plans. Consumers and the community are engaged in the planning and implementation of quality improvements.

## Principle 6 – Empower consumers and the community to be equal partners in care and treatment

Consumers and the community are empowered to improve the safety and quality of health care and partner with healthcare professionals.

## Principle 7 – Access and information

Consumers and the community have a right to access and receive information and education about their health and wellbeing in a way that meets their individual needs, and is a form that the consumer understands.

## Principle 8 – Support

Consumers and the community are provided with support they need to engage with the healthcare system. This requires a workforce with expertise in consumer engagement.

This means:

- > implementing training for clinical leaders, senior management and the workforce on the value of and ways to, facilitate consumer engagement and how to create and sustain partnerships
- > facilitating access to relevant orientation and training for consumers and / or carers when partnering with the organisation.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in HealthCare – Patient Centred Care: Improving quality and safety through partnerships with patients and consumers

---

## Principle 9 – Charter of Health and Community Services Rights<sup>9</sup>

Consumers and the community are aware of their rights and;

- > that a person should be entitled to participate effectively in decisions about his or her health, well-being and welfare;
- > that a person should be entitled to take an active role in his or her health care and in decisions about the provision of health or community services to the person;
- > that a person should be entitled to be provided with appropriate health or community services in a considerate way that takes into account his or her background and any requirements that are reasonably necessary to ensure that he or she receives such services;
- > that both professional and non-professional providers of health and community services should be given consideration and recognition for their contribution to health care and the well-being and welfare of individuals’
- > that a person should be entitled to obtain reasonable access to records concerning his or her health or other personal information relating to the person (taking into account what is appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances of a particular case), but that otherwise the confidentiality of such information should be maintained
- > that a person should be entitled to have access to procedures for dealing with complaints about the provision of health or community services.

## Principle 10 – Continuous improvement, measuring and evaluation

Consumers and the community participate in continuous improvement activities, including the collection, analysis and reporting of safety and quality and other performance measures, the results of which are interpreted and communicated in plain language and design.

## Principle 11 – Consumers and the community, and research and evaluation

Consumers and researchers working in partnerships based on understanding, respect and shared commitment to research that will improve the health of humankind<sup>10</sup>.

# 7. Standards

With the implementation of this framework, all organisations and services in SA Health will ensure:

### 7.1 all consumers:

- > have access to safe, high-quality health care and treatment<sup>11</sup>
- > receive information about their health care rights
- > receive information about their health and their care that is appropriate to their capacity to understand and promotes health literacy
- > have access to privacy and confidentiality around care and treatment
- > are partners in decisions and choices about their individual care and treatment
- > give informed consent to decisions about their individual care and treatment
- > are informed if something goes wrong, and receive an explanation, apology and support as appropriate.

### 7.2 consumers, carers and the community are involved in:

- > governance of the health care service. This should include engagement with priority setting, planning, quality improvement and evaluation of health services
- > activities to improve health literacy. This should include providing feedback on patient information and publications
- > the design of care to improve the patient experience and patient health outcomes, by better meeting needs and preferences, through engagement with activities to design or re-design care and how care is provided.

<sup>9</sup> South Australian Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004

<sup>10</sup> Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research, 2001 National Health and Medical Research Council

<sup>11</sup> National Safety & Quality Health Service Standards, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care 2011



- 
- 7.3 consumers and the community are well informed and supported through training and other relevant means to participate in the governance of the health service on behalf of their communities, and the health service has mechanisms for this to occur
  - 7.4 SA Health employees or persons who provide health services on behalf of SA Health understand and respect the role of consumers and ensure processes are used to support consumer engagement
  - 7.5 appropriate resources are provided for education and training of employees, consumers and the community on consumer engagement
  - 7.6 data from consumer feedback, complaints and patient / consumer experience surveys are used to measure and improve health services. Consumers and communities participate in the evaluation of this data and planning of quality improvement activities. Data and quality improvement action plans are considered by senior management.

## 8. Responsibilities

- 8.1 Chief Executive SA Health is responsible for:
  - 8.1.1 ensuring consumer and community engagement occurs across SA Health in accordance with this framework.
- 8.2 Executive Director Health System Development in conjunction with the Director of Safety and Quality will:
  - 8.2.1 establish, maintain and review the SA Health consumer and community engagement system and associated processes at state level
  - 8.2.2 provide advice to SA Health in response to specific queries about policy and legislative requirements
  - 8.2.3 coordinate timely reporting of relevant information to external bodies, including the community
  - 8.2.4 provide advice to the Minister for Health and Ageing on issues of public concern / media or public attention.
- 8.3 Department for Health and Ageing Executive Directors, Directors and other senior managers will:
  - 8.3.1 ensure mechanisms for consumer and community engagement are in place to support, foster and enhance a participatory culture.
- 8.4 Local Health Network (LHN) / SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) Chief Executive Officers will:
  - 8.4.1 ensure there is consumer engagement with service evaluation, design and planning
  - 8.4.2 ensure adherence to the framework and appropriate reporting
  - 8.4.3 ensure the LHN Health Advisory Council Inc (“the Governing Council”) support and drive consumer engagement.
  - 8.4.4 delegate responsibility for the ongoing management of consumer engagement
  - 8.4.5 allocate appropriate support and resources to implement an effective consumer engagement system in the LHN
  - 8.4.6 support the role of HACs as referred to in Part 4 of the *South Australian Health Care Act 2008*.
- 8.5 Safety, Quality and Risk Managers will:
  - 8.5.1 promote this framework and accompanying guidelines
  - 8.5.2 assist others to ensure that the health unit / LHN meets its obligation under this framework
  - 8.5.3 ensure that an evaluation strategy is in place to assess compliance with this framework
  - 8.5.4 develop and maintain own skills and knowledge in consumer engagement methods and health literacy, and act as a resource for other staff

