

# Partnering with consumers & community to improve consumer-centred care

## The Consumer and Community Engagement Model

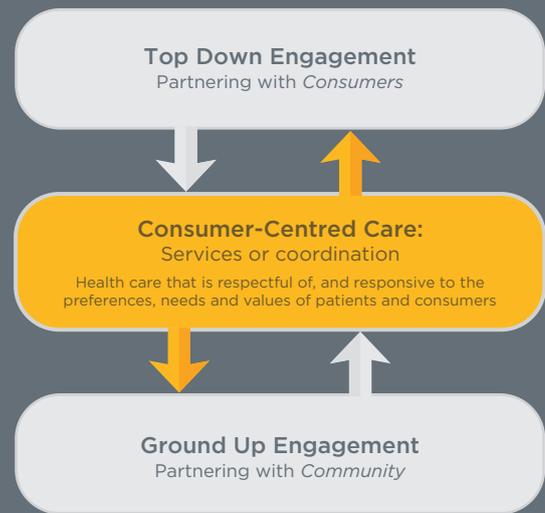
Health consumers, clinicians and health services all want to improve health care, however working together can be complex and challenging. This model of consumer and community engagement identifies and measures how consumer and community engagement contributes to consumer-centred care, so you can get on with implementing effective engagement.

Consumer-centred care is defined by the Australian Commission of Safety and Health Care as health care that is respectful of, and responsive to the preferences, needs and values of patients and consumers. While there are other ethical and strategic reasons for engaging with consumers, improving consumer-centred care remains the chief objective of consumer and community engagement.

Based on current evidence and best practice, the Health Consumers NSW/WentWest Consumer and Community Engagement Model makes clear exactly how engagement activities contribute to the quality improvement of health care.

In particular two distinct types of engagement are described:

- **Top Down Engagement** (Partnering with Consumers) is the planned engagement with consumers that supports the design, delivery and evaluation of health services.
- **Ground Up Engagement** (Partnering with Communities) is broader engagement with communities to explore and to determine with communities how to better meet their diverse health care needs. *(Continued page 4)*



Improving Consumer-Centred Care: Top Down and Ground Up Engagement.

## Partnering with consumers for service evaluation

'Top Down Engagement' with Western Sydney Partners in Recovery



Above: Bronnie Holwerda (L) and Allison Kokany (R) of Western Sydney Partners in Recovery.

The Western Sydney Partners in Recovery (WSPiR) Program aims to support people who have severe and persistent mental illness, many of whom have complex needs. It involves multiple service providers who employ support facilitators to work closely with the individual, their carers and families in order to achieve their recovery goals.

Top Down Engagement is about working with service users to improve consumer-centred care. Allison Kokany, a Consumer Consultant with WSPiR lead agency WentWest has been conducting an evaluation of the service with current and past clients, with the results leading to improvements in care.

A client survey was developed with The University of Sydney (a WSPiR consortium partner), with input from the WSPiR Consumer and Carer Forum. The survey collects de-identified quantitative and qualitative data about the clients' outcomes and experience of the program, including:

