

Lighthouse Disability's

framework for positive living



Introduction

Lighthouse Disability has developed a framework that shapes our work, based on six principles.

We have written this booklet about the framework to provide clients and families with information about how we seek to deliver support for people with complex and diverse disabilities, and the ways in which this sets us apart from other service providers.

The booklet also outlines our expectations of staff, and serves as a guide for the training we need to give them in order for this framework to be effective.

The implementation of this framework is important for our success, and we expect it to evolve as we learn from feedback given by clients, families and staff about how we can improve it.

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Lighthouse Disability acknowledges the contribution made by Penny Lynn (Principal Consultant, Ignis Consulting) to the development of this framework in March 2018.



Lighthouse Disability's framework for positive living

The primary objective of our organisation is to ensure that:

People who live with complex and diverse disabilities will be safe, happy and live life well.

The transition to working under National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) arrangements means that we are leaving a welfare 'headset' to now operate in a competitive market in which clients and families have the funds and the right to choose their service provider.

Therefore, there are two broad 'givens' for the way we operate. We must:

- Provide excellent customer service, and
- Be financially viable.

What makes Lighthouse Disability different?

There are many organisations like ours that provide a 24/7-supported accommodation service. Most of them would no doubt agree with us about what is important.

The aspect of our practice that sets us apart is how we make that happen. In our case, this is guided by a set of key principles relating to desired outcomes for clients, families, staff and the organisation.

These principles have been categorised as:

- Choice and control
- Belonging in the community
- Contributing to everyday life
- A supportive environment
- Engagement with families
- Financial sustainability.

We are committed to maximising the impact of these principles in the everyday lives of clients as well as families, staff and the organisation. They underpin every aspect of our work.

While setting high aims for our practice, we recognise that sometimes our aims may not be fully met. We have therefore established a work culture of always seeking to learn and do better, which means that the quality of our work is constantly improving.

Our understanding of what each of the six key principles means in practice for Lighthouse Disability, clients, families and staff is discussed in the following pages.

Choice and control

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

Choice and control is a basic tenet of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and one that is assumed as a right in most aspects of everyday life.

The amount of choice and control in our lives is variable, being regulated by social expectations, our duties and responsibilities to ourselves and others, and the ebb and flow of our daily lives. The ability to exercise choice and control matters to all of us, and we correspondingly uphold the ability for all clients to do likewise in ways that are meaningful to them in their daily lives.

In some areas of life, clients may have a large amount of choice and control, but not in others. For example, a client with Prader-Willi syndrome might be given broad scope for exercising choice and control when engaging in a favourite pastime or hobby but not with diet. Similarly, a client who has passions for clothes and for exploration may be given the freedom to choose an outfit every day but will have necessary restrictions placed on their freedom to roam.

For those clients who have difficulty communicating their choices, Lighthouse Disability works hard to ascertain the things that give them pleasure and to ensure these individuals are included in the process of making choice and control decisions.

What does this mean to our clients?

We would like all our clients to be able to say:

I make lots of choices every day.

Each client can expect to be asked frequently about his or her preferences in daily life, and to arrive at choices that best suit them.





Our organisational culture is one that seeks to understand the things that matter to our clients, and how and with whom they want to enjoy the world inside and outside of their homes. We use all available means, including assistive communication technologies, to help them make their views known. In some cases, this requires astute observation by staff for responses and behaviours that indicate client preferences.

Each client can expect that they may have less choice and control than others at certain times of day, as is the case for people generally. For example, some people find that getting out the door on time in the morning can be quite challenging.

What does this mean to our families?

Seeing a family member in a settled and happy state is highly appreciated by families. The exercise of choice and control by clients, which facilitates a sense of mastery, contentment and wellbeing, can bring this about.

The process of promoting client choice and control will, for parents, involve regular approaches by staff to discuss the choices offered and acted on.

What does this mean for our staff?

To facilitate choice and control for clients, staff are expected to seek out and understand the preferences of every individual and to act on them.

Staff are trained to understand that we each have personal views on what choice and control means, and that we need to put those aside to help clients exercise choice and control in daily life 'in the Lighthouse Disability way'.

Staff will also understand that asking a person about preferences and wishes may lead to a request that might not be practical or possible for some reason. They will therefore learn to say 'Yes, if' rather than 'No' and negotiate a solution that is acceptable to the client and others.



Belonging in the community

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

Belonging in the community is something that usually happens outside home, and is more about relationships rather than activities.

These relationships may be:

- Formal or informal (e.g. with volunteers compared to friends)
- Fleeting or long lasting (e.g. with retail staff compared to housemates)
- Singular or group (e.g. with an outing companion compared to a football crowd).

For most people, connecting with others outside the home usually takes place in a number of different settings, and may involve interactions with a diverse range of people of different ages, genders, sexualities, ethnicities, interests and beliefs.

