



## Service Access Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure set out Empowered Community Service's service access procedures. These procedures uphold the right for people to access appropriate services that meet their needs and that are provided in a transparent and equitable way.

This policy and procedure apply to all potential and existing participants, their family members, carers and stakeholders and meets relevant legislation, regulations and Standards as set out in Schedule 1, Legislative References.

### Access to Supports

#### ***Outcome***

Each participant accesses the most appropriate supports that meet their needs, goals and preferences.

#### ***Indicators***

- The supports available, and any access / entry criteria (including any associated costs) are clearly defined and documented. This information is communicated to each participant using the language, mode of communication and terms that the participant is most likely to understand.
- Reasonable adjustments to the support delivery environment are made and monitored to ensure it is fit for purpose and each participant's health, privacy, dignity, quality of life and independence is supported.
- Each participant is supported to understand under what circumstances supports can be withdrawn. Access to supports required by the participant will not be withdrawn or denied solely on the basis of a dignity of risk choice that has been made by the participant.

### Independence and Informed Choice

#### ***Outcome***

Each participant accesses the most appropriate supports that meet their needs, goals and preferences.

#### ***Indicators***

- Reasonable adjustments to the support delivery environment are made and monitored to ensure it is fit for purpose and each participant's health, privacy, dignity, quality of life and independence is supported.
- Each participant is supported to understand under what circumstances supports can be withdrawn. Access to supports required by the participant will not be withdrawn or denied solely on the basis of a dignity of risk choice that has been made by the participant.

- The supports available, and any access / entry criteria (including any associated costs) are clearly defined and documented. This information is communicated to each participant using the language, mode of communication and terms that the participant is most likely to understand.

## **Policy**

Empowered Community Service's service delivery environment is safe and engaging, physically accessible and responsive to participants' support and communication needs.

Empowered Community Service's screening and eligibility, priority of access and waitlist management is undertaken in a fair, equitable and transparent manner, and in line with Empowered Community Service's *Participant Charter*. Access to services is based on relative need, service capacity, the best interests of people using the service and potential impact on existing service users.

## **Procedures**

The Management Team is responsible for ensuring that all staff are familiar with the requirements of this policy and have sufficient skills, knowledge and ability to meet the requirements.

The Human Resource Officer reports to the Management Team on the effectiveness of Empowered Community Service's entry and referral processes. This is also further discussed at regular team meetings.

Participant feedback and complaints will be addressed in accordance with Empowered Community Service's *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*.

In accordance with Empowered Community Service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure*, respect for and protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality will be reinforced on an ongoing basis, verbally and in information promoting the services offered by the organisation.

Where required, participants or their representatives or families will be provided with information and support to access a person of their choice, such as an advocate, to assist them to access the service. See Empowered Community Service's *Decision Making and Choice Policy and Procedure*.

Empowered Community Services uses its *Participant Handbook*, signage and website to ensure that all participants and stakeholders understand how to access supports at Empowered Community Services.

To ensure participants understand this information, staff must provide information to them and their supporters or families in ways that suit their individual communication needs. Written information can be provided in different languages and Easy English or explained verbally by staff. Staff can also help participants access interpreters or advocates where required.

## **Service Environment**

Empowered Community Services ensures its service environment is kept clean, hygienic, safe, secure and aesthetically pleasing at all times, through implementing its *Work Health and Safety, Risk Management, Incident Management, Feedback and Complaints* and *Continuous Improvement* policies and procedures.

Empowered Community Service's physical accessibility is ensured through its *Physical Accessibility Policy and Procedure*. Reasonable adjustments to the support delivery environment are made and monitored to ensure it is fit for purpose and that each participant's health, privacy, dignity, quality of

life and independence are supported. Recognising that children have a right to be safe and protected at all times, Empowered Community Services also manages its accessibility with a focus on creating a safe environment for children.

