



DISABILITY
SERVICES
COMMISSION



Local Area Coordination

family, friends, community



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Local Area Coordination

The Disability Services Commission provides Local Area Coordination support in the Perth metropolitan area and throughout all regional areas of Western Australia. The program has been operating since 1988.

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are based in local communities and each provides support and assistance to between 50 and 65 people with disabilities. This enables the support provided by LACs to be personalised, flexible and responsive. LACs aim to build and maintain effective working relationships with individuals and families in their local area.

Local Area Coordination is available to people with physical, sensory, neurological, cognitive and/or intellectual disability who are under the age of 60 at the time they apply for LAC support.

The LAC operates as a service coordinator rather than a service provider and, as such, is there to help the person with the disability and their families/carers where appropriate to plan, select and receive needed supports and services.

LACs also contribute to building inclusive communities through partnership and collaboration with individuals and families, local organisations and the broader community. The overall aim of the LAC program is to support people with disabilities to live within welcoming and supportive communities.



Local Area Coordination Framework

VISION

All people live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support and a 'fair go' for everyone, including people with disabilities, their families and carers.

Developing a vision for a good life is a personal and individual matter. However, people with disabilities and their families throughout the state have expressed their view that a good life in the local community requires opportunities for valued relationships, security for the future, choices, contribution and challenge.

CHARTER

To develop partnerships with individuals and families as they build and pursue their goals and dreams for a good life, and with local communities to strengthen their capacity to include people with disabilities as valued citizens.

PRINCIPLES

- 1 As citizens, people with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as all other people to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.
- 2 People with disabilities and their families are in the best position to determine their own needs and goals, and to plan for the future.
- 3 Families, friends and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.
- 4 People with disabilities and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be their most powerful and enduring leaders, decision makers and advocates.
- 5 Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and to gain more control over their lives.
- 6 Communities are enriched by the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, and these communities are the most important way of providing friendship, support and a meaningful life to people with disabilities and their families and carers.
- 7 The lives of people with disabilities and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred supports and services and control the required resources, to the extent that they desire.
- 8 Services provided by government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a good life for people with disabilities.
- 9 Partnerships between individuals, families and carers, communities, governments, service providers and the business sector are vital in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.
- 10 People with disabilities have a life-long capacity for learning, development and contribution.

The LAC approach

People with disabilities and their families throughout the state have expressed a view that they value the approach of Local Area Coordination when it is characterised by the following qualities:

Values and attitudes

- ✓ Committed to the vision and principles of LAC
- ✓ Not 'values-free'
- ✓ Commitment to community
- ✓ Commitment to valued social roles for people with disabilities
- ✓ Recognises diversity and individuality

Relationships

- ✓ Listens/actively listens/ability to listen
- ✓ Not an 'authority', not always having an answer
- ✓ Non-judgemental; non-discriminatory
- ✓ Trusting relationships and shared partnerships
- ✓ Humility and willingness to learn
- ✓ Approachable, positive passionate, open, friendly and respectful
- ✓ Someone to talk to but not 'best friend'
- ✓ Respectful of confidentiality
- ✓ Ability to adapt their relationships to suit different families
- ✓ 'In tune' with families; ability to build rapport
- ✓ Commitment to long-term relationships

Effectiveness qualities

- ✓ Creative and Flexible
- ✓ Well-informed, knowledgeable and has an understanding of the big picture
- ✓ A 'can do' approach
- ✓ Focus on ability rather than deficits
- ✓ Provides information that includes all options
- ✓ Ability to explore goals and dreams

