



SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY AREA HEALTH SERVICE

Procedures for Recruiting, Appointing and Supporting Community Representatives on Committees and Other Health Processes

Aim of the Community Participation

The aim of the Community Participation is to ensure that:

- The Health service involves consumers, carers and the community in planning, delivery and evaluation of services;
- Local communities are well informed;
- There is transparency and accountability in the health service decision-making.

Community Participation will provide community members with the opportunity to:

- Have positive and effective input into health service planning, delivery and evaluation of services
- Provide input about issues and needs in the community
- Be active participants in the work of SWSAHS Committees

1. The Responsibility of Community Participation Managers:

The process for seeking expressions of interest from potential community representatives will involve:

- Placing advertisements in appropriate local newspapers
- Placing community service announcements with local radio stations
- Distributing information flyers
- Writing to local community organisations inviting them to nominate
- Writing to consumers of the service inviting them to nominate
- Placing posters on notice boards
- Calling for expressions of interest from formal community participation groups that have been established eg SWSAHS Community Representatives Network.

The information will:

- Identify the skills/experience the health service is seeking
- Indicate where application forms are available
- Provide a contact phone number for further information
- Identify the timeframe for receiving nominations
- Identify the term of appointment if necessary

A standard community representative application form, an Expression of Interest (Appendix 5), will be used for the process. A package of information about community participation and SWSAHS will be provided to all enquirers. SWSAHS will provide a period of at least two weeks for interested community representatives to submit their Expression of Interest form.

2. Number of Representatives on Committees

It is recommended that at least two positions be made available on committees that are seeking community representatives. This allows community representatives to support each other or represent each other during absences.

3. Interview Process for Community Representatives

An interview panel will be convened to make the decision about the suitability of intended community representatives. The interview panel will have as a minimum, an equal number of community members and staff including:

- A representative of SWSAHS
- At least one member of SWSAHS Community Representatives Network

The interview panel will follow a selection process for the community representatives based on the staff selection process which entails an application review, interview and referee check. The panel may decide to make a decision without conducting interviews, based upon how each of the applicants meets the selection criteria established. The selection of participants will be based on how well the applicant meets the criteria that have been identified for the community position.

Examples of selection criteria are:

- Lives within the South Western Sydney and Wingecarribee communities
- Is not an employee of SWSAHS
- Is able to demonstrate involvement with consumer groups/organisations
- Is able to report back to consumer groups/organisations
- Is able to effectively communicate on behalf of consumers
- Has an awareness of the needs of groups of consumers and not just the individual
- Can be reliable and responsible and willing to commit time to attending scheduled meetings
- Is able to represent other views with objectivity
- Can demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved
- Has experience as a consumer or carer in relation to the issue/subject matter

Attributes and skills in community representatives will include:

Attributes

- ✓ Want to improve the health system
- ✓ Willing to give some time to health issues
- ✓ Relate your own experience of health care to broader consumer

Issues

- ✓ Able to represent and respect the views of other people who use health care

Skills

- ✓ Some knowledge of the health system
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Experience with working on a committee or representing other people
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Personal level of empowerment

4. Appointing, Supporting and Reviewing Representatives

Successful applicants will be informed verbally that they have been appointed to the SWSAHS Community Representative Network and are now eligible for involvement in a range of formal processes.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed.

A confidential database of community representatives will be maintained by SWSAHS and permission sought from community representatives to be included in the Area-wide representatives database which is managed by the Area Manager, Community Participation. Access to the confidential database of community representatives is limited to the Area Manager of Community Participation and the Chairperson of the SWSAHS Consumer/Community Council.

Orientation training will be held for community representatives when available. This training will cover:

- The health system
- The role of a community representative
- How to be effective
- Support, advice and tactics

The training program is available through the Area Manager, Community Participation. Resource books from the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia, "Guidelines for Consumer Representatives", will be provided to each participant/representative and can be obtained from the Area Manager, Community Participation.

Community representatives will be supported by:

- Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses incurred in attending SWSAHS activities in their role as a community representative in accordance with the Policy on the Reimbursement of Consumer, Carer and Community Representatives
- Providing education and training opportunities relevant to their role as community representatives
- Providing support, information and guidance as requested or needed
- Assisting community representatives to network with each other
- Responding to issues raised by community representatives and providing feedback
- Clearly identifying a contact person or “Buddy” in the health system with whom to liaise

South Western Sydney Area Health Service will assist community representatives to provide information to the broader community. This may include reasonable assistance with producing written information, photocopying, holding community forums or preparing presentation materials, etc. Community representatives will need to report to either to they area / sector network by using the sample Report Form (Appendix 10).

