

3L Consulting

Department of Disability Housing
and Community Services

Report on Disability Services in the
ACT Consultations: Think Tank
Recommendations

February 2008

1. Introduction

Background

In August 2006 the Minister for Disability and Community Services, Katy Gallagher MLA, announced a review to explore the Government's role in providing disability services. Following wide ranging consultations in late 2006, the ACT Government determined that it has a continuing role as a provider of disability services alongside the community sector.

The next task was to establish what the service delivery system should look like. This covered questions such as how Government and the community can best partner to deliver high quality, person-centred disability services; how people access these services; how priorities are determined; and how funding decisions are made.

The consultations on the service delivery system commenced on 24 September 2007. Two general information sessions held in early October 2007 were followed by an Introductory Summit on 16 October 2007. Focus groups and several meetings with stakeholders were held and written submissions were received. Some 100 people participated in the consultations.

A short report drawing together the consultation outcomes was prepared and considered at a Concluding Summit on 23 November 2007 that was attended by 60 people. The report outlined the propositions that people felt should drive the service system and included two diagrams designed to show how the system could operate. In general, the propositions developed from the consultations were supported at the Summit, but there was no consensus around the diagrams. Some people felt the diagrams were unnecessarily rigid and showed a continuum that did not adequately represent a person-centred flexible approach. Others suggested that no one-dimensional diagram could represent the dynamic nature of the disability service system.

The Summit recommended that a small 'think tank' be established to develop the propositions from the consultations into concrete options and recommendations for the Minister's consideration.

This report provides those recommendations, which broadly cover:

- service delivery;
- access and information;
- establishing priorities and making decisions;
- service relationships; and
- sector development.

Recommendations

1. Develop a policy framework to guide the operation of the ACT disability service delivery system that includes the development of the relationship between the Government and community sector.
2. Using the concept of service agreements, define and publish the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities and their families who access Government and community-provided disability services in the ACT.
3. Establish key disability service delivery priorities for 2009-2014.
4. Establish an access framework as the pathway to the disability service system that:
 - reflects whole of life and encompasses all services;
 - links to other service sectors such as health and education as well as broader community services and natural supports;
 - enables people with disabilities, their families and carers to enter and re-enter at any point;
 - encompasses 'Service Guides' to actively engage with people with disabilities and their families and carers and assist them to navigate the system; and
 - encompasses interim support options when the needed service is not available.
5. Develop and implement an 'information hub' to support the access framework.
6. Establish a sector-wide client information system.
7. As part of the client information system, develop and trial the use of a disability client 'passport' for use across the specialised disability service sector.
8. Establish a decision-making framework for the disability service delivery system that clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the key participants.
9. Establish a consultative process for the disability service sector to provide input into funding and policy priorities.
10. Introduce outcome-based funding, contracting and reporting in the disability service sector.
11. Develop and implement a communication strategy for engagement both across the disability service sector and with the general community that includes:
 - effective communication on policy and planning with people with disabilities and families;
 - building strong and active relationships with disability service providers based on mutual respect and trust;
 - raising awareness and building strong and active relationships with the ACT community (including business, arts and sport).
12. Develop an Industry Plan for the disability service delivery sector that addresses at a minimum:
 - service standards;
 - relationships and community building;
 - sustainability including financial certainty, training and development;
 - flexibility and innovation.

2. Service delivery policy framework

A clear message in the consultations was that people with disabilities, their families and service providers did not feel that they knew enough about the context for disability services in the ACT. This includes issues such as what services and supports individuals and families can expect to be provided; how services and funding priorities are determined and how individual and service funding decisions are made.

There is a need for Government to articulate the policy framework for disability services in the ACT. This will then guide the operation of the service delivery system. The framework needs to be based on sound analysis and cover the life spectrum including early intervention. It should outline how service planning is undertaken, including planning around unmet need, and the role of groups such as the Disability Advisory Council and the Disability Strategic Oversight Group. It should also provide advice on what basis services are provided, how services in the ACT are to be delivered and outline the roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different participants in the service delivery system. Finally, the framework should outline how decisions about individual and service funding are made.

Families also strongly commented on the need for a clear statement on what they should reasonably expect from service providers, both in the government sector and the community sector, in terms of the level and quality of services provided. Using the concept of service agreements, Disability ACT should define and publish the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities and their families who access government and community provided services in the ACT.

Noting the documents including *Future Directions* and *Challenge 2014*, as part of the policy framework, the key service delivery policies for the period 2009-2014 need to be established and communicated.

