



Disability Services Commission – Local Operations

Local Coordination framework

Family, friends, community – a good life

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Contents

Local Coordination	3
Local Coordination framework	4
Assumptions underpinning the principles of Local Coordination	5
Service Outcomes.....	9
Local Coordination approach.....	9
Local Coordinator role.....	11
Examples to illustrate the role	11
Further information	15

Local Coordination

Local Coordination has been supporting West Australians with disability and their families and carers since 1988.

Local Coordinators (Coordinators) assist people with disability to plan, organise and access supports and services which enhance their participation in and contribution to their local community.

In addition, Coordinators work with family members and others involved in supporting people with disability so that they are strengthened and supported in their caring role.

Coordinators also work with people with disability and their families/carers to make local communities more inclusive and welcoming through education, advocacy and development of partnerships with local community members and organisations, government agencies and businesses.

Local Coordination is available to people with intellectual, physical, sensory, neurological and/or cognitive disability who are under the age of 65 at the time they apply for Coordinator support.

Coordinators are located across the Perth metropolitan area and throughout all regional areas of Western Australia. Each Coordinator works with between 50 and 65 people with disability, providing personalised, flexible and responsive support.

Local Coordination Framework

Vision

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

Developing a vision for a good life is a personal and individual matter. However, people with disability 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 disability as valued citizens.

Principles

- As citizens, people with disability have rights and responsibilities to participate and contribute to community life.
- People with disability and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be the most powerful and enduring leaders, decision-makers and advocates.
- Families, friends and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.
- Communities are enriched by the inclusion and participation of people with disability and are the most important way of providing friendship, support and a meaningful life for people with disability, their families and carers.
- People with disability and their families are in the best position to determine their own needs, goals and to plan for the future.
- Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and to have greater personal choice and control in their lives.
- The lives of people with disability and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred support and services and control required resources to the extent that they desire.
- People with disability have a life-long capacity for learning, development and contribution.
- Government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a good life for people with disability.
- Partnerships between individuals, families and carers, communities, governments, service providers and the business sector are vital in meeting the needs of people with disability.

Assumptions underpinning the principles of Local Coordination

1. As citizens, people with disability have rights and responsibilities to participate and contribute to community life.

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 and 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 disability and their families have natural authority and are best placed to be the most powerful and enduring leaders, decision-makers and advocates.

Assumptions

- People with disability and their families have a legitimate authority for advocacy and leadership that 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.

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

4. Communities are enriched by the inclusion and participation of people with disability and are the most important way of providing friendship, support and a meaningful life for people with disability, 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.

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

Assumptions

- Families are the most important and enduring support for a person with 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 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.

6. Access to timely and accurate information enables people to make appropriate decisions and have greater personal control in 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 disability 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.

7. The lives of people with disability and their families are enhanced when they can determine their preferred support 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. People with disability have a life-long capacity for learning, development and contribution.

Assumptions

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

9. Government and community agencies complement and support the primary role of families, carers and communities in achieving a good life for people with disability.

Assumptions

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

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

Assumptions

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

Service Outcomes which will be reported on in Local Coordination

- Choice and control over life
- Community participation
- Family relationships
- Learning new skills
- Safety and security
- Supporting family, friends and carers
- Wellbeing

Local Coordination approach

People with disability and their families throughout the State have expressed the view that they value a Local Coordination approach characterised by the following attributes:

Values

- Committed to Local Coordination's vision, charter and principles
- Not 'values-free'
- Community commitment
- Committed to valued social roles for people with disability
- Recognises diversity and individuality.

Relationships and attitudes

- 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 and able to build rapport
- Commitment to long-term relationships.

Effectiveness

- Creative and flexible
- Well-informed and knowledgeable with an understanding of the 'big picture'
- Has a 'can do' approach
- Able to focus on ability rather than deficits
- Provides or assists in the provision of information that includes options, opportunities and choices
- Ability to explore goals and dreams.

