

HEALTH CONSUMER COUNCIL

Meeting – 12 May 2021

Workshop 1 Summary

CREATING A SYSTEM OF CONSUMER VOICE BACKGROUND

The recently announced changes to the health system will impact on the Bay of Plenty Health Consumer Council (the Council) and other consumer bodies within the Bay of Plenty. In light of this, the Council held a workshop on 12 May 2021 to explore the future for consumer/community voice within the local health system.

Consumer and community engagement is a key part of the Bay of Plenty health system. There are a number of mechanisms currently in place to bring a consumer voice to the system, these include Te Amorangi Kāhui Kaumatua, the Health Consumer Council, Tauranga Health Liaison Group and the mental health consumer group. Other mechanisms for consumer feedback include complaints and direct feedback to staff, although it is not clear how these feed into strategic change.

THE PURPOSE OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

The Council identified five key purposes for consumer and community engagement: (1) Identifying Gaps, (2) Empowering communities, (3) Providing advocacy, (4) Sharing Power, and (5) Ensuring transparency.



Figure 1: The Purpose of Consumer & Community engagement in the Bay of Plenty
Effective community-led healthcare starts in the community. It values the lived experience of consumers in all their diversity. There is a need to effectively map services and gaps, and introduce systems to ensure the right spokespeople/consumer representatives are engaged.

The consumer voice should be able to disrupt the system – to challenge the status quo. There are currently issues of integration, particularly of different models and modalities of healthcare.

The reforms to the health system are of concern to the Council. Particular issues already identified include enabling whānau to travel and provide support for patients (there are already issues with this and a single national system is likely to create further issues) and the lack of services in key localities (e.g, Pāpāmoa, Ōpōtiki).

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE FOR THE FUTURE?

Consumer and community engagement needs to be valued and supported at all levels of the system locally – from planning to operations. This can only be achieved through a partnership model (see Figure 3).

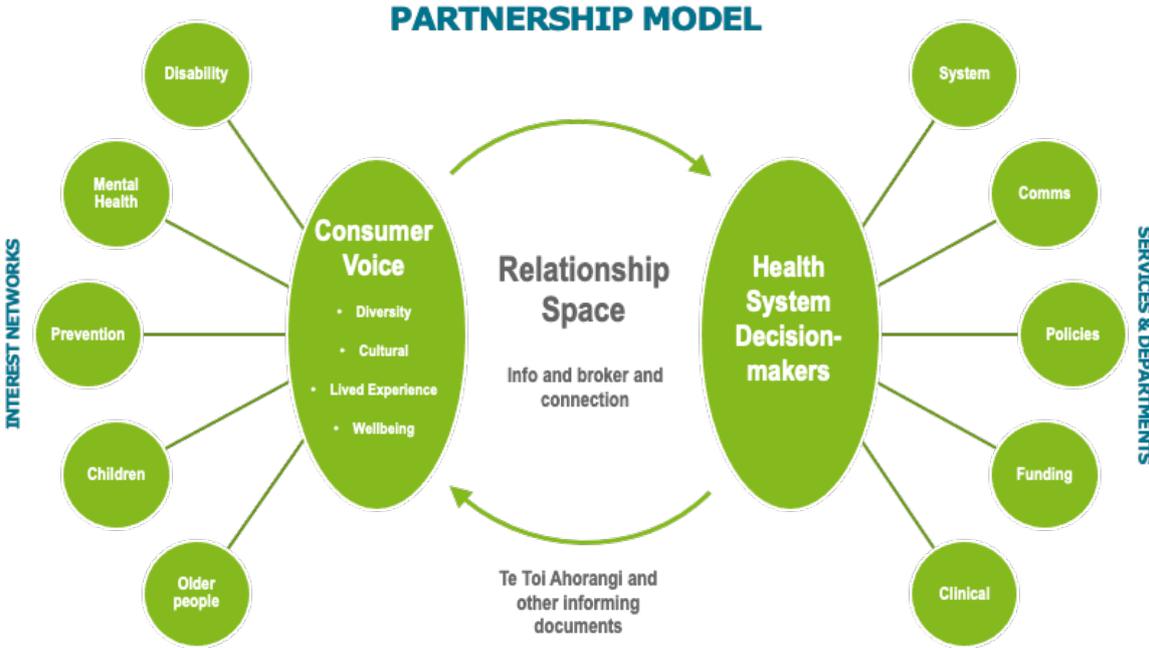


Figure 2 Consumer & System Partnership Model

This partnership model will require:

- » A local leadership body for consumer engagement and involvement. This group should be valued and empowered to be part of the decision-making structures. The group needs to be a mandated part of the system, current arrangements appear to be tokenistic.
- » The local health system to establish useful and productive relationships with consumer organisations – it is not sufficient to expect consumer representatives to hold those relationships.
- » All consumer engagement to be connected and supported. Consumer representatives need to be provided with the opportunity to develop the skills needed to provide strategic and useful input. There needs to be support for contributions from consumer organisations as well as population level input.
- » Departments to establish relationships with the community and their consumers. These should be long-term and strategic, informing future service planning and delivery.
- » Diverse consumer voices, particularly by locality, it is likely that separate forums in the Eastern and Western Bay would enable greater diversity and address the variation in experience.

The Council recommend that an independent consumer leadership group be established – with control over its own budget and resources. This group would provide guidance to the

health system on how to engage with consumers. It would employ people with lived experience of the health system to provide advocacy, support service design and contribute to research projects.

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>Functions</i>				
	Identify gaps	Empower communities	Provide advocacy	Share power	Ensure transparency
Consumer leadership body	X	X	X	X	X
Consumer organisations	X	X	X		X
Department consumer reps	X	X		X	X
Locality consumer groups	X	X		X	X
Public meetings	X	X			X

Figure 3: Functions and Contributors

WHAT WILL THIS ACHIEVE?

Developing an integrated and resourced partnership approach to consumer engagement will:

- » Provide a visible space for the community to engage
- » Increase community trust in the health system
- » Ensure that consumer voices are visible in policy, strategy and funding decisions
- » Embed as consumer-centric view within the health system
- » Create multiple avenues for feedback
- » Ensure greater transparency and accountability
- » Provide for information and data to be shared with the community
- » Demonstrate the health systems commitment to consumer voice.

It is further anticipated that consumer voices can be brought together to influence service delivery across government agencies.