Working With Diverse Peoples Procedure

1.   Purpose

Inala Community House is committed to providing services in a way which promotes safe and high-quality outcomes for service users. ICH recognises and celebrates Australia's diverse communities.

ICH recognises that people's experiences are shaped by their individual circumstances and that high quality, responsive and safe services can only be provided where a person's situation is viewed holistically.

This procedure outlines ICH's commitment in working with diverse peoples, this includes, but is not limited to, different cultures, languages, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, sexual orientation, gender identity and those living with a disability. This procedure also discusses working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

2.   Scope

This procedure applies to all Inala Community House workers.

3.   Definitions

Diversity: The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations and abilities.

Language Services: Services provided by agencies which address communication issues affecting people with limited proficiency in English. This may include speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and Auslan (Australian Sign Language). Language services include:
- engagement of interpreters via the telephone, video conference or on-site
- employment of bilingual or multilingual staff
- accreditation of bilingual or multilingual staff
- use of multilingual information strategies.

Interpreter: A person who conveys oral messages, concepts and ideas from one language into another language (including sign language), with a high degree of accuracy, completeness, objectivity and sensitivity to the cultures associated with the languages of expertise. In this policy, qualified interpreters are:
- interpreters certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) at the Professional, Paraprofessional, Interpreter or Conference Interpreter levels, or with NAATI recognition
- interpreters certified by NAATI in Auslan
- conference interpreters who are members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)
- interpreters with tertiary level qualifications in interpreting.

Bilingual/Multilingual Workers: Workers who are fluent in two or more languages but their language skills have not been formally assessed. They should not be employed in the capacity of a qualified interpreter and are therefore not expected to provide interpreting services as described above. They can act as a liaison for the culturally diverse communities (e.g. provide information directly in languages other than English or limited cultural advice).

LGBTIQA+: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and the many other terms which people use to describe their gender, sexuality or sex characteristics.

Intersectionality: How different parts of a person's identity or circumstances, such as age, race, culture, disability, gender, location or religion, intersect and combine to shape people's individual life experiences.

Cultural competence: Is a process where workers respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds and religion in a manner that recognises, values and affirms the uniqueness of individuals, families and communities.

4. Procedure

ICH recognises the vital role of diversity in Australia and seeks to both acknowledge and celebrate this diversity.

This procedure articulates ICH's mission, vision, values and other related policies.

Underpinning this procedure are some common principles (sourced from the ICH *Service User Support Policy)* which relate to an individual's rights in receiving services including:

- To have their legal and human rights upheld
- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To feel physically and emotionally safe, secure and valued
- Having individual autonomy where their choice and control is promoted
- To self-determination (individual choice), where individual need and relationships are considered without asking unnecessary intrusive questions
- Having their confidential information safeguarded
- Having a support person present
- To provide feedback or make a complaint
- To receive services without discrimination or victimisation

ICH aims to provide welcoming environments which are safe, inclusive and free of discrimination and judgement.

ICH aims to provide holistic services which consider the intersectionality of peoples lived experiences and how these are influenced by their circumstances and shape their identity. This includes identifying barriers to accessing or engaging with services and working to overcome these.

4.1   Importance of Working with People from Diverse Backgrounds

The importance of being able to work with, and support people from diverse backgrounds is essential and this is reflected in ICH's values:

- Focusing on People: meaning that we seek to empower people by responding to their individual circumstances and needs by providing tailored services. It means that our services are delivered based upon professional relationships which are underpinned by respect for each person
- Delivering Safe and Supportive Spaces: meaning that we provide a safe space for people which incorporates both physical and emotional safety, where differences can be recognised and celebrated. We promote inclusivity in all our services to ensure that people feel welcome
- Providing Quality Services: through workers who are equipped to respond in culturally appropriate ways, who can communicate effectively and provide high quality support to diverse service users. ICH is committed to providing workers with trainings and resources which support providing high quality services
- Working Together: this has many different aspects including partnering with external organisations or communities and utilising diverse workers across ICH. It also includes fostering a sense of belonging for people in our services but also through connecting them with relevant organisations or communities as appropriate

4.1.1   Service Planning

ICH will incorporate in service planning how to work with diverse peoples, this includes:

- Having policies and procedures which communicate ICH's commitment to diversity and inclusion. These documents will reflect upon the importance of diversity and provide guidance for workers to support people from diverse backgrounds
- Building strong and diverse networks with community leaders, partners and organisations
- Recognising and/or participating in events which celebrate diverse peoples and communities
- Ensuring that service resources are accessible and appropriate for service users and the general community
- Seeking opportunities for diverse workers within ICH to assist in providing knowledge, communication assistance or other supports to promote optimal outcomes and service delivery (as appropriate)
- Supporting workers to work effective with diverse peoples through:
  - o Supervision
  - o Implementing training (as required)
  - o Linking with other ICH services and workers to facilitate information sharing
  - o Collaborating with appropriate people, community leaders or organisations

4.1.2   Working with Diverse Peoples

Workers must act in a way which promotes:
- Acceptance and respect for difference
- Self-reflection upon their own personal beliefs and attitudes
- Recognising and responding to differences
- Continually learning about different ways of providing high quality services which meet the needs of diverse peoples
- Incorporating learnings into practice

- Individual and community self-determination (in accordance with their ability)

Practical strategies to work with diverse peoples include:

- Learning about a person's background and circumstances (i.e. from the person or through research) and seeking to understand their preferences
- Working collaboratively with other relevant people or organisations (without breaching confidentiality requirements)
- Reflecting upon their own cultural beliefs and values, and exploring differences or similarities
- Tailoring services in a way which accommodates different needs or preferences (where possible)
- Recognising each person as an individual and acknowledging the wide variety of social, economic and other factors which may impact upon their life. Understanding that people may face additional barriers or discrimination because of their diverse circumstances
- Recognising that a person may not want to receive services from a person/organisation of the same background (particularly with close-knit communities)
- Being aware that diverse peoples may have or continue to have experiences which negatively impact upon their lives (e.g. trauma, disadvantage, discrimination, etc.)
- Identifying barriers which may prevent an individual from accessing or utilising services and planning how to overcome these
- Referring any problems that are outside your area of expertise to an appropriate person or organisation for resolution
- Providing information/referrals about other relevant organisations (where appropriate)
- Sharing knowledge and expertise as a resource
- Promoting each person's right to engage with, practise and/or celebrate their diverse circumstances (e.g. use their own language, cultural practices)

It is not appropriate for workers to convey a paternalistic attitude towards those who do not fit within the mainstream, nor to regard people as needing to assimilate. These beliefs are damaging and do not respect individual and community strengths.

4.2   Anti-Discrimination

ICH does not tolerate any form of discrimination. ICH is committed to providing safe and inclusive spaces for all people, regardless of any type of personal characteristic. ICH is committed to addressing all forms of discrimination and oppression.

Incidents of discrimination constitute a breach of ICH policies and this procedure and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

4.3   Strengths Based Language

It is important to recognise that people from diverse backgrounds may have or may be experiencing issues such as discrimination, injustices, inequities, trauma and disadvantage. While acknowledging these circumstances, it is important to avoid deficit language and instead use empowering, strengths-based language which acknowledges and celebrates individual and community strengths, contributions and resilience. Likewise, it is important that language promotes unity rather than a divisive approach. ICH aims to work with diverse

peoples through promoting mutual respectful relationships, not through 'us' and 'them' type approaches or language.

4.4 Working with People from CALD Backgrounds

ICH recognises and upholds the principles within the *Queensland Multicultural Charter*. These include:

1. A shared commitment to Queensland and Australia, and a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law, fosters a strong and unified community.
2. The people of Queensland come from many diverse backgrounds and have worked, and continue to work, together to build a prosperous, fair and harmonious Queensland.
3. The people of Queensland should be able to express and celebrate, in a lawful way, their cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.
4. Equal rights and responsibilities under the law and equitable access to the services provided or funded by the government for all people of Queensland helps build a fair community.
5. A shared commitment, among members of the Queensland community, to mutual respect, fair treatment and valuing the diversity of peoples in the community fosters a caring, safe and inclusive community.
6. The creation of opportunities that encourage the full participation of people from diverse backgrounds in the cultural, economic, political and social life of Queensland helps build a prosperous state.
7. Sustained, respectful and inclusive engagements between all individuals, groups and the government are a basis for mutual understanding.
8. A unified and harmonious community promotes a sense of belonging among its people and builds community confidence and resilience.