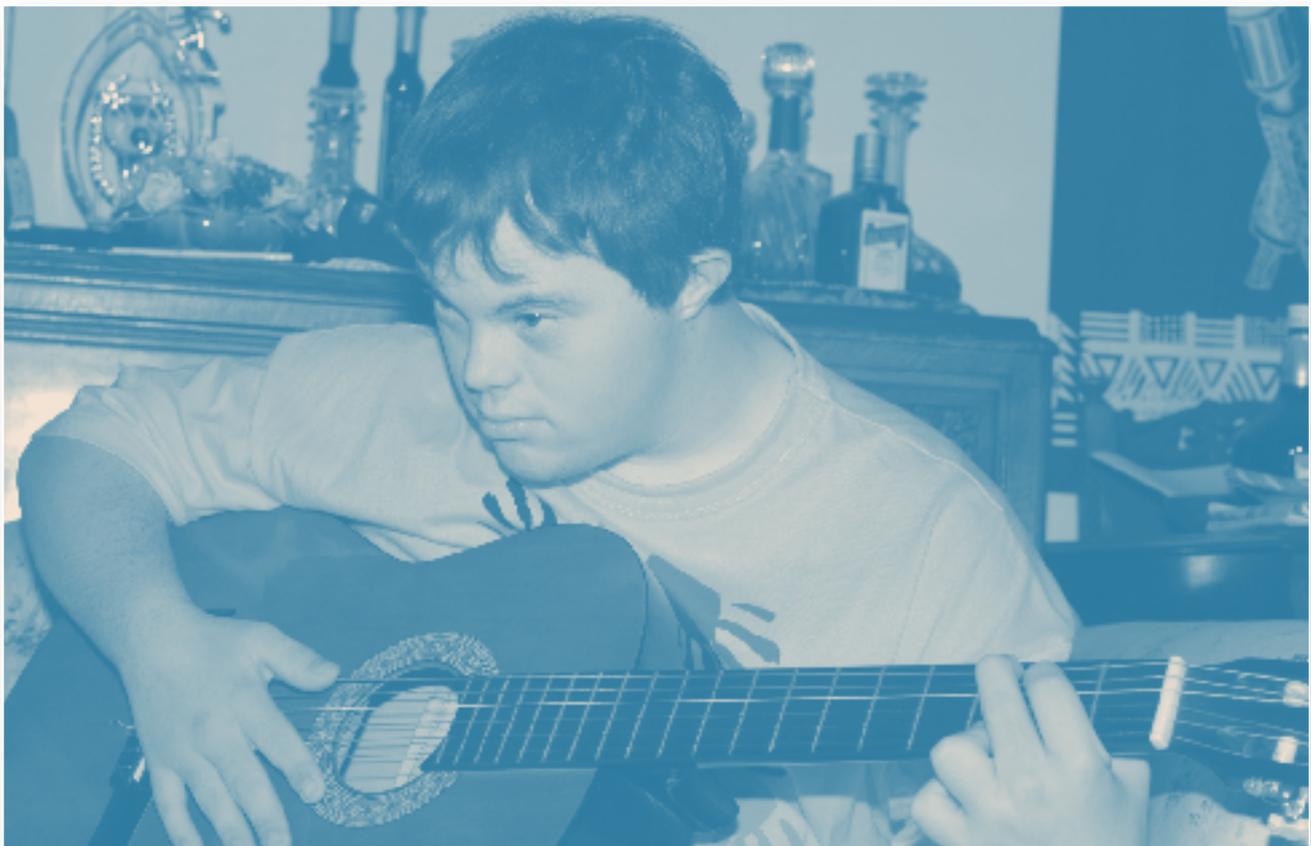
Personal-professional qualities

- ✓ Ability to network and link people together
- ✓ Supports the empowerment of families and individuals
- ✓ Strong understanding and skills in advocacy
- ✓ Stable, personal, consistent
- ✓ Strong local connections
- ✓ Meets with people in their homes and community
- ✓ Being the 'bridge'/'the link'
- ✓ Work from where 'people are at!'



The role of the Local Area Coordinator

- 1** Build and maintain effective working relationships with individuals, families and their communities.
- 2** Provide accurate and timely information. Assist individuals, families and communities to access information through a variety of means.
- 3** Provide individuals and families with support and practical assistance to clarify their goals, strengths and needs.
- 4** Promote self advocacy. Provide advocacy support and access to independent advocacy when required.
- 5** Contribute to building inclusive communities through partnership and collaboration with individuals and families, local organisations, and the broader community.
- 6** Assist individuals and families to utilise personal and local community networks to develop practical solutions to meet their goals and needs.
- 7** Assist individuals and families to access the supports and services they need to pursue their identified goals and needs.



Examples to illustrate seven aspects of the LAC role

The following examples of typical, every-day activities have been developed to illustrate some of the important aspects of the LAC role. They are examples of how the LAC can engage with and support individuals, families, carers and their communities. They are snapshots or insights into the work of the LAC without being a prescriptive list of activities that will apply in all situations. It should be noted that these examples are not an exhaustive list of all LAC activity.

1 Build and maintain effective working relationships with individuals, families and their communities.

- ✓ The LAC regularly visits a family home to discuss issues of importance to the person with a disability and their family.
- ✓ The LAC spends time at the local community centre meeting with local people and groups to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities into local initiatives and events held in and around the community.
- ✓ The LAC provides the Disability Services Commission with information about trends and issues of importance for people with disabilities living in their local area.

2 Provide accurate and timely information. Assist individuals, families and communities to access information through a variety of means.