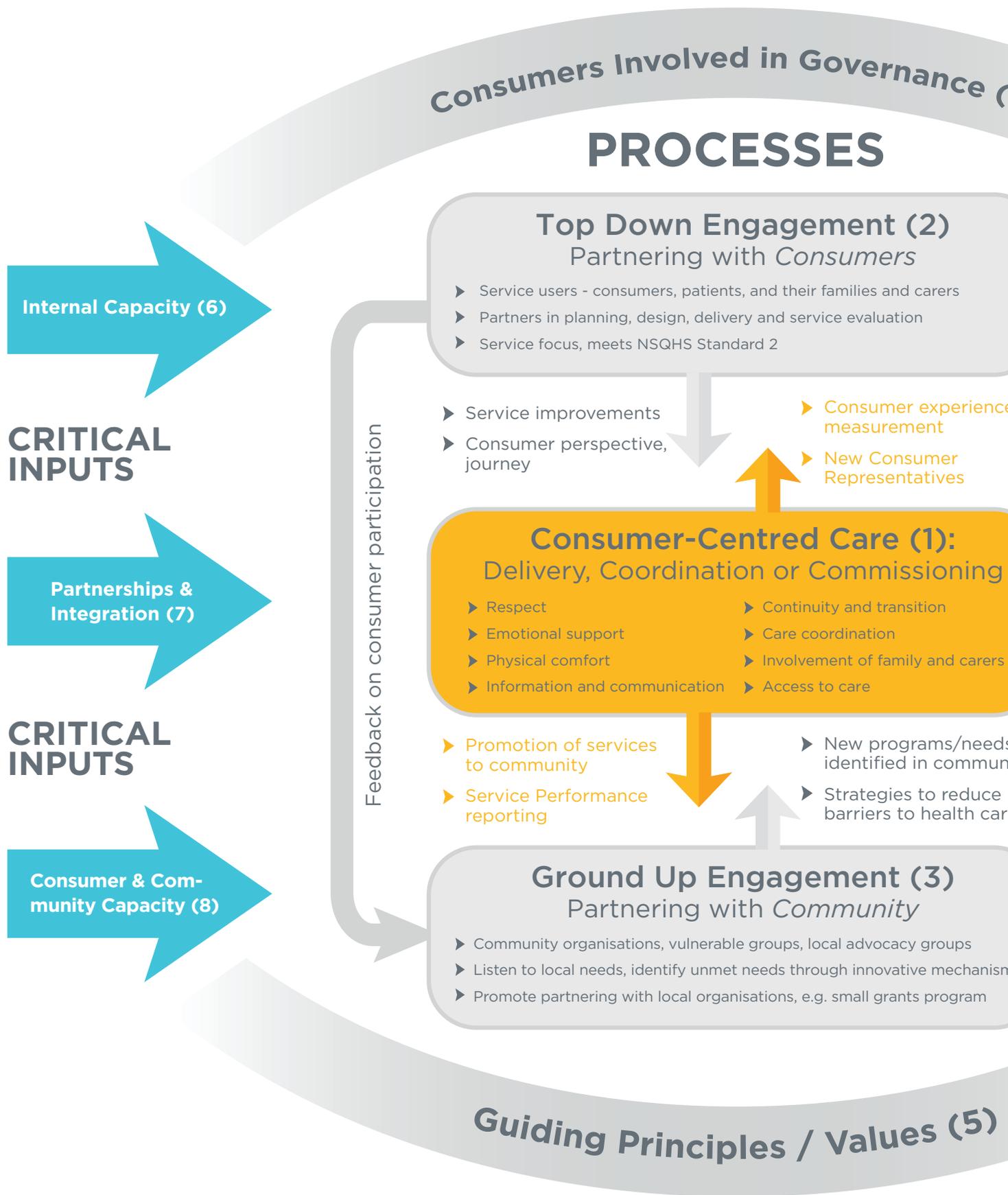
- how they were treated and if they felt listened to
- any improvements experienced in their lives
- if they would recommend the service to other consumers with similar needs.

