

LIFESTYLES

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Sharing the work of North West Support Services across the North West Region

NDIS AUDIT

Over the last few months we have been constantly referring to and preparing for the coming NDIS audit. The audit, which was done in two stages is now complete and our results are in. In the first stage we had to supply extensive documentation on how we run NWSS. In the second stage we had to provide proof that we were providing the service we claimed we were delivering. The auditors spoke to randomly selected people we support, their families, support workers and some of the agencies we deal with.

NWSS has, since inception more than twenty-nine years ago, worked at creating tools and systems to create optimal standards to complement government requirements.

The tools and systems included:

- Creating our own program guide, **Building Better Lives**
- Creating meeting agendas that support Building Better Lives – **Lifestyle Support Team Meeting Agenda & Minutes**
- Using the **The Human Need Hierarchy** as a primary service delivery guide
- An exhaustive guide for helping people make better decisions – **The Dilemma of Dangerous Decisions & Choices**
- A structure that eliminates waste and directs savings to protection and life enrichment programs for the people we support – **NWSS Structural History**
- Producing our own training videos with Armstrong Media
- Eliminating reception interfaces to ensure close personal contact with the people we support and their support workers
- A developmental approach to ensure that both the people we support, and their support workers have continual opportunities for personal development regardless of disabling, health or socially marginalising conditions
- Holding the importance of “home” and “cultural inclusion” as foundational goals

We are happy to share documentation and videos on request.

The rewards for this effort have seen NWSS hold its position of having the smallest staff turnover in the sector. The longevity of our management team and workforce has helped attract the ultimate compliment that I will come to shortly.

In the final debrief at the end of our audit we were told that we would be recommended for certification. As expected, some minor improvements were needed, and some suggestions were offered.

Highlights from our debriefing included being told:

- That we were exceptionally responsive in that, whatever they asked for we could supply immediately
- That we have very good practices in the area of Rights and Responsibilities
- That we have very robust NDIS incident reporting practices in that, we over report to be on the safe side and our reports are well detailed

The ultimate compliment was clear evidence of an “**innate caring culture**” that came through consistently in interviews with people we support, their families, staff and other service providers. Such a culture, we were told, could only be created by leadership at all levels from the top down, and could not be manipulated ready for an audit. Such a caring culture, we were told, was obviously the result of longevity of staff coupled with training, experience, leadership and resultant confidence. It was also found that, over and above certificate training, staff knew what they were doing and were prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Our management of the COVID-19 threat was seen by them as impressive and providing a high level of safety and security which had come through in staff and family interviews.

The final report from the auditor confirms in writing what we heard in our debrief:

“The organisation appears to have an effective business model based on outsourcing infrastructure to enable the purchase of services required when needed, with a focus on investing in the quality of supports. There is a small operational management team consisting of the General Manager – Neal Rodwell, Direct Service Manager – Lee-Anne Aulich, and Operations Manager – Teresa Inkson. This team is supported by Direct Service Coordinators who work with and have direct supervision of support workers. Absences are covered with the Insource Coordination Assistance Pool, and succession planning is enabled through a step-up program in the absence of members of the management team. The Operational Management team reports to the Board.”

*There was a range of documents and processes reviewed during the audit, including interviews with staff and participants, and while 4 minor corrective actions were raised, there was strong evidence that the management team understood the requirements of the standard. **There was consistent evidence demonstrated during the audit that***

carers, supervisors and the management team sincerely and passionately care about the participants for whom they provide supports. The organisation appears to have robust and effective quality processes in place to support recommendation for certification.

At the writing of this newsletter the minor corrections had been completed and passed by the auditor clearing NWSS for full certification

The board and management team thank all of our support workers, outsources and friends who helped bring in this result.

Building Lives & Communities