- ✓ The LAC arranges for an experienced interpreter to explain guardianship issues to the elders of a remote Aboriginal community.

This assists a family and the community to make decisions about a guardianship application for a young man with a cognitive impairment.

- ✓ Following a family's move to an area, contact is made with an LAC. Over a period of time the LAC links the family to various means of accessing information such as websites, mailing addresses, formal and informal networks.
 - ✓ During the first few meetings with the parents of a child with a disability, the LAC provides an overview of the Disability Services Commission and offers information about the Commission's programs and services as well as information about other supports and services.
- ## 3 Provide individuals and families with support and practical assistance to clarify their goals, strengths and needs.
- ✓ The LAC assists parents to plan for the transition of their young child into the school system. Through a series of home visits, and one important visit to the local school, the LAC assists with the preparation of an action plan to deal with all the issues associated with starting school.
 - ✓ An LAC links the parents of a young man with a severe intellectual disability living in a country town with a small voluntary organisation that provides practical assistance in the use of planning techniques. This assists the family to plan effectively to meet the goals and needs of the young man.

- ✓ A man with a disability talks about one day living in his own home. The man, his parents, and the LAC discuss a plan for some long-term strategies which assist the young man towards identifying and accessing the local networks which strengthen the opportunities for this to happen, and maintain his family connections.

4 Promote self advocacy. Provide advocacy support and access to independent advocacy when required.

- ✓ A man with a degenerative neurological condition believes that he is being discriminated against by the members of the body corporate at the block of residential units in which he is a tenant. He calls on his LAC for assistance to plan and prepare for his attendance at the next meeting of the body corporate during which he plans to express his concerns.
- ✓ The LAC assists a person with a physical disability who is having problems gaining required services from a local Home and Community Care (HACC) agency. The LAC provides information about the particular agency, including services available and the eligibility criteria and assists the person to explore how best to approach the agency. The LAC then attends the meetings and offers assistance where necessary.
- ✓ A child with multiple disabilities travels from a small country town to Perth on a regular basis to attend specialist medical appointments.

The child's parents have had difficulty in getting the medical facilities to co-ordinate appointments to minimise the time spent in Perth. The LAC successfully advocates on behalf of the family to ensure that future visits are planned and co-ordinated.

5 Contribute to building inclusive communities through partnership and collaboration with individuals and families, local organisations, and the broader community.

- ✓ An LAC is a member of the local government access committee and has highlighted a range of issues that restrict the mobility and community participation of people with disabilities. He will soon vacate the position to be replaced by a young woman with a physical disability who is keen to contribute and take on a leadership role in the local community.
- ✓ The LACs within a district/region work in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to connect with other local organisations and individuals to form a community group which builds on and assists in developing the strengths of that community. The group includes land development representatives, local not for profit groups, councillors, interested individuals, business people, and volunteers.

Examples to illustrate seven aspects of the LAC role

- ✓ An LAC has been actively involved in a local youth coordinating committee and has also established some good connections with local churches. As a result, the LAC brings together a youth worker, a local church member and a music teacher who has experience working with young people with disabilities to establish an inclusive music workshop program which is open to all young people in the area.

6 **Assist individuals and families to use personal and local community networks to develop practical solutions to meet their goals and needs.**

- ✓ The LAC has used her knowledge of the local community to link the parent of a child with high support needs with another family in the local area. Through this connection arrangements are made for the child with the disability to be taken to school each day in the family vehicle rather than having to use specialised transport which has proven to be problematic.
- ✓ A mature woman with an intellectual disability who lives on her own has recently moved into the area and has become socially isolated. The LAC gets to know her and finds out she is interested in craft and attending church. Consequently, the LAC introduces her to a local church and craft group and she makes new friends who visit her and are able to provide her with support when needed. She also finds a valuable role in the church.

- ✓ An LAC assists the parents of a child with disabilities to explore ways that they might enlist the support of immediate and extended family.

7 **Assist individuals and families to access the supports and services they need to pursue their identified goals and needs.**

- ✓ A family has recently moved into a new area. Over a period of time the LAC provides information about local formal supports with which the family wish to connect. The young woman with the disability is assisted to connect with the local educational organisations to pursue her chosen path of study, and given information to assist her in making her own decisions about transport.
- ✓ LACs in a country region take a leadership role in the development of a carer register which enables disability service agencies and other human service organisations to collaborate on the recruitment, selection, training and support of support workers and paid carers.
- ✓ Following an extended period of discussion and planning, an LAC assists the ageing parents of a young man with severe and multiple disabilities to apply for funding to purchase needed supports.