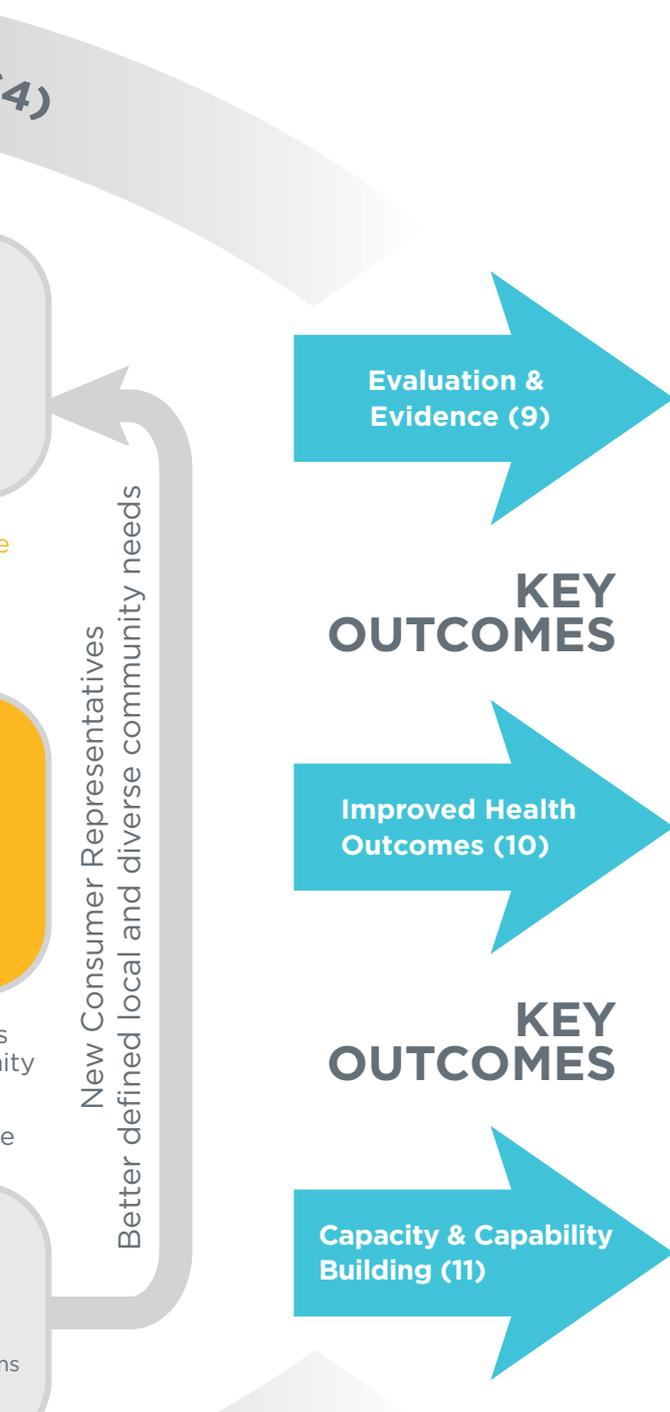
After an initial postal survey resulted in a low response rate (25%) Bronnie Holwerda (a consumer herself) was hired to conduct the survey by phone. This significantly increased the response rate with nearly all clients participating.

WSPiR will use this data to present program outcomes to their funding body as well as for service improvement across the consortium. However Bronnie and Allison make sure that if a client identifies a service problem during the process, it is resolved quickly for that client, demonstrating the absolute commitment that WSPiR has to consumer-centred care.

*WSPiR is a Commonwealth funded initiative led by WentWest, working in partnership with a consortium of service providers: Aftercare, Care Connect, WISE Employment, Uniting Care Mental Health, Mission Australia and RichmondPRA.*

# The Health Consumers NSW/ WentWest Consumer and Community Engagement Model





## KEY

- 1 **Consumer-Centred Care**  
Improving the experience and outcomes of consumer-centred care is central to engagement. It applies to service delivery, coordination and commissioning.
- 2 **Top Down Engagement – Partnering with Consumers** is planned engagement with consumers that supports the design, delivery and evaluation of health services provided or coordinated by the organisation.
- 3 **Ground Up Engagement – Partnering with Community** is broader engagement with communities to explore, understand and determine together how to better meet diverse health care needs.
- 4 **Consumers Involved in Governance**  
Involving consumers in clearly defined governance roles ensures that the consumer perspective is always considered in decision making and engagement is a priority.
- 5 **Guiding Principles / Values** provide a frame of reference for the way in which consumers and health services (and their staff and management) will engage with each other.
- 6 **Internal Capacity** is a major factor in engagement success. It includes governance and accountability, resources such as a 'champion' and a facilitator, plus training for staff.
- 7 **Partnerships & Integration**  
Improving the experience and outcomes for consumers requires working across services and integrating care with partners.
- 8 **Consumer & Community Capacity** to engage is critical. Consumers need resources, training and support. Communities can be supported to increase their capacity to engage.
- 9 **Evaluation & Evidence** includes monitoring and improving processes, evaluating engagement and outcomes, and contributing to the small but growing body of evidence.
- 10 **Improved Health Outcomes** includes improved experience and health outcomes for consumers, and better community outcomes through new services or improved access to care.
- 11 **Capacity & Capability Building**  
With engagement experience, staff and consumers grow in capability, while organisations and communities increase their capacity to engage.