- 8.5.5 participate in planning, implementation and review of appropriate consumer engagement with mechanisms that suit the social, economic, cultural and linguistic composition of the local population
  - 8.5.6 support consumer engagement and the implementation of the Framework and accompanying guidelines
  - 8.5.7 record consumer feedback in the Safety Learning System (SLS) Consumer Feedback module and respond to complaints in accordance with the SA Health Consumer Feedback Management Policy
  - 8.5.8 report data and quality improvement plans to senior management on a regular basis (ie. quarterly)
  - 8.5.9 provide support to Consumer Advisory Council / Committee / Group members including support with terms of reference, minutes, agenda and actions. Provide training and support to new members and the community etc
  - 8.5.10 participate or provide advice in consumer consultation, design of consumer feedback surveys
  - 8.5.11 participate in the design and delivery of relevant training for staff around consumer engagement methodology, and health literacy, including tools and resources in the accompanying guide and toolkit (refer to the SA Health Guide for Engaging with Consumers and the Community).
- 8.6 All SA Health employees or persons who provide health services on behalf of SA Health will:
- 8.6.1 adhere to the principles and aims of this Framework and ensure they operate in accordance with its standards and the accompanying Guide
  - 8.6.2 actively enhance a participatory culture by supporting, reporting on and contributing to consumer and community engagement activities
  - 8.6.3 when making an open disclosure refer to Incident Management Guideline incorporating Open Disclosure Response Policy Guideline (G0075)
  - 8.6.4 support patients and consumers to provide feedback in accordance with the SA Health Consumer Feedback Management Policy
  - 8.6.5 Develop and maintain their own skills and knowledge about best practice in enhancing consumer engagement, relevant to their role, including the use of the tools in the accompanying Guide.

## 9. Monitoring and compliance

- 9.1 LHNs will be required to report annually on implementation of the standards in this Framework, and compliance with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards 1 and 2<sup>12</sup>.
- 9.2 LHNs will be required to report annually and develop an action plan to improve any domains of care that are identified through SA Consumer Experience Surveillance System (SACESS) to be below the benchmark of 85%.

## 10. Relevant legislation

- > Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 (SA)
- > Health Care Act 2008 (SA)
- > South Australian Carers Recognition Act 2005

<sup>12</sup> Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare  
National Safety and Quality in Health Service Standard 1 – Governance for Safety and Quality Health Service Organisations  
National Safety and Quality in Health Service Standard 2 – Partnering with Consumers

---

## 11. Relevant SA Health policies, procedures and guidelines

- > SA Health Guide for engaging with consumers and the community
- > SA Health Charter of Health and Community Rights Policy (PDS ref no. D0281)
- > SA Health Incident Management Guideline incorporating open disclosure response (PDS ref no. G0075)
- > SA Health Open Disclosure Policy (PDS ref no. D0247)
- > SA Health Consumer Feedback Management Policy (PDS ref no. D0255)
- > SA Health Consumer Feedback Management Guideline and Toolkit (PDS ref no. G0113)
- > SA Health Aboriginal Cultural Respect Framework 2007 – 2012 (PDS ref no. D0130)
- > Carer Participation Position Statement (G0085)

## 12. Other relevant resources

- > Health Consumers Alliance of SA Inc (HCASA) role and responsibility as the peak body for health consumers in South Australia in accordance with their service agreement in providing research, policy development and advice, advocacy and representation, consumer consultation and capacity building, and information dissemination and community education [www.hcasa.asn.au](http://www.hcasa.asn.au)
- > Australian Safety and Quality Framework for Health Care, (December 2010), Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC)
- > National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, (2011), Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC)
- > National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, Standard 2 Partnering with Consumers Safety and Quality Improvement Guide (2012), Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC)
- > Patient Centred Care: Improving quality and safety through partnerships with patients and consumers – (2011), Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in HealthCare
- > Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector [www.oper.sa.gov.au/page-351](http://www.oper.sa.gov.au/page-351)
- > Consumer representative program policy. Consumers Health Forum Australia, 2011 (Accessed 24 March 2001 at [www.chf.org.au/consumer-representatives-program-policy.php#link11](http://www.chf.org.au/consumer-representatives-program-policy.php#link11))
- > Consumer and Community Engagement Framework (2012) Health Consumers Queensland
- > Consumer and Community Participation Toolkit (2002), Queensland Health
- > Developing a consumer and community engagement strategy: a toolkit for Hospital and Health Services, (2012), Health Consumers Queensland
- > IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum – International Association for Public Participation (2007)
- > Statement of Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research. (2001) National Health and Medical Research (NHMRC)
- > Health and Community Services Complaints Commission's (HCSCC) Charter of Healthcare Rights (2011)
- > The *Charter on the Rights of Children and Young People in Health Services in Australia* (the Charter)
- > Planetree [www.planetree.org](http://www.planetree.org)
- > Council on the Ageing (South Australia) COTASA [www.cotasa.org.au](http://www.cotasa.org.au)
- > Carers Australia [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)
- > Carers SA [www.carers-sa.asn.au](http://www.carers-sa.asn.au)
- > SA Government Better Together: Principles of Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet and Institute for Public Administration [www.saplan.org.au](http://www.saplan.org.au)
- > *Citizen Me!* a very practical and useful guide about how to involve children and young people in organisational decision making.





## For more information

**SA Health**  
**Health System Development**  
**11 Hindmarsh Square**  
**Adelaide SA 5000**  
**Telephone: 08 8226 5985**  
**[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)**



[www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons](http://www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons)

© Department for Health and Ageing, Government of South Australia.  
All rights reserved. FIS: 12165.1. January 2013.



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health