



WATERLOO NSW

HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

Waterloo Community Navigator Tool:

Connecting People to the Right Services

Workshop Participant handbook

Acknowledgment of Land

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional owner of this land, and pay our respect to their elders. We thank them for their careful custody of the land where we live, work and play.

Brief Introduction of the Human Services Plan

The Waterloo Human Services Collaborative Group (WHSCG) has been established to assist with engagement, planning and coordinated responses by human services agencies with the Waterloo community in advance of the Waterloo Estate redevelopment to address the current and future needs of the Waterloo community.

The WHSCG developed the Waterloo Human Services Action Plan (the Plan) in late 2021.

The Plan includes six priority areas:

- (1) Improved safety
- (2) Improved health and wellbeing
- (3) Improved communication, consultation, and community participation
- (4) Improved customer service
- (5) Improved service integration and service accessibility for all service users and
- (6) Improved responses to systemic issues (and accountability) on an ongoing basis.

Action 2.2 of the plan was tasked to increase Wellbeing Checks on Tenants

Our working group identified several services in Waterloo, where staff and volunteer regularly connect with residents.

Staff and volunteers interact with individuals for various reasons, identifying that they could benefit from additional support that they are not equipped to provide.

This can potentially result in gaps in support for residents.

It is hoped that with the navigator's tool kit, we can help bridge these gaps by providing staff and volunteers with the necessary tools and guidance to assist residents in navigating and accessing appropriate support.

What do we mean by community navigator?

As the name suggests, a community navigator helps people navigate community and government support services and allows them to connect to the community.

You are probably already connecting others to the community.

As a navigator, when you meet someone, you get to know them and introduce them to the community.

The Community Navigators tool aims to help make this process more intentional and to give you the resources, tools and access to peer support.

This will hopefully mean more people will be connected, especially those who may fall between the cracks and not be connected through other means.

What is the Waterloo Navigator Tool Kit?

The Waterloo Community Navigator Check Tool is designed to assist the navigator in gaining a general understanding of the issues the resident may require additional support with.

The tool kit is only required for navigators whose core service is not designed for case management purposes .

Community Navigators may, however, regularly encounter residents who need assistance regarding health, housing, social support, domestic violence, financial concerns, or other matters requiring further help or support.

This tool is accompanied by a service directory, which provides the navigator with information on services available to the resident and can help you suggest and signpost services that are better equipped to assist the residents.

Who Should Use the Waterloo Navigator Tool?

The tool is designed to assist community services, government service workers, and authorised volunteers from community organisations who may not specialise in referrals and casework but still need to connect people with the right services and support.

Alternatively, it can also be used for residents who want to independently describe their support needs before attending a support service.

If the navigator feels that they or the Resident is at risk, they can report it to their leads and emergency services as necessary.

The navigator or the Resident can stop the conversation if they feel uncomfortable discussing specific issues further.

Community navigation approach principles

Socially focused - Community Navigators concentrate on supporting individuals to enhance their social world, working with people to feel more engaged and connected to others and their communities.

Asset-based - Community Navigators are champions of the community. They continually seek to develop their knowledge of the local area and use this to connect individuals to resources that will help them meet other people and feel part of their community.

Positively focused - Community Navigators work with the individual to identify the next step to achieve the individual's goals. The approach is future-focused, looking for positive connections.

Person-centred - Support is individualised. It focuses on the needs, goals, and preferences of the individual. Community Navigators work collaboratively with the person rather than doing things to or for the person.

Non-directive - As a Community Navigator, you will have your ideas, goals, and agenda, but these are secondary to those of the person you are supporting, who directs the pace and direction of your journey together.

What is a community navigator's role?

Offer a general wellbeing check-in.

Signpost or support residents to access appropriate support that is better placed to assist them with their challenges.

Provide support to enable meaningful and sustainable social contact and connections.

To focus on the strengths of the person they are supporting and the incremental steps that can be taken towards reaching their goals.

Maintaining good knowledge of the local area helps to connect individuals to community resources that will help them meet other people and feel like they are part of their community.

Signpost people to case management providers or other specialist support where this is needed.

Alert appropriate emergency services or other relevant authorities where there is a concern for someone's immediate safety and wellbeing.

Work within the guidance and policies of their organisation

A community navigator does not...

- Have to attend activities with someone or become friends with them.
- Not to Provide assessments or structured Case management, psychological support, or counselling.
- Not to advise on medication or other medical matters or offer or suggest diagnoses and symptoms.
- Not to advise or advocate on practical issues, such as housing, employment, debt, benefits, and rights.
- Not to help with daily tasks, such as shopping, cleaning, food preparation, and attending appointments if they are out of their usual role.
- Not to provide indefinite support or create a dependent relationship.
- Not to act as an emergency responder, make promises or raise expectations that cannot be guaranteed.
- Not to carry out any formal assessment typically undertaken by case managers.

