



Lived Experience Network

Terms of Reference – May 2023

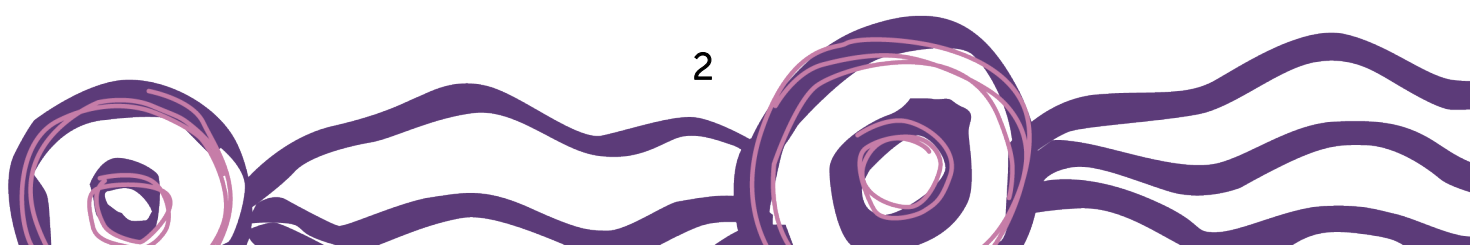


Government of
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What is the Lived Experience Network?

The Lived Experience Network (LEN) plays an important role in advising the the Department of Human Services (DHS) on how the child and family support system can better support families to keep their children safe and well at home.

LEN does this by giving opinions, sharing experiences and being involved in co-creation that will shape the design and future of the Child and Family Support System (CFSS). It contributes to a DHS commitment to bring together knowledge from diverse sources – research, practice and lived experience – to create and sustain a more evidence-informed and culturally responsive support system for children and families.

LEN members are called System Advisors. System Advisors have opportunities to participate in consultations and working groups related to the CFSS that suit their confidence, interest, skills and experience.


How LEN provides advice to DHS

LEN members participate in regular co-design and consultations with people in DHS. This includes policy and decision makers and people who work with families directly (practitioners), Members of LEN are supported by a Community Engagement Coordinator.

The time commitment is approximately three hours per fortnight. Examples of work undertaken to-date include:

- **Adults Supporting Kids (ASK) website** (www.adultssupportingkids.com.au): contributing to the vision and planning for ASK as well as the content, photo selection, and layout of the website.
- **Trauma responsive system capacity building framework:** System Advisors have helped inform the language and content of the framework, including advice on how organisations can seek to strengthen the voice of children and families in their practice. System Advisors helped to present the draft Framework and provided insights about service responses to trauma as part of an online State-wide Practice Forum.
- **Development of Practice Guides for CFSS:** System Advisors helped inform language and content for practice guides on assertive engagement, safe home visiting and risk and safety planning.
- **Culturally responsive and trauma responsive training:** Aboriginal members of LEN helped inform the design and content of the training package Yaitcha Mingkaminga Purrutipinhi. System Advisors featured in videos about the strengths of culture and trauma-responsive practice which are now being used in training.
- **Participating in the Communities of Practice Forums**, including guest speakers on a discussion panel about how practitioners can work well with families.

System Advisors also participate in Quarterly meetings to provide feedback to each other on activities undertaken, share ideas, consider new opportunities and identify and solve problems



arising. Quarterly meetings are an opportunity to stop and review how things are going within the group and between LEN and DHS. They will therefore be attended by the EIRD Director and Manager responsible for LEN.

Lived Experience Network Values and Principles


LEN Values

Common values are important to help LEN work together productively and to create a platform for equitable participation. The LEN values include:

- Creating a welcoming and safe group culture
- Transparency and accountability
- Honesty and integrity
- Collaboration and real engagement
- Mutual trust and respect
- Confidentiality
- Fairness, opportunity and choice.

Aboriginal Design Principles

- Recognise history and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and work to create Aboriginal led systems and services that supports self-determination.
- Give status to the diverse voices, knowledge, experiences, skills and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, communities, families and individuals. Acknowledging the intergenerational and complex traumas experienced in the community and the hopes and strengths of communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be supported by Non-Aboriginal allies who will walk alongside and within their power.
- Work to support the self determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Ensure they deeply listen and seek guidance and direction on the right ways of working.
- Ensure self-reflectiveness and responsiveness for practicing cultural humility and respect.
- Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to translate their vision into systemic design and challenge barriers, including systemic racism and white privilege.