Recommendations:

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2. Using the concept of service agreements, define and publish the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities and their families who access Government and community-provided disability services in the ACT.
3. Establish key disability service delivery priorities for 2009-2014.

3. Access and information

A fundamental question is access to what? There is no one size fits all access pathway for the disability service system, because the needs of people with disability and service responses tend to be varied, intermittent as well as ongoing, and encompass all of life's stages and domains. There are different pathways depending on whether a person's need is for general information, access to services, and/or access to individualised funding required for specialised services (the latter is discussed further in the next chapter).

As well, providing information on services does not necessarily equate with enabling access. People often require active support to articulate their needs and to understand the range of options that may be developed around the person with a disability to enable them to have a good life. This is often an iterative process that takes place over time and requires a relationship of trust.

Access framework

An access framework should be developed as the pathway into the disability service system. It needs to encompass all services. It needs to link to other service sectors such as health and education and be understood by providers of services within those sectors. Importantly it needs to acknowledge and enhance the role of broader community services, natural supports and information networks.

People with disabilities and their families need to be able to enter the access framework at any point and be confident that they will be guided to the appropriate area to achieve the outcomes they are seeking. Sometimes the appropriate assistance will be available from the first point of contact, but this will not always be the case. While a diagram can never represent the quality of the relationships and processes involved, Attachment 1 demonstrates the suggested mechanics of the access framework.

Service guides

The disability service system is varied, as are the needs of people with disability and their families. 'Service Guides' should be available to engage with the people with disabilities and their families at the access point to assist them to articulate their needs and to assist them to navigate the system successfully.

The role of the guide should include making an initial assessment of the client's needs, noting that this is often an ongoing an iterative process.

Sometimes because of the complexity and nature of the need, immediate access to significant funding will be required. In these circumstances the government-provided Intensive Response Team (IRT) should coordinate the detailed assessment. Access to the IRT may be direct or via a Service Guide.

The role of the service guide should include providing information on interim support options when the needed service is not available.

The Service Guides will require a high level of skill and will need to be:

- capable of conducting a non-clinical assessment of the strengths and needs of the client and their family, which may differ from the presenting problem;

- knowledgeable about the whole disability service system including mainstream or other community options and able to match this information to the client's needs;
- compassionate and flexible, able to think broadly about possible options;
- available to maintain a relationship with the client until the presenting situation is resolved and/or a referral to an appropriate service is established and/or the client no longer wants the assistance; and
- able to work in a person-centred framework and be sensitive to client needs and choices.

Systemic changes required to implement the access framework

Among other things, implementation of an access framework will require comprehensive planning and robust governance arrangements. It will also involve cultural change. In particular, sustained stakeholder involvement will be required in developing a planned approach that may include, for example:

- assessment to determine where the sector, including Government, needs development to implement an access framework;
- resources required to support implementation, for example sector training;
- changes to policy and contractual arrangements to support the access framework;
- system-wide mechanisms needed to strengthen and reward collaboration between services and to support the role of the Service Guide.

The culture to support the access framework should reflect the aspirations of the ACT Disability Vision and Values and *Challenge 2014*. In practice, it would mean that people with a disability and their families could expect that the Service Guide would:

- take responsibility for working with them to help them articulate their needs as comprehensively as possible, recognising that this may be an iterative process and occur over time;
- have a good knowledge of the service delivery system and experience in creating person-centred solutions drawn from a range of sources;
- assist them to have realistic expectations without limiting their options or the possibility of creative responses to their need;
- work with them to achieve the best possible outcomes. This may involve facilitating links and referrals to services, including general community services, supporting them during times when they have limited or no access to formal services and working with them flexibly to create alternative supports and solutions to meet their needs;
- have a clear and well managed transition when their role is no longer needed.

Information hub

An online 'information hub' should be designed and implemented. One of the key functions of the hub should be to support the access framework, but it could also be a repository for general information, demographic data and information on unmet need.

Initially, Disability ACT needs to have responsibility for developing the information hub. It could initially be built around the existing Disability ACT Information Service. However, once the information hub is established it may be more appropriate to locate its management and maintenance with a community provider.

The information hub should incorporate information that covers all of life's stages and domains. It should include information on the services available to people with a disability in the ACT. It should link with other service information systems already in place such as the recently launched CANAccess disability information system. Links should also be established with other Government agencies such as ACT Health and the ACT Department of Education and Training and relevant community providers.