Tips for Navigators in Getting to Know the local community

A crucial part of being a Community Navigator is getting to know the communities you work in. You may already come to the role with a good knowledge of your local area.

However, your work also involves gathering information about activities, groups and supports that are widely applicable and about resources relevant to people from communities or with particular identities, for instance, due to their ethnicity, sexuality or through having specific interests.

An essential part of your role will be sharing your knowledge of what's available locally with your Residents and other Community Navigator colleagues.

You can pool your knowledge, learn from the people you support, and hear what groups or activities they have used and found helpful in developing social connections.

We will provide you with a recent directory of helpful contacts for agencies currently supporting or working in the Waterloo area and details of online directory tools and apps at the end of this training.

In our experience, directories are not easy to keep updated. We recommend developing your resource spreadsheet and regularly checking in with Key Led services for changes.

We've come up with some key questions that may be helpful to think about as you get to know the local community:

1. Who do I know who is knowledgeable about this area and could tell me more about what's available?
2. Have I connected with any key community figures, services or community groups whose knowledge I could draw on?
3. Have I considered all the practical issues in attending this activity, group or service?
4. Before signposting others, have I considered cost, transport links and accessibility?
5. Have I considered all the possibilities of community centres, colleges, libraries, leisure centres, places of worship, activity groups and other less established places?
6. Have I visited venues and groups at different times to understand their atmosphere and whether people would feel welcome coming here?

How to Use:

This Navigator tool is structured to encourage responses to questions belonging to crucial support areas.

Before using the tool, we suggest you explain your agency's confidentiality policy and procedures and what the information will be used for.

Please also see the client consent section.

General overview of the tool

1. The tool guides your conversation; residents may need support in one or more areas.
2. Not all areas need to be explored; only those relevant to your conversation with the Resident.
3. The tool is to identify the general nature of the issue the client needs support on so you can locate the most suitable support agency,
4. It is meant to capture only the nature of the issue or support need, not all the nitty gritty details; the support service is better suited to doing this through its internal assessment process.
5. Suppose you or the residents identify any issues requiring immediate attention (such as eviction notices or risk of homelessness) or emergency issues (such as flooding, gas leaks, or fire damage). In that case, the navigator must refer to the local Human Service guide and connect the client to the appropriate crisis or emergency service.

Residents' contact details and demographic background.

This may be needed to ensure residents are correctly identified and can be contacted for follow-up.

It also helps collect a minimum primary data set information that most services are required to collect for their funders.

Residents are not required to disclose anything they are uncomfortable with, but it should be explained that not providing the information can make it difficult to assist them in connecting with other agencies.

General Section

This section is designed to give you a general sense of what areas the resident might be currently focused on, whether the support is for them or someone else, what support they might already use or be aware of, and if there are any immediate safety concerns or risks.

Housing:

This section identifies any support issues clients might need with their housing.

Some issues that might be recorded here included form filling, homelessness, overcrowding, outstanding maintenance, neighbour disputes, rent arrears, transfer requests, and safety concerns.

Social Connections:

In this section, ask questions to identify their social activity and interests and ensure they are not experiencing isolation or loneliness.

Some questions may include: Do you get out and about to meet people? What activities do you currently take part in? Are you connected with any local groups or organisations? What kind of social support do you have available to you? Would you be interested in hearing about or joining this activity or project?

Financial Security

In this section, ask questions to identify any financial or resource problems or difficulties the residents may be experiencing.

Some issues that might be documented here include benefit entitlement queries, debt issues, unaffordable rent or electric or gas bills, budgeting support needs, accessing affordable credit and advice on welfare benefits.

Health and Wellbeing

This section explores the resident's health and wellbeing needs.

Questions could include: Do you have any current physical or mental health problems? Have you got access to a G.P. or other medical services? Are there any activities that keep you healthy and active? Are there any barriers (or potential barriers) preventing you from accessing medical help and support?

Any other issues

This section covers other issues that may not have been included in the previous sections. These could include moving home, caring responsibilities, access to transport, education and training opportunities, volunteer work, or anything else they feel is relevant.

At the end of each conversation, you should record all relevant information that describes the nature of the issues so you can make the right suggestion for who can assist.

Legislation and professional guidance

Your organisation should have adequate policies and procedures concerning information collection, retention of records and disclosure of information. Some of the standard relevant legislation is highlighted below.

We Strongly recommend that organisations unfamiliar with this seek additional training and professional guidance.

- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)
- Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Part 13A of the Crimes (Domestic and Family Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy Regulation 2013 (Cth)
- Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 (Cth)

The five essential elements of informed consent in NSW to share information are:

- The individual gives consent voluntarily
- The individual is adequately informed before giving consent
- The consent is specific
- The consent is current
- The individual can understand and communicate their consent.