System Advisor Co- Design Principles

1. LEN co-designs alongside DHS and aims to recognise and respect the diverse experiences, opinions, knowledge, expertise and voice of families and will give these voices status.
2. DHS recognises that LEN is involved in designing the solutions and we need to work together, really!
3. In order for DHS, CFSS and LEN to work together well, we need to understand our own biases, power imbalances and be constantly thinking about how others might experience the world (including services) differently.

Membership and Eligibility Criteria

Membership Number

15 System Advisors

Definition of Lived Experience


In the context of the CFSS, Lived Experience includes people of diverse ages, cultures and backgrounds with lived experiences of:

- Being a parent or caregiver to a person under the age of 18 years.
- Significant family stresses (such as contact with child and family support services, domestic or family violence, mental health, alcohol and other drugs), that make it harder for families and children to feel safe, secure and valued.
- Directly supporting family members who have been living with family stresses.
- Seeking or receiving help from child and family support services or helping others to do so.
- Diverse cultural knowledge about what services need to be and do to be truly helpful.

For the purpose of the LEN, Lived Experience should be recent (up to five years and/or childhood experiences). Recent experience will mean System Advisors can draw upon these experiences to advise DHS. However, it is important that members have had some time to heal from the stress, hurts and trauma they may have experienced and can reflect upon these experiences and contribute positively towards system change.

The changes DHS are aiming to make to reform the CFSS are large and will take some time to take effect. This means the system reform may not impact on System Advisors' current situations. It is important for System Advisors to be at a point in their journey where the pace of system change is not likely to cause distress. It is likely that System Advisors will come across people from organisations they have been involved with or someone who knows their story.

DHS provides training and support to manage these complexities.



Membership is limited to one person per family. This is to enable a greater number of families the opportunity to participate.

Members are able to bring a support person if they wish. A support person's role is to support the participation of a System Advisor and does not include decision making or underaking LEN work. Examples of the types of support they provide are helping a System Advosr to build their confidence to participate, or assist with interpreting. Support people are not reimbursed for their time by DHS.



Diversity Priorities

System Advisors will have a diverse range of Lived Experience backgrounds, including (but not limited to):

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander *
- Rural and regional South Australia *
- Young parents
- Lived experience of disability, or supporting someone living with disability
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
- LGBTQIA+
- Men and dads
- Grandparents and/or carers

* Whilst the Lived Experience Network will aim for a diverse range of voices and experiences in its membership, priority must be given to representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and rural and regional members, given the over-representation of Aboriginal families in the system and the shortage of support for rural and regional families.

Criteria for changing membership status

Personal Challenges

If System Advisors are experiencing some personal challenges, they may take a break from LEN and be welcomed back after this break. The length of this break will be negotiated with DHS. DHS will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis.

If a System Advisor is experiencing tough times and have begun accessing Intensive Family Services (including Safer Family Services and/or NGO's) then they are to step aside for the duration of the service engagement. They are to be welcomed back after this break. The reason for this is the greater risk that participation in LEN activities will be triggering for System Advisors while they are receiving Intensive Family Services. DHS is committed to protecting the mental health and wellbeing of all System Advisors. DHS will ensure this is managed sensitively and ensure confidentiality is upheld.

If a System Advisor is finding it difficult to participate (e.g. attend meetings) then DHS and/or other System Advisors will reach out to this person and offer support. A short-term break will be offered to the System Advisor. If DHS cannot contact the System Advisor and the System Advisor has not participated in any meetings for over three months, then DHS will ask the System Advisor to finish with LEN to allow an opportunity to fill their position.

If System Advisors are engaged in paid work in the human services sector, they are to step aside from the LEN for the duration of this paid work. If the employment is for up to three months, then the System Advisor can return to LEN at the end of the employment. If the work continues longer than three months, then they will need to finish with LEN to allow an opportunity to fill their position.

The Family by Family “Sharing Family” role is considered a volunteer role and is NOT paid work. Voluntary work with both Family by Family and the DHS Lived Experience Network is therefore appropriate. A paid position with Family by Family (Uniting Communities) in another role is considered part of the human services sector and you would need to step aside from LEN.

If paid work is casual with low weekly hours, then DHS will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis.

When LEN members gain employment before the end of their term, this is a successful outcome and should be celebrated. This change in membership creates an opportunity to recruit someone new to LEN who has not yet had an opportunity to have a voice and influence system change in the CFSS.

