

Stretch2Engage Service Engagement Framework



A summary of best practice principles to improve and increase engagement of people with a lived experience, their families and carers in service delivery.

Background

In 2015 the Commission engaged the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health Inc. to work in a consortium with the Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies and Enlightened Consultants to develop draft best practice principles to improve and increase engagement of people with a lived experience, their families and carers in service delivery (the draft principles).

The best principles are embedded in the *Stretch2Engage Service Engagement Framework for Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drug Services* (Stretch2Engage).

Stretch2Engage aims to guide efforts to increase and improve engagement in the mental health and alcohol and other drugs public and non-government sectors. They are intended to drive reform towards implementing the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019* Shared Commitment to Action 1.

Why new principles are needed

A number of policies and procedures, such as the *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards*, require public health services to engage with those who use services, their families and carers within the health sector broadly. Within the public mental health sector, the *National Standards for Mental Health Services* and the *Queensland Health Consumer, Carer and Family Participation Framework* (the Queensland Health Participation Framework) also requires engagement. More recently, Project Gauge was publicly released providing guidelines to the public alcohol and other drug sector on engagement. Governments have also, in the last few years, adopted a principle of 'co-design' in developing, implementing and evaluating policies, programs and services.

These policies and standards provide an important foundation to engagement. Despite these policies and standards, little guidance is provided about how to engage meaningfully with people with a lived experience, their families, carers and friends. In particular they do not address how to meaningfully engage with people from diverse backgrounds.

Developing the principles

The Consortium undertook extensive research and consultation to develop the draft principles. A literature review was undertaken and engagement with service providers in both the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors, people who use services, or could potentially use services in the future, as well as families, carers and supporters.

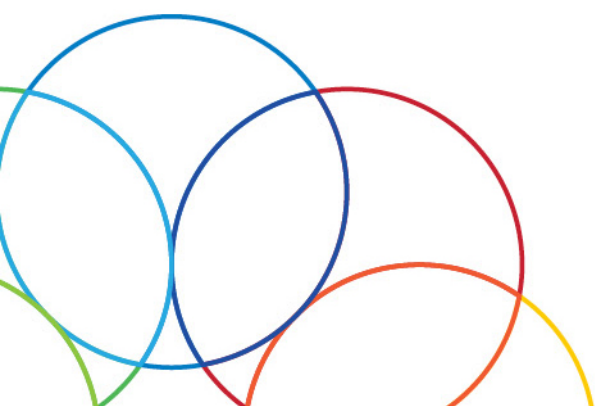
The engagement process involved over 250 stakeholders including through:

- an online think tank with 177 people registered to participate
- two face-to-face think tanks held in Cairns and Brisbane with 74 people participating
- four targeted consultations to test the draft principles held in Cairns, Brisbane (two) and Toowoomba
- online testing of the draft principles involving those who had registered online for the think tanks and people who could not attend the consultation sessions.

The engagement and consultation process actively targeted hearing the views and experiences of diverse people and groups including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living in rural and remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Stretch2Engage

Stretch2Engage provides a framework for use by the public, non-government and private mental health and alcohol and other drug services.



Defining engagement

Stretch2Engage defines engagement as:

‘Encompassing the processes and techniques that organisations employ to involve people using services, and their families, carers and friends in the design or redesign of their services.’

They make the very clear distinction between engagement and therapeutic engagement which focuses on the rapport and relationship built between a clinician and/or other workers for the purpose of providing direct support or treatment to a person.

Values

Stretch2Engage is founded on values which acknowledge engagement of people with a lived experience, their families and carers as a human right fundamental to citizenship. This value sees engagement as being important in its own right while acknowledging the benefits to services who engage effectively.

To give effect to these values, the draft principles require organisations to think and act differently. They call upon services to think about their engagement activities by asking the question:

‘How can my organisation more effectively engage?’

This question differs significantly from the usual approach of asking the question *‘how we can enable people with a lived experience, families, carers and friends to engage with us?’*

These different questions change the emphasis of engagement activities. It moves the focus from inviting and building the capacity of people with a lived experience, families, carers and friends to engage, to one which seeks to build the organisation’s capability. The change of focus influences how engagement is viewed, funded, assessed and evaluated, by organisations.

Changing culture

Moving towards this change of emphasis involves culture change for many organisations. Based on contemporary approaches to organisational change, the draft principles are based on notions of stretching beyond what is already known and resisting inevitable pulls to the maintain the status quo. Put simply, organisations, stretch to change but in the process may have a tendency to return to the known practices and approaches. As noted in the draft principles, much like a rubber band.

The draft principles

Based on the definition of engagement, underpinning values and the need to change culture, the draft principles fall under seven value domains:

Stretch2Be Curious: Eager to know or learn.

Stretch2Be Clear: Initiatives are transparent in their reason and are easily understood.

Stretch2Be Champion: Vigorously lead, promote and support the organisation in their engagement initiatives.

Stretch2Be Creative: Use of imaginative methods to evoke new ideas.

Stretch2Be Collective: Intentionally seek out and engage people from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Stretch2Be Comprehensive: Willing to explore all aspects and embrace divergent views.

Stretch2Be Committed: Pledge to ongoing service engagement initiatives.

Our next steps

In 2017 there are a number of opportunities for the draft best practice principles to influence and inform the foundation of reform in Queensland.