4.4.1 What is Culture?

Culture has many definitions; one helpful definition is "Culture is the knowledge people use to generate and interpret social behaviour". This means that culture refers to ways of thinking, communicating, values, feelings and beliefs, actions, behaviours and activities. This can also be called a cultural identity.

It is also important to recognise that culture is not static and evolves over time influenced by socio-economic, political and situational factors.

Some considerations:

- Everyone has a cultural identity
- There are differences in each culture (and even within a culture)
- People can be influenced by and identify with more than one culture or cultural group
- It is the choice of the individual as to which culture they identify with regardless of their cultural background or family influence

4.4.2   Working in a Cross Cultural Context

ICH workers will recognise, respect and celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of each service user. When working with people from other cultures workers should:

- Promote two-way communication across cultures
- Be aware of and abide by any rules, regulations or traditional laws which may apply to the community
- Recognise and have knowledge of social and cultural differences

Communication in cross-cultural context can be challenging. It is not simply a case of language barriers. It can also be non-verbal cues or even preferred methods of communication. Different types of protocols can also exist for communication. Some examples of differences can include:

- Different protocols when addressing, meeting or interacting with different genders
- Gestures that are considered to be common and normal may be offensive in other cultures
- Sustained eye contact can be either normal and expected or inappropriate
- Periods of silence in conversation
- Greeting people including the type of greeting (e.g. handshake, bow, etc) and also the method such as the pressure, length and type of clasp
- Some cultures will prefer more personal communication styles such as face to face meetings or the phone

Each service user's right to practice their culture values and beliefs while accessing ICH services will be supported. ICH will provide services which are responsive to service users' culture, diversity, values and beliefs through identification and responsive practice in accordance with the wishes of the service user.

ICH recognises that for some service users, the law in Australia may conflict or impact upon their ability to continue following their cultural traditions or practises. Where this occurs, it can be challenging for individuals and families to adapt or understand. ICH workers will seek to educate and inform service users experiencing this in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner.

4.5   Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Inala Community House respects and values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. ICH aims to deliver services which recognise the proud history and traditions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the impact of colonisation upon the communities.

Aboriginal peoples comprise diverse Aboriginal nations, each with their own language and traditions, and historically lived on mainland Australia, Tasmania and many of the continent's offshore islands. Torres Strait Islander peoples historically lived on the islands of the Torres Strait, between the tip of Cape York in Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

The plural use of the word 'peoples' acknowledges that within these two distinct cultures there are hundreds of unique and distinct communities, cultural and language groups, spiritual connections to land, environmental influences, families and kinship networks.

ICH recognises the following principles in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples have the world's oldest living culture
- There is no single indigenous culture in Australia
- Kinship ties are an integral part of culture. Kinship networks can be extensive and focus on mutual obligations and sharing of resources. This can have a significant impact on how services are provided such as:
    - Resources provided for one family unit may instead be shared across the kinship network
    - Caring for a child may be shared between multiple people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lore is very different from the British based system of law. This can cause distress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are involved in legal processes as their cultural lore may not be observed
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples connection to the land and sea. It is important to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have lost their connection to land (and culture) which can impact upon their cultural identity and lead to them feeling a loss of connectedness
- The term 'Dreaming' refers to traditional belief systems. The term today is used to reference a person's current lived experiences and how these intersect with their sense of connectedness and belonging
- Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultures there are gender based cultural beliefs and considerations, this is sometimes called men's or women's business (although this is not a term which should be used by workers). When gender based issues are being discussed, it may be appropriate to have workers of both genders present
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may have different protocols when there is a death in the community or family. 'Sorry Business' refers to a period of mourning in which members of the community collectively seek to process the loss. In some cultures, it may be inappropriate to mention the deceased person's name or to show their photograph. An alternative name for the person who passed away may be used (which is selected by the family or community).

ICH will seek to build strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by:

- Giving a Welcome to, or Acknowledgement of Country
- Developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people, including Elders
- Participating in events such as NAIDOC week, Mabo Day and Urban Dreaming
- Using respectful language avoiding terms which may cause offence (e.g. referencing caste, Aborigines)
- Paying attention or asking how people wish to self-identify, recognising that this may change based on the situation (workers should not use historically derogatory terms which have been reclaimed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples)
    - Using Aunty or Uncle (as a term of respect) only where a person has agreed to this form of address as it may allude to a sense of mutual obligation

4.5.1 Welcome To, or Acknowledgement of Country

ICH will include a Welcome to, or Acknowledgement of Country prior to all significant meetings, these include, but are not limited to events and formal occasions (e.g. internal and external meetings, trainings, etc).