**Health Consumers** are people who use, have used, or are potential users, of health services – including their family and carers.

**Engagement** describes a range of activities that involve consumers or communities participating in health service decision-making, policy development, service design, delivery and evaluation.

## Partnering with community

### 'Ground Up Engagement' with Thrive@5 in Doonside

'Thrive@5 in Doonside' is a whole of community program led by WentWest, that has been developed to improve the quality of life of children (from birth to five years old) and their families in the suburb of Doonside in Sydney's western suburbs.

Demonstrating Ground Up Engagement, the Thrive@5 early intervention program works in collaboration with parents, community members and local service providers to reduce barriers to services and to identify fun ways of helping families and young children to develop their skills in preparation for school. It specifically aims to partner with the community to improve health through achieving improved Australian Early Development Census results (AEDC is a measure of 'readiness for school').

During 2014 Thrive@5 interviewed community members about the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of life in Doonside for young children and their families in order to inform program development. As well as sharing what they thought was or wasn't working well in Doonside, parents were invited to participate in the Local Community Partnership Group.

One of the most popular programs rolled out in 2014 by Thrive@5 was *Mini Tots Soccer* (for children 3-5 years). Thirty children and their parents took part in an eight-week program of play and social interaction, building on motor and social skills. This included *Baby Rhyme Time* - a chance to enjoy language and rhyme through reading with their parents.

*Thrive@5 is jointly funded by WentWest and Western Sydney Local Health District, and works with services across the area. It uses the 'Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework' (Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health).*

**Right:** Father and daughter enjoying Baby Rhyme Time, Thrive@5 program, 2014.



## Continued from page 1

**Top Down Engagement** helps organisations deal with known health needs and existing services and often involves service users in activities such as co-design or service evaluation. Top down engagement contributes to improving consumer-centred care by recommending improvements to services and providing a better understanding of the consumer journey.

Through partnering with community organisations or engaging widely with diverse groups, **Ground Up Engagement** identifies gaps in services, access issues and other unmet needs. These partnerships also allow communities to help identify strategies to reduce barriers to their health care, and together with the identified gaps can help to improve consumer-centred care (and ultimately the health of the community).

Implementing effective consumer and community engagement is a complex task for any organisation and we have reviewed best practice to identify the critical inputs as well as the key outcomes. These are underpinned by **Involving Consumers in Governance** roles and structures and operating under agreed **Guiding Principles or Values** (see inside for more detail).

### CRITICAL INPUTS

- Internal Capacity
- Partnerships & Integration
- Consumer & Community Capacity

### KEY OUTCOMES

- Evaluation & Evidence
- Improved Health Outcomes
- Capacity / Capability Building

*References: Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, "Patient-centred care: Improving quality and safety through partnerships with patients and consumers", ACSQHCC, Sydney, 2011.*

### Evidence-based strategies for best practice consumer and community engagement

- 1 Ensure consumer engagement is a priority.
- 2 Address organisational facilitators.
- 3 Actively include disadvantaged/marginalised groups.
- 4 Build the capacity of consumers to engage.
- 5 Build the capacity of staff to support engagement.
- 6 Focus on outcomes and evaluation.

*Joyner, S. (2015) Consumer and Community Engagement Model: An outcome of the WentWest-Health Consumers NSW Joint Consumer Engagement Project. Sydney: WentWest-HCNSW*