



Welcome to the Inaugural Service User Engagement (SUE) newsletter – “Engage”!

Service User Engagement (SUE) is vital. It is where the marginalised service user is respected, and their position is revered. SUE doesn't just permit but sanctions the service user voice within the service provision space. With the incredible support of WCS services and their service users, we are developing flexible and meaningful ways to implement and measure the impact of the fundamental goal of SUE, that is to give a voice to service users, and to have that voice be heard. The important message we have received is that service users want their service provision to be coproduced.

The SUE project is heading off full steam ahead for 2024! We will continue to provide advocacy and support, in any way we can, to embed SUE at WCS. To let everyone know how we are going, SUE will disseminate a quarterly newsletter. This the first one!



Where we are at

Service User Engagement is well into its implementation stage, with all service areas delivering it in their own way. SUE needs to be flexible in its approach to suit the diverse needs of our service users. Here, the service areas give feedback on their stories.

Housing and Homelessness (Supportive Tenancy Service (STS))

The STS team influences, empowers, and represents people who are looking for accommodation.

STS received various kinds of referrals in 2023 from OneLink, as well as other organisations and services in Canberra. Considering SUE, STS case managers provide support according to service user needs, and partner and co-design programs as per service user's requirements. In 2023, we worked on developing a new WCS Housing and Homelessness service user feedback Register for SUE. Through SUE, we have been able to co-design and co-produce service provision for our service users, resulting in a richer experience for service users, and them being more engaged. For example, consider the experience of Jelly, a STS service user. Jelly contacted Housing and Homelessness to get tenancy support. Her husband had left her with their kids, and she had received a notice to vacate. Jelly was escaping domestic violence and had no income. STS worked very closely with Jelly to plan what support could be offered. Jelly's priority was to get some income sorted so she could look for another rental and afford the rent. Jelly's engagement with her STS case manager, co-designing her needs, made it easier for Jelly to achieve her goals.

Children's Services

The Children's Services Service User Engagement Reference Group (SUERG) is looking forward to proceeding in 2024 in full swing! The Group's first meeting for the year was scheduled for 5th of February 2024.

Children's Services SUE Register members completed a survey in November 2023. The survey responses helped us to reflect on the work we have done, and what we can do moving forward. The survey showed that its

completers felt safe to freely give their points of view about improving and bringing changes to Children's Services. What was very pleasing was that all survey participants felt that SUE is important, and that it has given them the ability to have their voice heard in shaping Children's Services service provision. They agreed that Children's Services were a community asset. Children's Services will continue to communicate well with its service users, using various ways of communication, such as newsletters and social media updates. Children's Services SUE priorities for this year include continuing to engage with children and families.

Children, Youth and Family Services

Family Case Management (FCM) is almost ready to launch an expression of interest to engage service users to join its SUE Register and have a say about how the program meets their needs.

Both current and former service users will then be invited to complete an initial survey before developing more targeted areas for understanding. It is anticipated that Youth Services will take a similar structure, but this will be adapted to ensure appropriate engagement strategies for young people to provide their input. One of the ways we have engaged with service users included hosting a family fun day at the Woden Youth Centre on 18 January 2024 to allow families to have some fun, interact with other families and to engage with staff. This was a successful event with 9 families (11 adults and 15 children aged 0-11). Despite the diversity in culture, language, and ability everyone enjoyed the activities and connection with community. Events like this will create additional opportunities to explore the needs of FCM service users.

Mental Health

The Mental Health SUE team have come far.

The Mental Health SUE team met for their first Reference Group in October 2023 with 3 participants across TRec, Step Up Step Down (SUSD), and New Path programs.

During the first meeting, the Group identified that there are challenges with our Mental Health services communicating with each other when transferring participants between internal programs. Discussed was the need to co-design an handover document, with the partnership of the SUE Reference Group and WCS Mental Health teams, to improve the process of handing a participant's information over to a new key (support) worker. This co-designing will begin in February 2024, when the Mental Health SUE team will run its second Reference Group meeting. The team have arranged for a guest from the ACT Health Link team, who manages referral pathways for our Mental Health programs, to come and receive feedback from our SUE participants.

NDIS

NDIS was one of the pioneering service areas for SUE. NDIS began its SUE journey creating a focus/Reference Group with a total of four service users.