A Welcome to Country can only be conducted by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representative. The Welcome to Country involves the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representative welcoming others to the land of their ancestors.

An Acknowledgement of Country may be used by a non-indigenous person. The Acknowledgement recognises the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples connection to the land and pays respect to the Elders. ICH sites are all located in the land traditionally owned by the Jagera people. Wording of the Acknowledgement may change however some examples are provided below:

"I would like to begin today by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future."

"I would like to begin today by acknowledging the Jagera people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future."

4.5.2 Developing Relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

ICH aims to build trust and respect within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by building strong relationships. ICH acknowledges the role of Elders within the community as members who are relied upon to give advice and provide knowledge about cultural beliefs and practices. ICH also aims develop strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Elders and organisations may be consulted when supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (without breaching confidentiality) to seek guidance about supporting the service user.

4.6 Working with People Living with a Disability

ICH recognises and promotes the contribution of people living with a disability in the community.

ICH promotes and supports the *Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. Underpinning this Strategy is the vision 'for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfill their potential, as equal members of the community.' This strategy contains eight guiding principles which include:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality of people
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

Disability is a broad term which describes people who live with a cognitive, physical or emotional condition which impacts upon their ability to do certain activities and/or interact with the world around them. Disabilities can include:

- Sensory which includes loss of sight, hearing or speech difficulties
- Intellectual which means difficulty learning or understanding
- Physical which can mean a range of different things such as:
    - Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties that restrict everyday activities
    - Blackouts, seizures or loss of consciousness
    - Chronic or recurrent pain or discomfort that restricts everyday activities
    - Incomplete use of arms, fingers, feet or legs
    - Difficulty gripping or holding items
    - Restrictions in physical activities
- Psychosocial which can mean nervous, emotional or mental conditions which restrict everyday activities and which may require help or supervision. It can also include memory problems or confusion, social or behavioural difficulties which restrict everyday activities.
- Head injury, stroke or acquired brain injuries

It is important to recognise that people with disabilities have the same rights as other community members. It is important to recognise that people with a disability should:

- Be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability.
- Be able to exercise choice, including in relation to taking reasonable risks, in the pursuit of their goals and in the planning and delivery of their supports
- Be supported to receive reasonable and necessary supports

Services provided to people with a disability should be tailored to support effective engagement and reduce any barriers to accessing support.

ICH aims to provide safe and inclusive spaces by:

- Providing accessible sites and services (wherever possible)
- Promoting awareness and inclusion of people living with a disability including in the planning of service delivery (promoting choice and control)
- Providing easy to read information (where appropriate)
- Asking people living with a disability how they prefer to communicate (e.g. phone, email, etc.)
- Altering communication styles to suit the person living with a disability and in accordance with their ability and preferences, this may include
    - Using easy to understand language, avoiding jargon
    - Always facing a person who lip reads
    - Speaking slower if necessary
    - Ensuring adequate lighting for a person with low vision
    - Explaining information and confirming their understanding (where needed)
- Not stereotyping people living with a disability, disempowering or devaluing their lives or contributions

- Not using inappropriate, condescending, offensive or overly emotional terms (e.g. dumb, physically challenged, wheelchair bound, etc.)

Workers when engaging with people living with a disability must:

- Always assume that a person is competent and then adjust accordingly. It is more respectful to assume competence than to assume that there is a lack of competence. It is also important to recognise that a person may struggle with a particular area but this does not mean that they automatically lack competence in other areas
- Convey respect for that person, this includes talking to them directly using appropriate tone, language, speed and volume in accordance with the individual's abilities and preferences. Strategies which may be relevant include:
  - Speaking slowly and leaving pauses in conversation
  - Speaking in clear, short sentences and using simpler words (avoiding jargon)
  - Asking one question at a time
  - Using or supporting the person to use a communication device
  - Using visual cues
- Seek to learn about the individual, the impact of their disability on their life and any barriers that they face relating to this
- Include support persons such as family members, friends or paid support workers to the extent preferred by the person
- Work collaboratively with the person and their support network to provide effective services.

