

Video transcript

Many people use health and community services that are delivered in the home or in the community, but

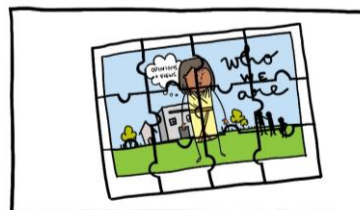
- Why are their experiences of these services different?
- What is it that attracts us to one service provider over another / and
- How can providers help people to get the most out of the services they use?

All services aim to be welcoming and create environments that make people feel comfortable and safe. This is important for services delivered in the home or the community. As service providers, staff or volunteers we can unintentionally create barriers for people, reinforcing their concerns that the service or staff maybe unwelcoming, unsafe or unable to help.

To overcome these barriers we need to “know our community”. This means, understanding the diversity of the people who live in the local area, which parts of the community aren't accessing services and why. We need to develop ways to connect with local people and learn about what is important to them and then respond appropriately.

When people use our services we need to work with them, their families and carers to help them do as much as they can for themselves and to maintain their quality of life. We can do this through a model that includes:

- Assessment
- Planning, and
- Service Delivery



Assessment – a conversation that helps us to get to know the person, including their strengths and what motivates them. Planning – that is inclusive of the person (their family and carers) and is based on what is important to the person now and into the future and Service delivery – that is flexible and responsive to the individual needs of the person and includes regularly ‘checking in’ to find out how things are going

While it is important that the quality of support we offer through assessment, planning and service delivery is consistent for everyone, we must still be focused on providing a service that is individual and flexible to suit each person.

People are experts in their own lives and are therefore best placed to be involved in, and plan their own futures. As service providers it is our role to listen and learn, focusing on what is important to someone now and for the future. If we look at the whole person rather than viewing them as a series of needs we can provide services that enable a person's sense of purpose and confidence - through meaningful social participation, connectedness and life enjoyment.

Part of looking at the whole person is understanding their diversity. We are all unique, shaped by a variety of areas:

- personal characteristics – the things that are innate to who we are including our age, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, ethnicity and many more
- experiences - our personal story and situations such as our financial or living arrangements and how socially connected we are
- values and beliefs – our opinions and views potentially informed by religion or faith, political ideology or our personal experiences.

We are all made up of many diversity pieces that connect together to create a picture of who we are. The value or significance of each diversity piece will vary from person to person.

For example:

Gender identity and gender expression may rate highly for John a trans man, but be less important for someone else. These diversity pieces are not the only things important to John. If we ignore part of someone's diversity or only focus on one or two diversity pieces we will be overlooking their other characteristics and what else is important to them.

Jenny is an older person who enjoys catching up with friends in the local walking group, is a long term member of a senior's choir and is a volunteer tutor at the neighbourhood house. While Jenny's physical and cognitive capabilities are similar to many 20 year-olds some of her friends have experienced significant declines in physical and cognitive capabilities at a much younger age. There is no typical older person. As service providers we need to be responsive and create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed. This means going beyond tolerating people's difference and truly respecting, celebrating and embracing them for who they are.

Diversity pieces shouldn't just be looked at individually, multiple pieces may connect to tell you something about a person and what is important to them. Mai-Lee was born outside of Australia, she speaks little English, has no family, but enjoys being active. To her it is important to remain active and form social connections with people who speak the same language and share a similar culture. However, Kimiko who appears to be in the same situation as Mai-Lee is interested in improving her language and communication skills so she can form social connections with people who have other diversity pieces in common, such as family status, religion, age or sexual orientation.

To see the entire person we need to connect the pieces they have shared with us, being sure that we never make assumptions about them, their diversity or their history, as no two people are the same.

Helping people maintain their independence and live the best life they can requires us to put the person at the centre of their own care. Mai-Lee and Kimiko's journeys will be different, based on their diverse characteristics, preferences and strengths but we can help by really getting to know them as a person, and understanding what is important to them, where they are now, and where they want to be in the future. We need to support them to be an active participant in all aspects of their own care, enabling them to have control and make decisions about their care. Assisting them to decide on **their** goals and make a plan for **their** future, including what actions need to be taken to achieve their best possible outcome. Our services need to be adaptable to meet their own unique capabilities and strengths, but also be responsive to their changing needs and circumstance. The final way we can support Kimiko and Mai-Lee is by creating an environment where they, the people important to them and others involved in their care, work together to support their goals.

People's journey through health and community services will differ. Individual experiences and preferences will influence the paths they take. As service providers, staff or volunteers we can support people to retain or regain their functional, emotional and social independence by

- removing the barriers they face when trying to access services,
- understanding their diversity, interests and needs; and
- delivering appropriately tailored long or short term services