5. Criminal Record Checks

Criminal record checks will be carried out for community representatives who are seeking to join the SWSAHS Community Representatives Network. Permission will be sought from the community representative prior to conducting a criminal record check. The checks will be conducted in respect of sexual offences, serious offences involving threat or injury to another person and other serious offences relevant to the duties of the position. Where the criminal record check reveals a criminal conviction, the Area Human Resources Manager will discuss this with the prospective community representative and then make a recommendation to the Area Director of Business Services about the community representative’s appointment. The Area Manager and/or sector coordinator will be consulted on this recommendation. Any community representative who has been charged with having committed, or has been convicted of, any sexual offence, serious offence involving threat or injury to another person or other serious offence relevant to the duties of their position, must report this within seven (7) days to the Chief Executive Officer.

6. Intellectual Property/Copyright

Any intellectual property arising out of the community representative’s involvement with SWSAHS committees or working groups will be vested in SWSAHS unless specific prior agreement has been made to vary this principle.

7. Conflict of Interest, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality

Community representatives should declare any conflict of interest, or potential conflict of interest at the time they nominate to be involved. If a conflict of interest was not declared at the time of their appointment, or arises during their representation, this must be notified to the Area Manager, Community Participation.

Community representatives will be asked to sign an agreement that sets out what they can expect of SWSAHS and what SWSAHS expects of them (Appendix 6). As part of their involvement with SWSAHS committees, community representatives may have access to information that is considered confidential. SWSAHS has a common law and statutory obligation to protect the privacy and confidentiality of some information that committee members have access to (for example, under Privacy Legislation). In keeping with these obligations, it is expected that community representatives will accept and maintain the confidentiality of information so designated. It is the responsibility of the Chairpersons of Committees to clearly identify information that is confidential and to make this known to the community representatives.

Asking community representatives to observe the confidentiality of some information will not prevent participants from communicating with other community members on general principles and issues as they need. If a participant is unsure, this can be checked with the Chairperson of the committee. If the confidential status of written information is unclear this could also be checked with the Chairperson before distribution.

8. Membership of Sub-committees

Committees sometimes establish sub-committees, working parties, reference groups and other groups to do some of the committee's work, provide advice or undertake specific tasks. Wherever possible these bodies should have community participation as well. This could be an existing community representative from the main committee or additional participants from the community.

9. Making Public Statements

The policy of the South Western Sydney Area Health Service states that only General Managers and Senior Executive staff are authorised to make public statements on behalf of the organisation. Community representatives must not make public statements on behalf of the South Western Sydney Area Health Service unless the General Manager or Senior Executive has given them approval or asks them to do so. Examples include, media interviews on committee work, speaking at conferences as a representative of South Western Sydney Area Health Service and writing material for journals and other publications.

However, community representatives may speak about and share information on their experience as a participant, but must be clear that they are not speaking on behalf of South Western Sydney Area Health Service.

10. Resignation, Removal and Replacement of Representatives

Participants/Representatives may resign at any time and should notify the Chairperson of the Committee or contact person for the process in which they are involved. Written notification is preferable. An Exit Form should be completed (Appendix 11).

Community representatives will be informed when their term of appointment is due to expire. Retiring representatives can reapply for a further appointment.

Should problems arise which raise questions about the performance or continuing representation of a community representative, the views of the participant/representative will be sought with the aim of resolving any difficulties or problems. Initially this will be the responsibility of the Chairperson of the committee or contact person for the process. If, after an attempt to resolve the difficulties, the Chairperson feels that the community representative's appointment should be reviewed, the local Coordinator of Community Participation or the relevant General Manager or Area Service Director will be involved to conciliate on the matter. The community representative is encouraged to have a support person with them during this process. If conciliation is unsuccessful and a decision is made to discontinue their participation, the community representative will be verbally informed of the decision in the first instance with written confirmation being provided to them.

The community representative may appeal this decision to the Manager, SWSAHS Community Participation who will make a determination on the matter in consultation with the community representative, the local Coordinator/General Manager/Service Director and the Chairperson of the committee.

