

SIX STEPS TO BECOMING A CONSUMER ADVISOR



Health Issues Centre
Consumer voices for better healthcare

It can be hard to know what to expect when starting out as a consumer advisor. This resource helps guide you through the process in the beginning.



STEP 1: Get in touch

There are two main ways you will connect with a health organisation to become a consumer advisor:

1. You come across a call out for consumer advisors on a poster, in a newsletter or on a website.
2. Someone at the organisation encourages you to become a consumer advisor.

What to expect

- You may be asked to fill out a registration form or answer some questions about yourself.



If you want help or have any questions, ask or tell them how to make the process easier for you.



STEP 2: Have a chat

An interview or chat will be arranged and will be a time for you to learn more about being a consumer advisor and what the organisation is looking for. It will also be a chance for the organisation to better understand you and your experiences.

The chat may be in person, over the phone or in an online meeting. Your contact person's title might be Consumer Engagement Officer or Consumer & Community Engagement Manager. Their role will be to help you through this process.

What to expect

- You will hear about types of engagement opportunities at the organisation.
- You might be given some things to read or watch at home that give you more information.
- The next steps will be explained.



You are welcome to ask questions or for help through this process like bringing a friend to the interview or having an interpreter present.



STEP 3: Join the organisation

You will be welcomed to the organisation and get to know how things work in more detail. This process can be called induction and orientation.

What to expect

- You may be...
 - given a welcome pack
 - introduced to key people at the organisation
 - invited to morning teas to meet other consumer advisors
 - given a tour of the site
 - asked more about your skills and interests
 - asked to complete basic training
 - allocated a mentor



At any time you can ask questions or seek help.


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STEP 4: Respond to opportunities*

Current engagement opportunities will be made available to you. At times you may be approached about a particular project based on your skills and experience. You will often need to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) for any project that interests you.

What to expect

- You will be given a description of the role, the skills or experiences it requires, the time commitment and any payment or reimbursement offered.
- You will be notified of the outcome of your EOI.
- Keep in mind there may be more interest than places available in any one project.

 Ask for help or clarification at any time.

** Your journey might start here because you have seen a project or committee opportunity advertised and become actively involved in it straight away. If this happens, you still need to be taken through an adapted version of steps 2 and 3. This is particularly important if you decide to take on other roles as a consumer advisor in the organisation.*


STEP 5: Get to work

You will join the project or committee. You will be introduced to other consumers and/or staff who are involved and get to know the different roles people play.

You will receive more detailed information about the project or committee such as the Terms of Reference. A key contact person or buddy will be assigned to you, so you know who to turn to for questions or help.

What to expect

- Meetings may be in person at the health organisation, in the community or online.
- It might feel daunting to speak up at first but over time your confidence will grow.
- Often you will be sent things to read before meetings to help you prepare.

 If you are affected by any discussions, or have any difficulties reach out to a trusted person at the organisation. This might be your mentor or the person who guided you through Step 2.


STEP 6: How did it go?

Feedback is an important part of every engagement opportunity. This includes getting feedback from the organisation but also giving them feedback.

What to expect

This will be a chance for you to consider:

- How did you find the process? What did you like or not like?
- Were you given enough support?
- Did you feel like you were able to meaningfully contribute?
- Do you feel like you made an impact?
- Would more training be beneficial?
- Would you like to participate in more engagements?

 **If the process goes well and you feel like you would like to do more, keep an eye out for future opportunities!**