Over time, the information hub should develop as a resource for service providers to facilitate cross-sector communication and as a repository in areas such as good practice in the ACT, nationally and internationally.

Client information system

Families and people with disabilities are tired of retelling their stories every time they want to access a service. A client information system is strongly supported. Client participation in such a system would be voluntary and would need to include privacy safeguards.

People who have registered with the system could be provided with a 'passport' that records all relevant information about them and is retained by the person with a disability or their family/ guardian. This approach should be trialled for those who wish to use it.

If they give permission, information about people with disabilities and their families should be recorded in the information hub. With appropriate safeguards, this information would be accessible across the system. This would enable people with a disability to be registered in the system and for relevant parts of their story to be added over time. The need to repeat basic details each time the system is accessed would be reduced and, over time the data would contribute to the development of comprehensive data on need.

Recommendations:

4. Establish an access framework as the pathway to the disability service system that:
 - reflects whole of life and encompasses all services;
 - links to other service sectors such as health and education as well as broader community services and natural supports;
 - enables people with disabilities, their families and carers to enter and re-enter at any point;
 - encompasses 'Service Guides' to actively engage with people with disabilities and their families and carers and assist them to navigate the system; and
 - encompasses interim support options when the needed service is not available.
5. Develop and implement an 'information hub' to support the access framework.
6. Establish a sector-wide client information system.
7. As part of the client information system, develop and trial the use of a disability client 'passport' for use across the specialised disability service sector.

4. Establishing priorities and making decisions

The think tank considered that there are six broad categories of decision making in the disability service system: (1) the strategic level; (2) interpretation of Government policy; (3) funding priorities across the service system; (4) determining service funding levels; (5) determining what services are provided; (6) determining which individuals receive funding.

A decision-making framework is required with clear guidelines and processes for each area of decision-making. The agreed roles and responsibilities of key players in all areas of decision-making need to be articulated in the framework and understood by all the key participants.

At the broad strategic level

Recognising that the ACT Government has responsibility for setting the broad policy direction, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) and Disability ACT have primary roles in establishing priorities and making decisions at the broad strategic level.

The Strategic Oversight Group should have a role in advising the Chief Executive DHCS on establishing priorities.

Demographic data and consolidated information on unmet need should be major determinants of the advice on strategic directions provided to the ACT Government, DHCS and Disability ACT.

Community service providers have a key role in providing information on which policy and planning decisions are made, including information on unmet need. This includes through formalised arrangements such as Service Funding Agreements.

Interpreting government policy and funding priorities across the system

At all levels, decision-making processes including the roles and responsibilities of key players should to be transparent and defensible.

Building on the existing Disability ACT funding model, a process should be articulated to consolidate information on all clients, particularly those with high and complex needs, to determine the quantum of funds required to meet this demand now and in the future. (In relation to people with high and complex needs, this would also aim to ensure that all have access to consideration for funding if they wish).

A consultative process should be established to provide input to funding and policy priorities arising from Government policy and to communicate decisions to the sector about funding priorities.

The Department and Disability ACT have the primary role in interpreting Government policy. Disability ACT and the Strategic Oversight Group have key roles in advising the Chief Executive DHCS on funding priorities across the system.

As mentioned above, community service providers, people with disabilities and their families have key roles in providing information to the decision-making process,

including information on unmet demand through the current Disability ACT Register of Interest.

Determining which services are funded

Taking note of the evidence-based and consultative processes described above, the ACT Government, through its budgeting process, makes decisions about service funding levels.

Determining which services are provided

At the macro level, disability service provision is determined by the Government's broad strategic, budgeting and planning processes. The Department and Disability ACT make the decisions about which services are funded and the procurement process. It was suggested through the consultations that the current procurement framework for disability services with its transactional focus is not as flexible as it might be in achieving person-centred services and that outcomes-based funding, contracting and reporting should be introduced.

At the micro level, service providers determine which services they provide within their contractual commitments to meet the required outcomes.

Individual funding decisions

The think tank did not generally support the suggestion that a stakeholder panel should make decisions about individual funding. This was largely due to privacy issues, the difficulties for stakeholders in maintaining objectivity and the potential for weakening accountability for the decisions taken. However it could be considered if the issues of responsibility and accountability were clearly dealt with.

Rather, the decision-making body for individual funding should be composed of public service members, but not necessarily limited to Disability ACT, ie. including relevant officers from housing, health and education etc. There could be some consideration of external oversight.