Empowered Community Services takes a continuous improvement approach to its physical accessibility and encourages participants to use its *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure* to assist it to respond to accessibility needs where required.

Empowered Community Service's opening hours are 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

The Managing Director tracks demand, as well as participant and accessibility needs, by monitoring:

- **Demographic data:** relating to the local community and its needs from Local, State and Federal Government Sources, including ABS data and specific NDIS market data published by the NDIA;
- **Unmet need:** demographic data (as above), Empowered Community Services enquiry and waitlist data and feedback from staff, including those involved in local service networks; and
- **Opportunities for innovation and improvement:** through monthly review of Empowered Community Service's *Complaints Register* and *Continuous Improvement Register* and annual staff and participant satisfaction surveys.

## Service Access

The Management Team deals with all enquiries from prospective participants or their representatives or families about accessing services. If the Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team doesn't take the initial enquiry personally, they will contact the person seeking services within 1 working day.

In their first contact with the person who has enquired, the Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will assess whether they require any support to move through the intake process. They will also:

- advise the person of their right to involve a support person in their dealings with Empowered Community Services;
- provide information and assist the person to access a support person of their choice, such as an advocate, to help them to interact with the service (see Empowered Community Services *Decision Making and Choice Policy and Procedure*);
- where physical access issues, or other issues such as availability of, or access to, transport, are identified, consider whether Empowered Community Services is accessible for the person, and if not, how it could be made accessible; and where a language or cultural barrier is identified, engage an interpreter or an appropriate external agency to support the person. See Empowered Community Services *Service Delivery and Participation Policy and Procedure*.

The Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will book an Intake Interview with the person within 5 working days of their initial contact with them, or sooner if the person's needs are considered urgent.

All Intake Interviews will be conducted by a member of the Management Team. They will provide the person with information about:

- entry and exit procedures;
- eligibility and priority of access requirements;
- conditions that may apply to service provision; and
- fees.

The Support Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will undertake an assessment of a participant's eligibility based on:

- the best interests of the participant;
- service guidelines; and
- identified participant needs and risks.

To be eligible to receive Empowered Community Service's services, a participant must meet the following eligibility criteria. The person must:

- have one or more identified intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairments that are, or are likely to be, permanent;
- have one or more identified impairments that are attributable to a psychiatric condition and are, or are likely to be, permanent; or
- be a child who has a disability like those described above or a developmental delay.

Consideration must also be given to the participant's Priority of Access by examining:

- their relative need compared to others who receive or want to receive services;
- any additional needs they have;
- the extent to which Empowered Community Services can contribute to those needs being met;
- the resources available within Empowered Community Services to meet the
- participant's needs;
- other services the participant receives and how Empowered Community Service's services will complement those and contribute to improved outcomes for the participant; and
- the best interests of the participant.

Where relevant, the interview will take into account information already provided about the participant in their NDIS Plan. The Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will provide the person with:

- an Empowered Community Services *Participant Handbook*, outlining Empowered Community Service's entry and exit procedures and appeal processes (see service refusal below), priority of access requirements, waitlist procedures, fees, hours of operation, booking procedures, conditions that apply to service delivery (including when supports may be withdrawn), rights and responsibilities, privacy and confidentiality, and feedback and complaints processes;
- information about fees associated with the delivery of supports; and
- Empowered Community Service's *Privacy Statement* and *Feedback and Complaints Form*.

If the participant is offered services at the Intake Interview and this is accepted, they or their representative or parent/guardian will be asked to complete Empowered Community Service's intake forms, including the *referral form and other consent forms*.

Where a decision regarding whether the participant can be offered services cannot be made at the Intake Interview, the Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will contact the person or their representative or family within 1 working day of the Intake Interview to advise them of the outcome. If the participant is offered services, intake forms should be posted or emailed out for completion or the relevant person provided the opportunity to complete them in person.

Where the participant is offered services and accepts, for next steps, see Empowered Community Service's *Assessment, Planning and Review Policy and Procedure*.

