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**Supporting your consumer representative(s)**

**This information is specific to committee type work; however, it can apply to any engagement method you are using to partner with consumers. For example, this information is relevant to working groups, reference groups or a one-off focus group.**

**Before the meeting**

* The consumer representative is a member of your consumer activity now. It’s important to communicate directly with them (not through Health Consumers Queensland).
* Email the consumer representative(s) with a copy of the Terms of Reference for the committee they are sitting on, previous minutes, meeting dates for the year and any background reading for the next meeting. Ask the consumer representative(s) how they would like to receive minutes/background reading (by email or by hard copy in the post).
* Please provide lists of committee members with full details of their positions and not use

acronyms. If using acronyms in meeting minutes or documentation, please provide a

glossary of terms for the consumers so they are able to keep up with the conversation and

not have to stop to ask what the acronym relates to.

* Provide your consumer(s) with information on the proposed meeting timeline, length of

meetings and completion date for the project so they can be prepared.

* Check the consumer(s) is able to access the online meeting technology. For example, if using

Teams instead of Zoom. Set up a meeting prior to the first meeting and run through any tech issues and support.

* It would be valuable to provide a pre-briefing to the consumer, so they are able to quickly

participate in the meeting. Arrange a meeting with the consumer prior to the first meeting

(even if it is 30 minutes before their first meeting).

* Discuss the logistics of any forms, information you need from them including bank details, the process for remuneration and parking/travel.
* Arrange a meeting with the Chairs of the committee prior to the consumer representatives’ first meeting (even if it is 30 minutes before their first meeting).
* Identify a ‘go to’ person who can de-brief with the consumer representative following meetings, to clarify any terms or issues or the way that information is presented to the committee, hear and provide feedback to the consumer representative, and help trouble-shoot any difficulties they may be having (including administrative problems such as being paid, getting car parking sorted etc).

**During the meeting**

* Ensure the Chair warmly welcomes them to the first meeting, introduces the consumer representatives to all the committee members and vice versa.
* Demonstrate the value of consumer perspective to the committee, and that the Chair and other committee members understand the need for consumer representation.
* Let them know you will value their contributions that will serve to protect and raise the interests of health consumers, carers and their families. They may be sitting on a working group with mostly people with degrees, whereas the consumer is solely representing the views/experiences/lived experiences of those who use the health care system. You value and welcome that consumer perspective. You encourage them to speak up and promote the needs and preferences of consumers and their families.
* Ask the working group members to have consideration for the consumer and limit jargon and use of acronyms and explain in full what they are talking about so the consumer can fully participate in the conversations.

**After the meeting**

* Call the consumer and de-brief about the meeting.  Responding to any immediate needs helps to build trust and understanding between the consumer and staff/other committee members.
* At the second meeting, if the consumer representative is comfortable, to feedback to the group how they feel about their involvement and how it felt for them. Did they feel involved/not involved, connected/disconnected, lost/informed?

**Resources**

Health Consumers Queensland provides training and resources to staff and consumers to enable stronger consumer partnerships. You can sign up to our weekly eAlert to keep updated and go to our website to find resources: [www.hcq.org.au](http://www.hcq.org.au)

 