Once individual funding decisions are made, all data on unmet need identified by the funding process should be consolidated and recorded in the information hub for input to service planning.

The process should link with the access framework so that people who are unsuccessful in obtaining funding are offered information and/or support to consider other options for meeting their needs.

Recommendations:

8. Establish a decision-making framework for the disability service delivery system that clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the key participants.
9. Establish a consultative process for the disability service sector to provide input into funding and policy priorities.

5. Service relationships

This refers to the relationship between service providers and the government, which should be based on mutual obligation and mutual respect. Relationships will be strengthened if roles are clear, the fundamentals are well managed and a healthy two-way information flow is maintained.

Roles of government and the community sectors

Future planning needs to be based on the following assumptions about respective roles:

Government and community service providers have a shared role in delivering services to people with disabilities including the development of service options, dissemination of information and broad community awareness raising and inclusion.

Government and community service providers should have interrelated roles with the strengths of each determining the focus of those roles.

Community service providers have strengths in the delivery of services including accommodation, community access, information, advocacy, supported referral and coordination, respite, case management, transition planning, community development, social research and therapy. They also have strengths in collecting data in their individual services and the provision of policy advice including on funding service priorities.

Government strengths include accommodation support, respite and therapy services, policy development and implementation, quality assurance and continuous improvement, cross sector data collection and analysis, planning, service funding management, and management of complex coordination responses (emergency and intensive treatment and support) including mobilisation of whole of government support for people with extraordinary needs.

Managing the fundamentals

Contract management arrangements between Government and community service providers should be based on building relationships (as set out in *The Social Compact*) and have a quality improvement rather than a transactional focus.

Government ‘contract managers’ should be well informed about the services for which they are responsible. An information management system is needed in Disability ACT so that the necessary information is updated and readily available.

Outcome-based funding and accountability provisions should be introduced to service contracts to encourage flexibility and person-centred service delivery and ensure that services funded are provided.

Practical quality processes should be adopted across the sector including Government service providers.

The rationale and use of reports and data collection should be clearly understood across the disability service sector.

Services should clearly understand the decision-making framework and their role in it (see Chapter 4).

Two-way information flow

Communication across the sector needs to be improved. A communication strategy, which supports regular information flow to and from Government is required. It could include, for example:

- establishment of quarterly implementation update meetings for the sector;
- development of an information and updates page for disability service providers on the information hub;
- use of reference groups to progress particular issues (eg the events reference group provides a model);
- building awareness and relationship with the broader ACT community sector;
- regular communication with the service sector that builds commitment; and
- a strong leadership role for the Strategic Oversight Group.

Recommendations:

10. Introduce outcome-based funding, contracting and reporting in the disability service sector.

11. Develop and implement a communication strategy for engagement both across the disability service sector and with the general community that includes:

- effective communication on policy and planning with people with disabilities and families;
- building strong and active relationships with disability service providers based on mutual respect and trust;
- raising awareness and building strong and active relationships with the ACT community (including business, arts and sport).

6. Sector development

Defining what is meant by the disability service sector is the first step. The think tank determined that the service sector is made up of a disability specific sector that comprises some 40 organisations that specialise in providing services for people with disabilities. It links with the broader sector which comprises related areas such as health, education, therapy, home and community care services and the broader community such as business, arts, recreation and sports.

The think tank considered a number of issues in relation to the disability specific service sector.

An ACT disability service sector Industry Plan should be developed, funded and implemented.

Prior to developing the Plan, it will be necessary to determine what the ACT disability service delivery sector should look like. For example some people may believe that the sector is currently too fragmented and when overlap occurs there is less capacity to cover a range of different service options. Others see diversity of services as a strength with service overlaps providing choice. An Industry Plan should be based on a considered and agreed position as articulated in a policy framework rather than an *ad hoc* approach or history.

Work already undertaken on the ACT workforce development strategy should link with the Industry Plan. Other preparatory work will include identifying:

- the current capacity and capability of the sector;
- where centres of excellence and areas of expertise currently exist across the sector;
- which areas require strengthening in both the Government and community parts of the sector;
- short and longer term priorities for development.

Recommendations:

12. Develop an Industry Plan for the disability service delivery sector that addresses at a minimum:

- service standards;
- relationships and community building;
- sustainability including financial certainty, training and development;
- flexibility and innovation.

