

# Advantages and disadvantages

## AOD client engagement and participation activities

Insight Training and Education Unit  
 Metro North Mental Health – Alcohol and Drug Service  
 Metro North Hospital and Health Service  
 Floor 4, 270 Roma St, Brisbane QLD 4000  
 Phone: 07 3837 5655

Client engagement and participation has many benefits and can lead to better health outcomes, service satisfaction, quality of care and treatment retention. In order for these benefits to be realised, avoid tokenism. This involves planning and consideration of what is achievable for both clients and the service. You may wish to add your own thoughts to the table below.

Activity	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Survey's</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous</li> <li>• Good for data collection</li> <li>• Not very time consuming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low response rates</li> <li>• Questions may be misunderstood</li> <li>• Can seem cold and faceless</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback and suggestion boxes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to set up</li> <li>• Anonymous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily forgotten unless good processes are in place</li> <li>• Not good for clients with literacy problems</li> </ul>
<b>Telephone interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous</li> <li>• Using an independent person can encourage views to be shared (e.g. not the client's caseworker)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be hard to contact people</li> <li>• People may be busy or preoccupied</li> </ul>
<b>Face to face interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High response rates</li> <li>• Gets individual views</li> <li>• Good for people with low literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel obliged to respond</li> <li>• Costly in terms of staff time and skills</li> </ul>
<b>Focus groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different viewpoints can come together</li> <li>• Informal and relaxed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be difficult to arrange</li> <li>• Need to make sure all views are heard</li> </ul>
<b>Client shadowing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick and easy way to get client feedback and ideas on improving service environments</li> <li>• Demonstrates client opinions are valued</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk services not acting on feedback and therefore wasting the time clients have contributed</li> </ul>
<b>Client advisory groups, committees and planning groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases sense of ownership</li> <li>• Develops participant's skills</li> <li>• People have more influence regarding specific issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everyone feels confident to take part in this way</li> <li>• Support needs can be heavy and time consuming</li> </ul>
<b>Clients involved in service evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides skills and experience of team work and a shared commitment to act on findings of evaluation</li> <li>• Leads to increased service satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be seen as less objective as the people doing the evaluation have a vested interest in the services/programs</li> </ul>
<b>Involving clients in education and training of staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New staff meet are inducted with client informed training</li> <li>• Demonstrates service values of client engagement and participation</li> <li>• Client expertise is utilised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires well established structures, resourcing, support and training for clients</li> </ul>

Adapted from: Street, C. & Herts, B. (2005). *Putting participation into practice: A guide for practitioners working in services to promote the mental health and well-being of children and young people*. Young Minds: London.

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