The assumptions underpinning the principles of Local Area Coordination

1 As citizens, people with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as all other people to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.

Assumptions:

- All people have a contribution to make to society.
- All people should have opportunities to make a contribution to society.
- All people should have the opportunity to take risks in their quest to lead good lives.
- Disability should not be a barrier to citizenship.
- All people should be given the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the 'building blocks' of life: education, training, employment, leisure, community life.
- Community connectedness is essential for a good life.
- Segregation, isolation, marginalisation and 'congregation on the basis of disability' are damaging to all people.
- Community participation provides opportunities for people to make valued contributions.
- For all members of society, rights come with responsibilities.

2 People with disabilities and their families are in the best position to determine their own needs and goals, and to plan for the future.

Assumptions:

- Families are the most important and enduring support for a person with a disability.
- Families generally want what is best for each family member.
- Brothers and sisters can be in a position to support other siblings.
- When resources and supports are chosen and controlled by the person with the disability and/or their family, they are more likely to fit in well with family life.
- All people have a desire to pursue dreams and develop trusting relationships.
- All people need other people.

3 Families, friends and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.

Assumptions:

- Active involvement in family life adds richness to the lives of individuals.
- Friendships are the bridge between individuals and community.
- Involvement in friendships, groups and community life enables people to develop valued roles in society.

The assumptions underpinning the principles of Local Area Coordination

- Families can gather information and learn from other families.
- Families give on-going commitment, support, security, love, belonging and a values base.

- 4** People with disabilities and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be their most powerful and enduring leaders, decision makers and advocates.

Assumptions:

- People with disabilities and their families have a legitimate authority for advocacy and leadership which stems from their direct involvement in the issues associated with disability.
- Leadership, decision making and advocacy are most effective when they are based on natural (legitimate) authority.

- 5** Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and to gain more control over their lives.

Assumptions:

- Information is a powerful tool for decision-making.
- Accurate and timely information is essential for good decision-making.
- All people gain greater control of their lives when they have real choices and can make decisions for the future.

- People with disabilities and their families gain information and advice from a wide range of sources.
- People receive and process information in different ways. Relevant information should be available in alternative formats and in alternative modes of presentation.

- 6** Communities are enriched by the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, and these communities are the most important way of providing friendship, support and a meaningful life to people with disabilities and their families and carers.

Assumptions:

- Society is enriched when all citizens are allowed to contribute their knowledge, skills, creativity and opinions.
- Communities need to become more aware of the rights, needs and goals of all people.

- 7** The lives of people with disabilities and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred supports and services and control the required resources, to the extent that they desire.

Assumptions:

- Individuals and families are best placed to monitor changing needs and goals.



- All people gain a greater sense of control when they are directly involved in decision making about their lives.
- All people gain a greater sense of security when they have some control over the resources they need to live their lives.

8 Services provided by government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a good life for people with disabilities.

Assumptions:

- Families have their own resources to meet needs and to pursue dreams.
- Additional supports and services may be needed by people with disabilities and their families to meet needs and pursue goals.

9 Partnerships between individuals, families and carers, communities, governments, service providers and the business sector are vital in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

Assumption:

- Resources, supports and services should complement the natural resources available to people with disabilities and their families.

10 People with disabilities have a life-long capacity for learning, development and contribution.

Assumption:

- All people in society should be credited with the capacity to grow, develop and make a contribution to the world around them.



Some comments about LACs



“ My LAC has been great. He has assisted me to deal with lots of issues that were causing me problems. I was really worried about Amy starting school but this was handled really well. The LAC gave me a lot of information and we planned for meetings at the school – it all worked out well for Amy. ”

“ We used to dread the regular trips to Perth for appointments with the specialists. But one day Jan (LAC) suggested that we try videoconferencing as an alternative way of linking up with the therapists. It was great. We now have a regular session ‘on line’ and my daughter and our whole family avoids all the stress. The LAC has come up with good ideas on many issues. ”

“ We need all sorts of support for Gary. We link up with quite a few different agencies and it has been great to have the LAC work with us to plan and coordinate this. I get a lot of confidence from knowing that I can lift the phone and call her. ”

“ I think sometimes that we do not appreciate the work that is done by people like our Cindy (LAC). You might say, “that’s their job”, “that’s what they are paid for”, but that is not the full story. Our LAC is a constant source of support and she brings optimism. We have been assisted to look into the future and plan with confidence. This is great. ”



DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION

Local Area Coordination

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