

Chapter 1

Quality human service



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Helen's story

Helen complained that her 20 year old son Peter was not able to access respite care when the family was experiencing a crisis.

The DSC Resolutions Officer found that there was a history of tension and disrupted communication between the parent and the disability service. Peter had not accessed respite for more than a year due to the communication issues. The family were increasingly stressed and angry about asking for assistance. Service provider staff reported feeling intimidated and frustrated as they were not able to get cooperation from the family. They regarded Helen as difficult and threatening.

In dealing with the complaint, the DSC Resolutions Officer designed a process to have the two sides discuss the issues. Beyond the communication issues, the parties needed to agree upon a process for assessment for the purpose of determining respite needs. It was discovered that emergency respite in the area was operating as planned respite. This raised systemic and resource issues. The family was subsequently provided with respite and the process for accessing it was more fully explained.

The provision of good quality human service is based on a sound and trusting relationship that develops with people using the service, through an ongoing process of effective communication. This is important to ensure the service continues to appropriately meet people's needs. Good service delivery is about enabling people with a disability to say what is working and not working for them so that actions can then be taken to build on what is working and address what is not working.

This is based on an expectation that people with a disability have the right to expect quality services and these services have an important role to play in improving the quality of life of people with a disability. Many people with a disability and their families are increasingly aware of their right to receive quality services. However, this has not always been the expectation.



When people not used to speaking out are heard by people not used to listening then real change can be made.

John O'Brien (2007)

1.1. Department of Human Services Standards 2011

The Department of Human Services Standards (DHS Standards) comprises of four service quality standards:

- Empowerment
- Access and engagement
- Wellbeing
- Participation



Thought

In addressing these areas it is important that your organisation records what you are learning in terms of both what is working and what is not working, from the perspective of the person with a disability.

The importance of complaints to the provision of quality services is identified in the DHS Standards, which seeks to promote a culture of quality and

continuous improvement across the disability sector. Standard 2 – Access and Empowerment requires that “the quality system in place includes regular review and evaluation of systems and process and feedback mechanisms to support continuous quality improvement.”

The DHS Standards also seek to highlight the importance of people knowing how to exercise their rights. The monitoring and evaluation of Standard 1 – Empowerment includes:

- There are processes in place and evidence to demonstrate that people who use the service know how to exercise their rights and responsibilities
- Evidence of people exercising their rights and responsibilities, such as a complaints register.

Department of Human Services Standards 2011.

The DHS Standards evidence guide has been developed to help DHS and organisations funded by DHS to prepare for and participate in internal and external reviews against the DHS standards.

The evidence guide outlines documented approaches to each of the four standards including:

- Giving people information in an accessible format, that facilitates their understanding of feedback processes and processes for complaints.
- Gathering feedback
- Managing complaints and feedback.



This is to ensure that:

- People understand their rights in relation to complaints
- The complaints and feedback processes can be easily accessed by all people
- People are satisfied with the management of complaints and feedback.

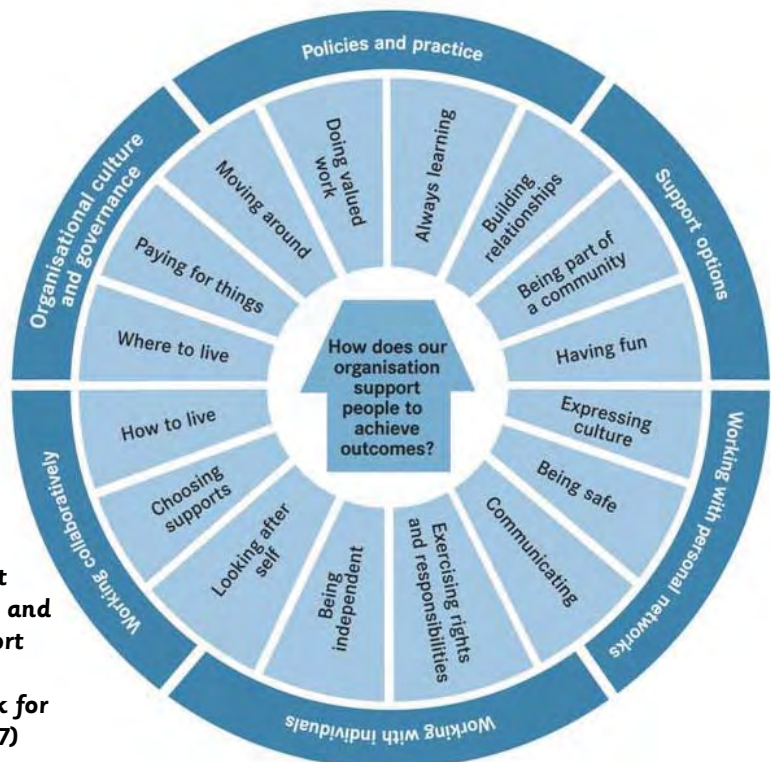


Figure 1: Structures and processes that lead to good practices, better services and desired outcomes for individual support users (Dept. of Human Services Understanding the Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria, 2007b: 7)