

# Our health and disability system

## Voice of communities and consumers

People should be at the centre of our future health system that is listening and acting on the voices of consumers, whānau, and communities in the design and delivery of health services.

### What's changing?

The future system will be supported by a clear set of expectations and guidelines for how local, regional, and national organisations should listen to and involve communities and consumers. This will ensure everyone understands the importance of the community and whānau voices in the services they use.

We know providers and organisations can struggle to engage some consumers in a meaningful way. Our future system will support Health New Zealand, the Māori Health Authority, and the Ministry of Health with best practice on engaging consumers, whānau, and communities in line with the expectations and guidelines.

Alongside this, we will bring together consumer groups into a more accessible national system of consumer forums. These forums will connect Health NZ, the Māori Health Authority, and the Ministry of Health to national, regional, and local consumer groups to make sure the right voices are heard, in the right way.

The forums will also ensure consumers are kept informed about the outcomes of engagement or any relevant changes to our health system. The forums won't advocate for individual consumers, but will advocate for their voices to be heard at all levels of the system, and help existing quality consumer and community groups effectively represent their people.

Finally, the future system will work toward a single mechanism for gathering feedback and consumer experiences across the country so consumers, whānau, and communities can clearly see how their feedback, both positive and negative, will be heard and acted upon.

### Why?

There is huge variability in how the consumer and community voice is heard across regions and providers. Some areas of our system engage consumers in a really meaningful way, but others have little or no engagement. The voices of vulnerable populations, including Māori, are particularly under-prioritised.

It can be difficult for consumers, whānau, and communities to know how their voice can be heard and for the system to know it is listening to the right voices. There is little accountability for ensuring consumer voice is prioritised and not much support for providers on how to do it.

## What will it look like in future?

Our future system will:

- make it easy for consumers, communities, and whānau to contribute to our health system, from feeding into the design of their local services through to contributing to national strategies and plans
- clarify our expectations for how the voice of consumers and communities is captured in the system nationally, regionally, and locally
- improve tools and support for organisations to involve people, particularly vulnerable populations who have traditionally been underserved
- support existing consumer and community groups to be part of a stronger forum at national, regional or local levels, so that there is a clear and consistent mechanism for partnership
- appropriately elevate and embed the Māori voice as a central pillar of consumer voice with a “by Māori, for Māori” approach
- make sure there is a clear and consistent feedback pathway across the entire system to make it easy for consumers and whānau to say if their expectations are not met.

## What's next?

We will introduce some of these structures and frameworks to ensure the consumer voice is prioritised over the next 18 months as we transition to the new system. We will also test new ways of capturing the consumer voice at a local level, particularly for vulnerable populations.

This work will include engagement with the health sector and with consumers, whānau, and communities.

## Want to know more?

Further information about the work and progress of the health reforms is available on the DPMC website under the work of the Transition Unit:

[www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/transition-unit](http://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/transition-unit)