4.7   Working with LGBTIQA+ Peoples

ICH aims to ensure a safe and inclusive space for LGBTIQA+ peoples by:

- Recognising and respecting people's choices regarding their sexuality and gender identity
- Mirroring their language in how they choose to identify their gender identity or sexual orientation (e.g. a person who identifies themselves as a gay woman should not be called a lesbian)
- Understanding that a person may not want to disclose their sexuality or gender identity with other people or organisations (e.g. their chosen pronoun)
- Collecting information regarding peoples' gender identity or sexual orientation only where it is necessary or appropriate (e.g. to provide services)
- Referring people to LGBTIQA+ services where possible and in accordance with that person's choice
- Not stereotyping peoples behaviour, dress, voice or appearance as indicating that they may identify with the LGBTIQA+ community

4.8   Language Services

ICH recognises that a person who lacks English language proficiency or who uses an alternative form of communication such as Auslan, can face significant barriers to community participation and access to services.

Language services aim to provide people who have difficulties communicating with the same access to effective and efficient services and programs as other people.

ICH shall seek to deliver responsive and high quality services through:

- Client focused service delivery which considers specific language/communication needs
- Working with qualified interpreters (where possible) and developing plans to ensure that services can be delivered where an interpreter is not available
- Adopting a planned approach to producing and disseminating information about services and activities in forms accessible to clients who experience language/communication barriers
- Planning for the provision of language services by incorporating interpreting and multilingual information needs into relevant systems and practices, this includes identifying sources of language assistance (such as translating assistance through Department phones/websites)
- Utilising the cultural and linguistic skills of workers in the planning and implementation of services (i.e. those who are bilingual or multilingual)

4.8.1 Working with Interpreters

ICH is committed to using interpreters in accordance with the Queensland Language Services Policy (for Queensland government funded programs). ICH uses the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) as the provider of interpreters.

The following are some tips which help to increase the effectiveness of communication when using interpreters:

- Be sure to have a private area organised where the session can take place.
- Arrange seating in an appropriate layout:
    - For spoken language interpreting: triangular form (if the interpreter and service user are present) to allow for easy communication between the interpreter and the service user
    - For deaf services: the interpreter sits next to the non-Auslan user so that an Auslan user is able to see both the person speaking and the interpreter. In a meeting setting, the interpreter may move to different positions (e.g. if different people are speaking)
    - It is ideal to position yourself so that the client is directly facing you and the interpreter is sitting to the side.
- Introduce yourself and brief the interpreter on the main topics you will be discussing.
- Always speak in the first person and speak directly to the client.
- Allow the interpreter to clarify information if necessary.
- Use clear language and short sentences.
- Avoid using jargon, slang, idioms or proverbs.
- When communicating over the phone, include a pause after each sentence so that the call participants do not talk over each other or cut each other off. If it is a long call, the interpreter may require a few minutes break on the half-hour.
- Clearly indicate the end of the meeting, particularly a phone meeting to everyone involved.

TIS also have some helpful videos and training which can be accessed at:
https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Agencies/Help-using-TIS-National-services/Working-with-TIS-National-interpreters

There are a number of services which provide interpreting services for the deaf community. Deaf Services Queensland is one which offers a number of services including Foreign

Language Interpreting (access to interpreters and translators for people with a language other than English).

4.9   Responsibilities

Board and Leadership Teams will:

- Be committed to promoting diversity, inclusivity and respect
- Ensure that teams are trained to work effectively with diverse peoples
- Promote awareness of diverse cultures, traditions and beliefs
- Celebrate relevant and appropriate events and special days
- Ensure that services are accessible, appropriate and safe for all people

Workers will:

- Promote inclusivity in service delivery
- Tailor service delivery to meet the needs of service users
- Identify and respond to/report any barriers to service users accessing or engaging with the service
- Participate in relevant training

5.   Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every 3 years.

6.   Related Documents

Policies
ICH Commitment to Community Policy
ICH Service User Support Policy
ICH Anti-Discrimination Policy
ICH Service User Protection Policy
ICH Feedback and Complaints Policy
ICH Human Rights Policy

References
Human Rights Act 2019