Attachment 1

Figure 1 Access Framework

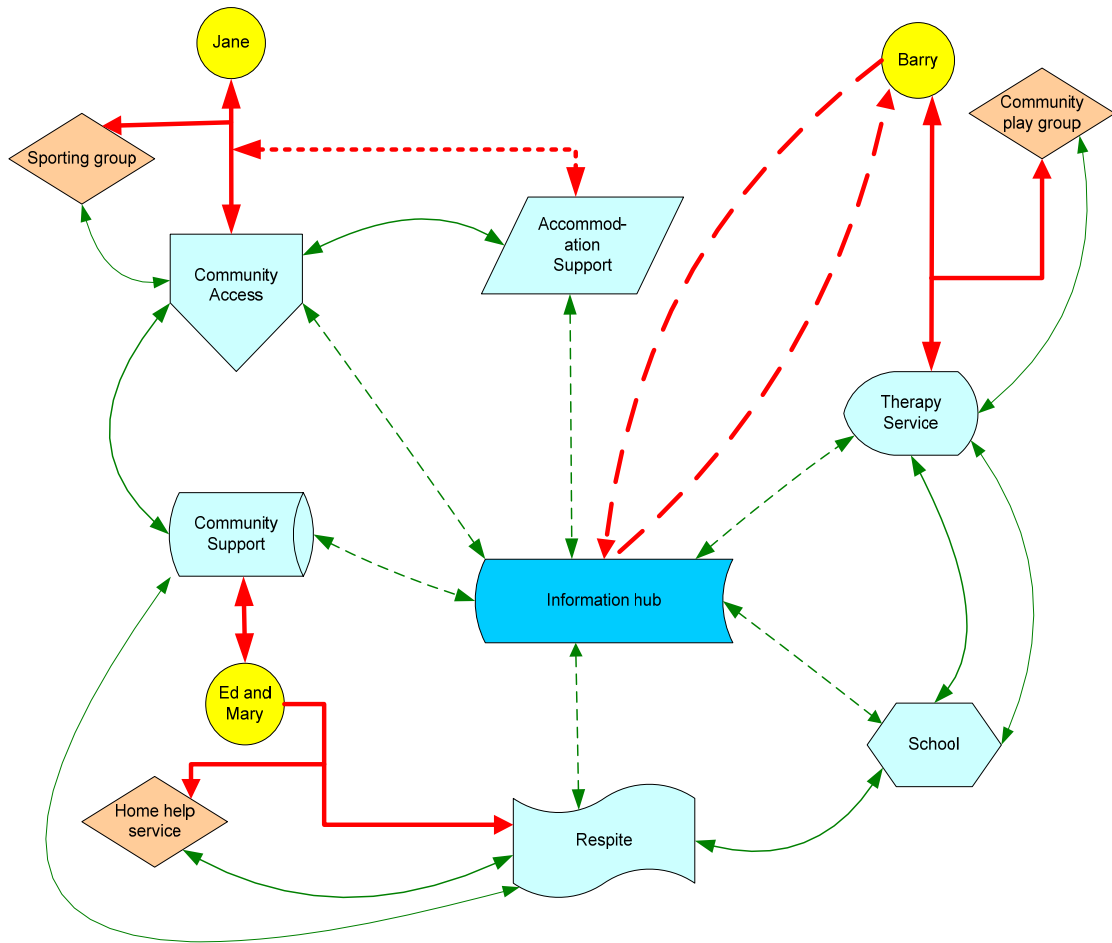
Scenarios:

Jane is concerned about accommodation options for her son Craig and talks about it with his community access service. This service works with the family to understand their needs. The access service consults with an appropriate accommodation support service, but it has no capacity at present. The access service maintains contact with Jane working with her to look at other ways of supporting her and her family in the interim, including facilitating Craig's access to a sporting group in the community.

Barry seeks information directly from the on-line information hub about the speech therapy needs of his daughter who has a disability. He decides to contact the therapy service. As part of its response, the service recommends that his daughter would benefit from attending play group at the local family centre.

Ed and Mary have two sons with disabilities and they need access to respite. In addition to referring them to the respite service, their community support service also recommends that they seek some assistance from a home help service.

With their permission, relevant client information from all is entered into the information hub to ensure that they do not have to tell the basic details of their story again and that data on services and unmet need is fed into the broader system.



- Relationship, collaboration, information flow and referral patterns between services
- - - → Data and information flow between services and information hub
- Data and information flow between client and information hub
- Contact between client and service provider
- - - → Waiting on availability of service