Whilst paid workers also have Lived Experience, they have other ways to influence the system. They have a voice in their workplace and opportunities to influence the system that other people who are not employed do not have. DHS want to protect the Lived Experience Network to ensure it is a genuine opportunity for people with Lived Experience to have a voice and contribute to system change. DHS are making sure there are mechanisms for all people to contribute to the CFSS reforms. This includes the Communities of Practice forums for Leaders, Practitioners and LEN, as well as all people being able to comment on new policy documents such as the Practice Guides.

Length of Term

System Advisors will serve a standard term of 24 months, with the possibility to extend for a further six months. A sustainable and stable model would see membership be staggered, so that a group of experienced members can support new members gain skills, confidence and experience.

This staggered approach maintains stability whilst leaving room for fresh voices and perspectives, and the opportunity for other families to gain the experience, training and skills that will come from participation in LEN.

Whilst the term is 24 months (and possible 6-month extension), flexibility exists in certain circumstances e.g. if someone’s circumstances change, or if someone is involved in a working group that continues beyond the 24 month time-frame. This will mean that the membership may flex up and down at any given time but should be based on the agreed membership number of 15 System Advisors.



Leaving the Lived Experience Network

After 24 months, a self-reflection survey will be provided to the System Advisors to help determine who might be ready to finish their term and who might be interested in a 6-month extension.

Equal distribution of diversity will be sought within remaining and future members, ensuring that the priority groups are represented (see Membership Criteria).

For those staying on for a 6-month extension the role will extend to helping mentor and support the new System Advisors.

Feedback for DHS

At the end of their 12-month term, System Advisors will be provided an opportunity to meet with DHS and provide feedback to help continually learn from LEN and improve how LEN are supported. A farewell will occur when System Advisors finish to celebrate their contribution and DHS will present them with a certificate of appreciation.

LEN Alumni

Alumni definition: Group of former members of the Lived Experience Network

For those who are interested, DHS are keen to retain a connection with former System Advisors. LEN System Advisors who complete their term or decide to move onto other opportunities will be known as the LEN Alumni, and will be invited to stay connected to LEN and DHS. The LEN Alumni may be invited to attend:

- Events associated with work they have done while they were in LEN
- A specific consultation where a broader cross section of voices would be useful
- Surveys or to comment on a policy document
- Speak publicly about a specific issue
- Informal events and gatherings.

Recruitment

Recruitment should be undertaken every six months as membership terms renew, or at other times if a number of spaces open up in the LEN. The recruitment process should include two people: the Community Engagement Coordinator and one current System Advisor. To support the orientation of new System Advisors, a mentor (existing System Advisor) will be matched with new System Advisors.

For more detailed information regarding recruitment please see separate document *Lived Experience Network Recruitment Procedure*.



Mutual Commitments

DHS commits to providing:

- Support from the DHS including but not limited to the Community Engagement Coordinator.
- Reliable access to crèche.
- Access to counselling and opportunities to debrief (e.g., Employee Assistance Program).
- Appropriate training and orientation to complete the role (orientation to DHS; Code of conduct; Confidentiality; Context of CFSS reforms and co-design; Aboriginal design principles; other training as agreed between the Lived Experience Network and DHS).
- Reimbursement for in LEN activities (i.e. meetings, working groups, training presentations and contribution to travel costs).
- Access to growth opportunities and leadership roles within the Lived Experience Network and working groups.
- Support to undertake a Working with Children Check and National Police Clearance.

System Advisors commit to:


- DHS values and supports equitable participation of all members.
- Maintain confidentiality of information they receive about the CFSS and other parts of government or the service system.
- Attend all meetings whenever possible and send apologies if unable to attend.
- Attend orientation and training as required by DHS.
- Read notes prior to sessions and catch up on notes from missed sessions.
- Let DHS know if their circumstances change and they can no longer contribute.
- Undertake a Working with Children Check and National Police Clearance.
- Comply with DHS Volunteer requirements in accordance with the **Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Volunteer Guidelines** (including confidentiality and privacy, orientation and training, honesty and integrity and complying with the Principles of Conduct).

Conflict Management

In keeping with our commitment to create a safe and welcoming environment for all, we will work to ensure there is a positive approach to situations where conflict may arise.

Adherence to LEN Values will guide this process.

In the event of a conflict, members are encouraged to firstly attempt to resolve this with the individual(s) involved.



If this is not possible then members are to approach LEN Community Engagement Coordinator for support to resolve the matter.

If the matter remains unresolved then it will be referred to the DHS EIRD Manager responsible for resolution.

Where appropriate documentation of conflict discussions will occur in collaboration with affected parties.

Review

The LEN Terms of Reference will be reviewed in 12 months.



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