We want our clients to similarly have access to a wide range of relationships so that they have a sense of belonging and connection with others outside the home, and for these connections to be brought into their homes.

What does this mean for our clients?

We would like all of our clients to be able to say:

I am seen and involved in different settings outside of my home.

Clients can expect to be asked:

- What they enjoy doing outside the home, with special attention required to explore the implications for people who cannot easily access community activities
- Which individuals they enjoy doing things with
- Which groups they enjoy being with (e.g. day-group participants, football crowds, friends at a pub).

Clients can expect Lighthouse Disability to organise schedules that accommodate as fully as possible their wishes to belong in the community.

What does this mean for our families?

With clients gaining a sense of belonging in the community, families will be relieved and happy to know that their family members are connecting with others and doing things they like and enjoy.

The families of clients can rest assured that their family member is getting the best out of life.

What does this mean for our staff?

We expect our staff to clarify and record as much information as possible about how clients would like to belong in the community.

Our staff are then expected to use their initiative to facilitate this in ways that are meaningful to clients, and to ensure that an appropriate diversity of relationships is made available to them.

We encourage the responses of 'Yes if' and 'Not yet' rather than 'No' to requests that cannot be implemented immediately. We will, in the meantime, work on finding out how to realise these requests in a manageable, affordable and enjoyable manner.

As an additional form of assistance, our staff will provide information in Lighthouse Disability's newsletter and on its intranet about community activities that clients can access.



Contributing to everyday life

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

Making contributions to everyday life, such as helping in the home, is one way that all of us can come to feel that we matter.

Contributing to everyday life can occur in three ways:

- Through carrying out set responsibilities in the household
- Through windows of opportunity that spontaneously arise
- Through regular volunteering.

All clients are expected to undertake some set household responsibilities, since, in our view, clients are residents, not guests. The contributions they are asked to make are determined according to their interests and abilities. These contributions may be as simple as holding pegs on their wheelchair to assist with hanging out the washing, or making their bed daily, or helping to unstack the dishwasher. We acknowledge that we all have days when we do not want to carry out our responsibilities, and we respect clients' wishes to do the same occasionally.

For some of our clients, unplanned opportunities for involving them in activities may occur. Our staff are trained to recognise and harness these when they arise.

Some of our clients love to volunteer their assistance for certain activities within the home or to assist activities undertaken outside the home by other organisations.

Whatever the nature of the contribution a client makes – whether as part of a set responsibility, window of opportunity, or volunteering venture – we always ensure that clients are thanked for their assistance.

What does this mean for our clients?

We would like all our clients to be able to say:

I feel like I matter in my world.

Clients will have some set responsibilities in their lives. If these are not carried out on a regular basis, we will look for other responsibilities better suited to their interests and abilities.

Those who wish to volunteer will be supported to make this contribution.

Clients can expect to be thanked for any and all kinds of contributions they make.

What does this mean for our families?

We expect families will be pleased to learn their family members are engaging in useful activities that boost their self-esteem, and that the contributions they make are appreciated and acknowledged.

We expect also that families will very probably see in their family member an improved sense of wellbeing as a result of carrying out these activities.

What does this mean for our staff?

Our staff are expected to guide and encourage the contributions of clients to everyday life, and to look for ways for clients to be meaningfully included in making the house feel like a home.

Staff are also expected to thank clients for their contributions. This may be delivered via verbal expressions of appreciation, praise or other ways meaningful to the person.



Supportive environment

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

The environment for our clients should enable them to live their life the best they can.

A supportive environment involves three elements:

- **The physical environment** (buildings and gardens)

The design of the physical environment needs to meet the physical needs of clients in order to improve mobility and reduce behavioural issues. The design should also meet the needs for sensory stimulation and to help make a residence feel like home. The types of sensory inputs that we seek to provide include everyday things like the hum of a lawnmower and the smell of cut grass, the aroma of home cooking and the chug of a washing machine.

- **The human environment** (staff, housemates and volunteers)

The human environment can bring out the best in clients. Our staff are trained to enable clients to achieve their goals and to contribute to the household effectively. We know that it is important for people sharing a home to like each other. A lot of effort is therefore put into processes to select housemates who are likely to be compatible – which includes involving existing tenants in these processes. The regular visits of volunteers, meanwhile, add richness to the home.

- **Safe and robust service** (health and wellbeing through structure and governance).

Lighthouse Disability connects clients with the medical, dental and allied health support services they need to enjoy the healthiest lives possible.

Many of our clients are vulnerable to mistreatment. We provide staff with training, and we have clear policies and systems to minimise the likelihood of this happening. If families and clients notice anything that concerns them, they are strongly encouraged to speak out as soon as possible. Staff are also required to speak out about any concerns as soon as possible.





What does this mean for our clients?

We would like all our clients to be able to say:

I feel comfortable in my home where I'm able to be my best.