Personal and Professional

- Ability to network and link people together
- Supports the empowerment of individuals and families
- Displays a strong understanding of disability matters and has sound advocacy skills
- Stable, personal, consistent
- Strong local connections
- Meets with people in their homes and community
- Being 'the bridge' or 'the link'
- Work from 'where people are at'.

Local Coordinator role

1. Build and maintain effective working relationships with individuals, families/carers and their communities.
2. Provide accurate and timely information. Assist individuals, families/carers and communities to access information through a variety of means.
3. Provide individuals and families/carers with support and practical assistance to clarify their goals, strengths and needs and to plan for the future.
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/carers, local organisations and the broader community.
6. Assist individuals and families/carers to use personal and local community networks to develop practical solutions to meet their needs and goals.
7. Assist individuals and families/carers to access the supports and services they need to pursue their identified needs and goals.

Examples to illustrate seven aspects of the Local Coordinator role

The following examples of typical, every-day activities have been developed to illustrate some of the important aspects of the Coordinator role. They are examples of how the Coordinator can engage with and support individuals, families, carers and their communities. They are snapshots or insights into the work of the Coordinator 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 Coordinator activity.

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

- The Coordinator regularly visits a family home to discuss issues of importance to the person with disability and their family.
- The Coordinator spends time at the local community centre meeting with local people and groups to facilitate the inclusion of people with disability into local initiatives and events held in and around the community.

- The Coordinator provides the Disability Services Commission with information about trends and issues of importance for people with disability living in their local area.

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

- The Coordinator 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 a Coordinator. Over a period of time the Coordinator links the family to various means of accessing information such as formal and informal networks, websites, and mailing addresses.
- During the first few meetings with the parents of a child with disability, the Coordinator provides an overview of the Commission and offers information about its programs and services as well as information about other supports and services.

3. Provide individuals and families/carers with support and practical assistance to clarify their goals, strengths and needs and to plan for the future.

- The Coordinator 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 Coordinator assists with the preparation of an action plan to deal with all the issues associated with starting school.
- A Coordinator 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 disability talks about one day living in his own home. The man, his parents and the Coordinator discuss a plan for some long-term strategies which assist the young man towards identifying and accessing the local networks that strengthen the opportunities for this to happen and also maintain his family connections.
- The Coordinator works with all people with disability in the local area to develop individualised plans which reflect their unique circumstances, goals and dreams. The plans detail actions, the impact of which can be reviewed at a future date to ensure progress towards realising the stated goals. Some strategies will build on people's informal networks and resources available in the community, while others will require funding.

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 Coordinator 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 Coordinator assists a person with a physical disability who is having problems gaining required services from a local agency. The Coordinator 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 Coordinator then attends the meetings with the person 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 Coordinator successfully advocates on behalf of the family to ensure that future visits are well planned and coordinated.

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

- A Coordinator 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 disability. He will soon vacate the position and links in a young woman with a physical disability who is keen to contribute and take on a leadership role in the local community.
- The Coordinators within a district/region work in partnership with people with disability and their families to connect with other local organisations and individuals to form a community group that 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.
- A Coordinator has been actively involved in a local youth coordinating committee and has also established some good connections with local churches. As a result, the Coordinator brings together a youth worker, a local church member and a music teacher who has experience working with young people with disability to establish an inclusive music workshop program which is open to all young people in the area.

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

- The Coordinator 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 Coordinator gets to know her and finds out she is interested in craft and attending church. Consequently, the Coordinator 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.
- A Coordinator assists the parents of a child with disability to explore ways that they might enlist the support of immediate and extended family.

7. Assist individuals and families/carers 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 Coordinator provides information about local formal supports with which the family wish to connect. The young woman with disability is assisted to connect with the local educational organisations to pursue her chosen path of study and is given information to assist her in making her own decisions about transport.
- Coordinators in a country region take a leadership role in the development of a support-person 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, a Coordinator assists the ageing parents of a young man with severe and multiple disabilities to apply for funding to purchase needed supports.

Further information

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