### **Non-acceptance**

Where a person is offered services but chooses not to accept the offer, staff will respect this choice.

The Support Coordinator or other member of the Management Team will encourage the person to contact Empowered Community Services should they change their mind, noting that they may need to be placed on Empowered Community Service's waitlist if the service has no capacity to provide services at the time they do recontact.

### **Service Refusal**

Where services cannot be provided, the person will be provided with a clear reason based on Empowered Community Service's eligibility criteria, Priority of Access requirements or waiting list processes.

Empowered Community Services may refuse to offer a participant service where:

- they do not meet Empowered Community Service's eligibility requirements;
- other potential participants are assessed as a higher priority based on Empowered Community Service's Priority of Access criteria;
- Empowered Community Services does not have the capacity to cater to additional participants; or Empowered Community Services does not have the resources to cater to the specific needs of the participant.

A participant who meets Empowered Community Service's eligibility requirements and cannot be offered a service due to lack of capacity, can be placed on Empowered Community Service's Waiting List. The person will be advised of the possible waiting time before services might become available.

In either case, the person will be assisted with referrals and support to access alternative services, as per Empowered Community Service's *Providing Information, Advice and Referrals Policy and Procedure*.

## **Waiting List Processes**

The Support Coordinator or other member of the management Team will contact people on Empowered Community Service's Waiting List at least every three months to:

- advise them of their current status on the list;
- check whether they want to remain on the list;
- provide referrals to other service providers if required; and
- advise the estimated wait time remaining.

To keep Waiting List size and wait times to a minimum, at the Managing Director's discretion, additional services will be offered where justified by demand and Empowered Community Service's resources allow.

## **Appeal**

Anyone refused services has the right to appeal the Service Coordinator or other member of the Management Team's decision. Appeals should be directed in writing to Empowered Community Service's Managing Director and a final decision will be made by the Management Team.

If required, staff will provide support for a person to make an appeal, by either transcribing their feedback for the Managing Director's review or referring the person to interpreter or advocacy services.

Those not successful in their appeal will be provided written advice to this effect. For procedures for those who successfully appeal, see *Empowered Community Service's Assessment, Planning and Review Policy and Procedure and/or Early Childhood Early Intervention Assessment, Planning and Review Policy and Procedure*.

If a person is unhappy with outcome of their appeal, they will be directed to *Empowered Community Service's Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*.

## **Alternative Supports**

Empowered Community Services will work collaboratively with all participants refused services or their representatives or families, to identify alternative services and referrals that could best meet their needs. These will be provided within 5 working days.

With the participant's, representative's or family's consent, relevant information will be provided by Empowered Community Services to new service providers to support the participant's seamless referral.

## **Continuous Improvement**

Empowered Community Services will maintain a record of participants who have been refused a service, summarising reasons for their being found ineligible or, if found eligible, reasons for being placed on Empowered Community Service's Waiting List. Access, service refusal and referral information will be tracked in Careflo to inform Empowered Community Service's continuous improvement.

## Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least annually by the Management Team. Reviews will incorporate staff, participant and/or stakeholder feedback. Participants and service networks will be advised of any changes.

Empowered Community Service's feedback collection mechanisms, such as participant satisfaction surveys and service delivery planning activities, will assess:

- Participant awareness of Empowered Community Service's access procedures;
- Participant satisfaction with Empowered Community Service's physical access, service access procedures and management of service refusal and appeals regarding access;
- Whether participants are satisfied with the service environment, service delivery and referral and support to access other services;
- Whether Empowered Community Service's eligibility criteria are reflected in its participants; and
- Feedback provided by and to participants and potential participants around access and refusal and whether the information provided to participants is appropriate and effective.

Empowered Community Service's *Continuous Improvement Register* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Empowered Community Service's service planning and delivery processes

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1	09 December 2019	Policy and Procedure Manual created to meet NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission Practice Standards.