11. Grievances and Complaints

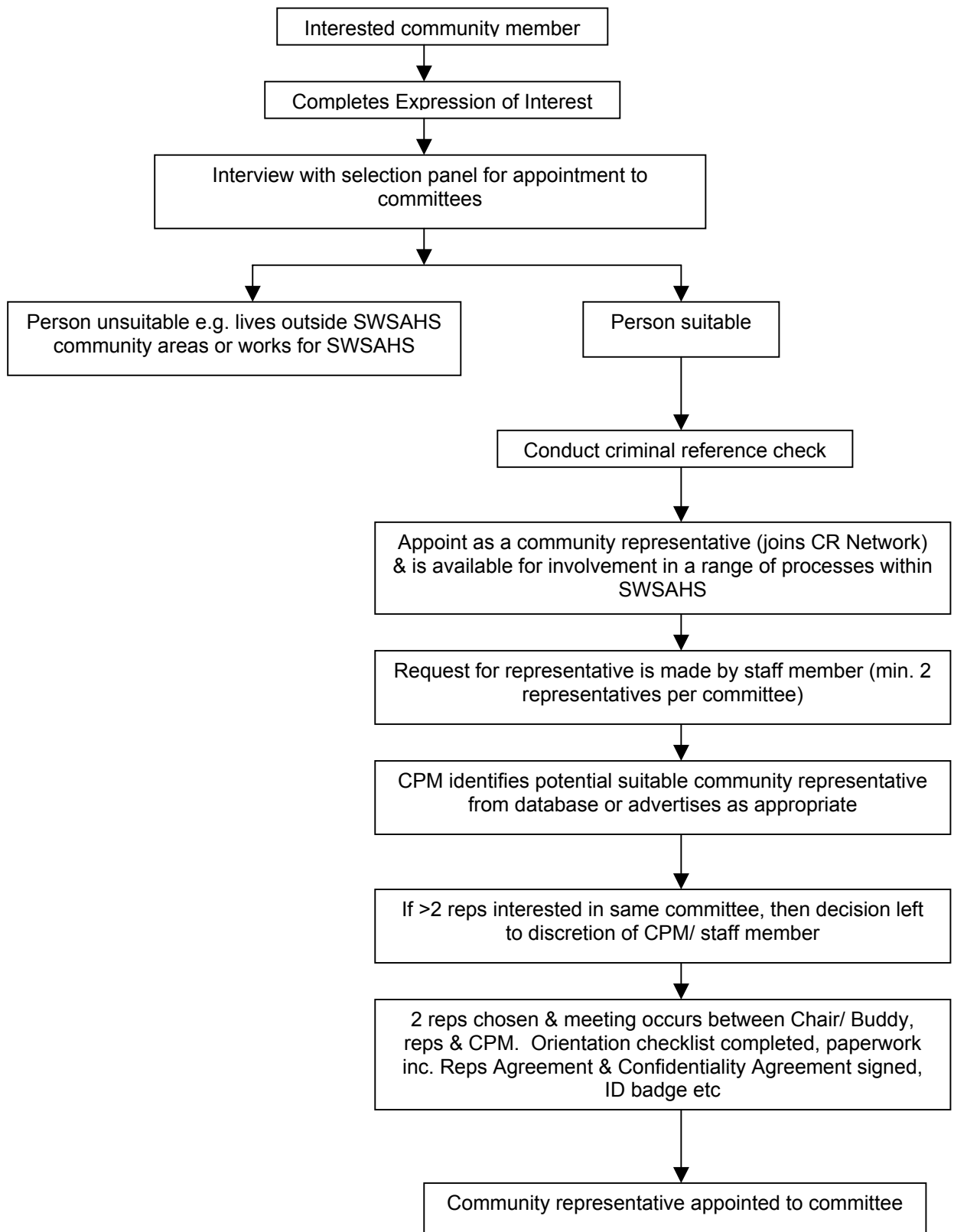
Community representatives are encouraged to inform SWSAHS if they are not receiving the advice or support they need to fulfil their role. Initially concerns need to be directed to the local Coordinator of Community Participation or the Area Manager, Community Participation.

12. The Responsibility of SWSAHS Staff seeking to involve community representatives.

Staff seeking to involve community representatives should consider the following points:

- Why do you want a community representative on a committee?
- What do you hope to achieve from having a community representative on a committee?
- What level of involvement do you want from the community representative?
- Do you have a “Buddy” for the community representative?
- Can you accommodate the minimum 2 community representatives required on committees?
- Does the committee understand the role of a community representative?
- Are you aware of the role and responsibility of having a community representative on a committee?

Recruitment and Appointment Of Community Representatives



Supporting documents

1. Health Community Representatives Network
South Western Sydney Area Health Service
Expression of Interest (Appendix 5- Community Participation Framework)
2. South Western Sydney Area Health Service
Community Representative Agreement (Appendix 6- Community Participation Framework)
3. **Report Form**
Community Representatives with South Western Sydney Area Health Service (Appendix 10- Community Participation Framework)
4. **Exit Form**
Community Representatives with South Western Sydney Area Health Service (Appendix 11- Community Participation Framework)