Lighthouse Disability clients can expect to live in a home that keeps them mobile, creates an environment that supports their disability (if required), provides enriching sensory input, and helps them to achieve what they want in the way that they choose – in short, to have a life that is well lived.

They can expect to receive the support they need on a daily basis from well-trained staff.

Meanwhile, Lighthouse Disability clients are protected by formal and informal processes that promote client safety and wellbeing.

What does this mean for our families?

Families will see that their family members enjoy living in their home with people that they like.

They will see that family members are safe in this environment, with a range of formal and informal systems in place to protect them.

What does this mean for our staff?

The core role of our staff is to deliver the assistance Lighthouse Disability clients need on a daily basis. Our staff are trained and supported to ensure clients stay as safe and healthy as possible.

Lighthouse Disability promotes a culture of open disclosure, with staff being required to speak out about anything they think is awry. Should they feel in any way threatened, we have established processes to protect them as much as possible.

Engagement with family and significant others

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

Lighthouse Disability supports connections between each family and client, and our homes have an open-door policy for families to visit when they choose, providing this does not impact adversely on others living in the home.

Families almost invariably have a relationship with clients that Lighthouse Disability staff cannot have, and they can also give their family members a voice they might not otherwise have.

Lighthouse Disability staff, meanwhile, spend 24 hours a day with clients, through which, they come to develop an in-depth understanding of clients' daily needs and desires.

A situation can therefore arise where what we think and what a family thinks is best for a client may differ. When this occurs, both the family and Lighthouse Disability need to be involved in resolving the difference. While working things out, families need to be aware that our work practices must comply with legislation and professional practice standards (e.g. Work Health and Safety) and that our practices will be shaped by these obligations.

The Family Advisory Committee invites all families to make their views known about Lighthouse Disability's delivery of services for clients. Families are also encouraged to contact the Manager of Service Delivery at any time if they have concerns. We actively encourage anyone with concerns to refer to the complaints process on our website.

What does this mean for our clients?

We would like all our clients who have family to be able to say:

I connect with my family.

We encourage clients to engage with family in ways that they enjoy.

What does this mean for our families?

Families are welcome in their family member's home at any time as long as their presence does not disrupt others in the house.

Families are encouraged to participate in social activities and we will assist clients to attend and be part of family gatherings and holidays.

Feedback from families is always accepted with grace. We recognise that families are often the 'eyes and ears' should mistreatment occur, and all reports of suspected misconduct by staff will be taken seriously.

What does this mean for our staff?

Our staff will welcome family visits to the client's home and assist as needed to make this a happy time. They will also invite family to social activities held in the home.

Staff will provide the support required to enable a client to participate in family gatherings and holidays.

In the time between catch-ups, staff are expected to provide regular updates to families and respond to queries and questions from families.

Staff are aware that they cannot change the care given to a client to satisfy a request made by family unless this has been negotiated with Lighthouse Disability through a process that takes into account our legal and professional obligations. Similarly, Lighthouse Disability will consult with families before making changes to agreed care plans.



Financial sustainability

What does this mean to Lighthouse Disability?

Lighthouse Disability must remain financially viable to provide services to our clients.

For the next few years, the rollout of the NDIS will change how we deliver services, driven by the expectations of the NDIA and the new approach to funding service provision. Every part of our organisation is being affected by these changes, including what can be included in a client's care.

Because change will continue to affect us, it is a priority to have open communications with our staff, families and, where appropriate, clients.

We aim to be responsible, creative and efficient in what we do, and to maintain our focus on the principles detailed in this framework.

We will continue to aim for a culture that says, in response to a client request that looks prohibitive, 'Yes if', or 'Not yet, let's see what we can do' rather than 'No'.

We want clients and staff to raise any issues that concern them.

What does this mean for our clients?

Our clients may have changes made to their existing schedules based on inclusions in their NDIS plans.

Our clients may have more or less freedom to choose what they do than they experienced in the past. We support more freedom wherever possible.

Clients have choice; clients can choose their service provider, and we hope the exercise of choice will mean that clients, if satisfied with what we offer, will continue to use our services.

What does this mean for our families?

The introduction of NDIA involves unprecedented change, which we hope will be for the better, but there are no guarantees about this. Change (good or not) is something that many of us struggle with. We want to work with families to help them get through these changes, which for us will be just as profound.

Services will be offered on the basis of a fee for service, and there may be aspects of the NDIA package that require time, effort and oversight by families (unlike the block funding system).

What does this mean for our staff?

Our staff are expected to be willing to take up and 'go with' the changes we make as we experiment to find the best ways to adapt to the NDIS.

Our staff are expected to maintain their focus on the six framework principles discussed in this document regardless of the changing funding and environment.

Our staff are encouraged to offer ideas about how to provide the support our clients will need in this environment of change.



How you can help

We welcome support for our work provided by donations of money, goods and services as well as the time put in by volunteers. Please contact us if you would like to contribute in any of these ways.

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