Signposting

What is Signposting?

Signposting guides individuals towards the appropriate service, support, or information they need, often within a community or healthcare setting. It involves offering clear directions, advice, and information to help people navigate complex systems and find the most suitable help.

Tips for Effective Signposting

Know Your Resources & Familiarise yourself with available services:

- Maintain an up-to-date directory of local resources.
- Develop relationships with service providers.
- Visit services when possible to understand what they offer.

Listen Actively & Understand the individual's needs:

- Take the time to listen without interrupting.
- Ask open-ended questions to gather comprehensive information.
- Show empathy and validate their concerns.

Clarify Understanding & Ensure the person understands your guidance:

- Use simple, jargon-free language.
- Confirm that the person understands the information you provide.
- Encourage them to ask questions if anything is unclear.

Be Specific & Provide clear and detailed directions:

- Give exact names, addresses, and contact details of services.
- Explain the steps they need to take to access the services.
- Offer options and alternatives if applicable.

Follow-up & Check-in after initial signposting:

- Arrange a follow-up call or meeting to see if they accessed the service.
- Offer additional support if they encounter barriers.
- Keep records of the support provided for future reference.

Stay Informed- Keep your knowledge current:

- Regularly update your directory of services.
- Attend training and workshops on new community resources.
- Subscribe to newsletters or join networks related to your field.

Empower the Individual & Encourage self-sufficiency where possible:

- Provide tools and resources that they can use independently.
- Please encourage them to take the first step, offering support as needed.
- Build their confidence in navigating systems on their own.

Maintain Confidentiality & Respect privacy and confidentiality:

- Only share information with consent.
- Handle personal data securely.
- Be aware of and adhere to relevant privacy laws and policies.

Be Patient and Supportive & Offer ongoing encouragement and assistance:

- Recognise that navigating services can be overwhelming.
- Provide reassurance and positive reinforcement.
- Be patient and give them time to process information.

Utilise Technology & Leverage digital tools to enhance signposting:

- Use apps and websites that offer information on local services.
- Provide digital guides or maps if available.
- Use email or text messages to send detailed information and reminders.

Effective signposting is crucial in helping individuals access the right services and support. By following these tips, community navigators can ensure they provide clear, empathetic, and practical guidance, making it easier for people to find the help they need. Remember, your role is not just to point the way but to empower individuals to take the path toward the support they require confidently.

Case Examples

Affordable Housing Assistance

Sarah, a single mother of two, struggled to find affordable housing after losing her job. Through the community navigator program, she was directed to a local, housing advisor who helped her apply for Public housing and secure temporary accommodation. This provided Sarah with a stable living environment and reduced her stress levels significantly, allowing her to focus on finding new employment.

Health Services Access

David, a 55-year-old man, had been experiencing chronic back pain but had difficulty accessing healthcare due to his limited mobility and lack of transport. A community navigator listened to his concerns and assisted him securing a care package and referred him to a local community transport provider, who assisted him in getting local medical services.

Social Connections

Emily, an elderly widow, felt isolated after moving to a new area to be closer to her family. She missed the social interactions she once had. The community navigator suggested she join a weekly local seniors' group. Emily now participates in various activities and has made new friends, alleviating her loneliness and enhancing her mental wellbeing.

Financial Advice

James, a young professional, was overwhelmed by mounting credit card debt and student loans. He reached out to the community navigator for help. The navigator referred him to a financial counselling service by the local legal centre that provided one-on-one advice on an outreach basis in the local community centre. James learned to manage his finances better, created a budget, and eventually consolidated his debts into a manageable payment plan. This guidance has set him on a path to financial stability.

Case Management Support

A recent immigrant, Mia faced numerous challenges, including language barriers, finding employment, and adjusting to a new culture. The community navigator connected her with a case management service at a local multicultural community centre that offers comprehensive support for newcomers. This service helped Mia enrol in English classes, assisted her with job applications, and provided cultural orientation. Mia now feels more confident and integrated into her new community.

These case examples illustrate community navigators' vital role in guiding residents to the appropriate services, ultimately improving their overall quality of life.

Waterloo collaborative resources

The Local Tenants Welcome Pack, Local Human Service Directory, and other relevant training material and tool kits are on the Waterloo Human Service Collaborative website.

www.waterloo2017.com

Service Seeker is another third-party online tool for finding services and community groups beyond Waterloo.

www.serviceseeker.com.au

Additional Local support

If, as a Waterloo community navigator, you need additional advice from those who do it as core work or to arrange a navigator's workshop, you can contact the following working group members.

Counterpoint Community Services - Mike Shreenan or support team members

info@counterpointcs.org.au

(02) 9698 9569

Mission Australia TPCE - Roopali Sharma

TenantparticipationCE@missionaustralia.com.au

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