We also have recruited for a NDIS SUE Register. The aim is to provide an opportunity for those involved in NDIS support coordination to have their voice heard. So far, the Reference Group have identified areas where they feel their service could be improved. These include making sure that any feedback given is addressed and that outcomes from this process are fed back to the original person. Also, that staff are properly trained in their roles, for example in trauma informed care.

Aged Care

The Aged Care Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) has grown its membership over 2023 and now has 6 representatives who between them access a range of WCS Aged Care Services.

Over the past year, the CAG has given feedback on client information and documentation outlining the minimum standard guidelines for domestic assistance. As well, the Group have helped improve the quality of our office communication channels, transport changes, marketing opportunities and audit response. Continuity of care is a real challenge for Aged Care and the Group have endeavoured to understand the scope and challenges of the program and how we get the messaging out to clients that the staff are there to work with the clients to aid independence. One of our ongoing challenges and discussions has been how to get feedback and suggestions from a broader client group. To this end the CAG has put a lot of time and effort into creating a designated mailbox which was advertised through the Seniors Newsletter.

The Big Issue

The Big Issue (TBI) held its first SUE Reference Group meeting towards the end of 2023.

The vendors gave some great feedback about support they would like while selling, and opportunities they would like to have to develop their skills. Two workshops were organised on budgeting, resume writing and career advice. TBI is partnering with Care Financial and MAS for these workshops. Our move to the Woden Community Hub has made us more accessible for vendors and we are seeing increased engagement as a result. We will continue to review and implement recommendations from vendors over the coming year.

Profiles - Profile of SUAC

In each edition, we will give you a profile on either a service user, a SUE Group, or a SUE champion. For this edition, we will be featuring the Service User Advisory Committee (SUAC).



Photo of the original SUAC

The SUAC had its inaugural meeting on 11 August 2022. It is made up of service users, support persons and people with lived experience. The committee currently has five members. The SUAC is co-chaired by Jenny Kitchen and Leanne Heald. Its role is to provide guidance and advice to the project. The group brings a lot of combined experience and expertise to the SUE space, and their ongoing commitment is commendable and appreciated.

SUE Christmas party in 2023



Of course, there was a SUE Christmas party in 2023! It was great to celebrate the year with SUE friends

Plans for 2024

In 2024, the SUE project will continue engaging in:

- Project co-planning and co-design with service users.
- Project implementation and co-production.
- Project co-reflections and co-evaluations. We are employing flexible methods of evaluation. Service areas have either set up Reference Groups and/or Registers to identify issues related to SUE. Areas have also used surveys, interviews, and case studies.
- Learning and adapting. The evaluation findings will equip us to review the project strategies and learning and development needs.

The SUE project utilises an important part of quality improvement, change and assessment via a participant action research methodology.

The **Peer Work Framework** is an exciting new project which aims to create a robust WCS peer workforce, where lived experience provides a better service model, based on the values of co-production. Fundamentally, WCS is utilising lived experience to make for better service delivery. It is being piloted in the Mental Health service area.

The SUE Mental Health Reference Group was invited to play an important part in the Peer Work Framework project, making a Peer Work Reference Group. Participants highlighted a need for a peer worker to be separated from the regular support workers, with expectations and boundaries set early on in the relationship between the peer worker and participant. Participants also raised concerns of their impact when they are unwell, working with a peer worker, and discussed appropriate supports in place for peer workers' wellbeing in WCS.

Resources

Here are some examples of great resources:

Co-production

https://cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CMHDARN_-Co-production Kickstarter FINAL-22.4.22.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKATrzUV2YI>

Community Engagement

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/425576/33487.pdf

Mental Health Service User Engagement

[https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/consumer-and-carers/consumer-and-carer-engagement-\(1\)](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/consumer-and-carers/consumer-and-carer-engagement-(1))

The Big Issue – Social Impact Report

<https://thebigissue.org.au/#section-1>

Consumer Engagement in Aged Care – Australian Government – Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/acqsc_consumer_engagement_in_aged_care_-_literature_review.pdf

MORE INFO

More information – contact us

If anyone would like further information on SUE, including how you can use it in your planning and service delivery, or how to engage with your own co-production of your service provision, please feel free to **email Rachael McMahon at rachael.mcmahon@wcs.org.au or engage@wcs.org.au**, or phone Rachael on 0478 658 705.