



## 1.1 ACCESS, ELIGIBILITY AND EQUITY POLICY

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### Policy Statement:

The Access, Eligibility and Equity policy outlines the approach taken by Interchange Inner East towards the allocation and provision of services. The key values and principles in this policy are:

Services are made available to everyone who is entitled to them, free of any form of discrimination, responsive to and respectful of, community diversity.

Services are made available through a simple and consistent process.

Services are developed, allocated, and delivered on the basis of fair assessment and treatment of all participants eligible to access them, within a framework of consultation, participation and inclusion.

Eligible participants are informed of the services available, clearly communicated through provision of current, clear information,- how they can obtain them and associated costs or conditions.

Services will be sensitive to the needs and requirements of participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and be responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.

### Procedure:

#### Eligibility

To be eligible for funded services from Interchange Inner East participants must meet the following criteria:

- They have a disability as defined by the Disability Services Act 2006
- Live at home with their family or in home based care, including foster / long term care

Some funded services have additional eligibility criteria around age and locality that need to be met for a participant to be considered eligible for those specific services.

To be eligible for purchasable services participants must have access to funds that will enable full cost recovery of any service provided.

#### Access

Eligibility for the service does not guarantee access to the service. Access to Interchange Inner East services is determined by a range of factors including:

#### Location

Some of Interchange's programs have regional restrictions based on funding agreements. In the main Interchange provides programs and support to clients living in the municipalities of Boroondara, Manningham, Monash or Whitehorse.

### Age Range

Interchange Inner East is a service that supports families of children and young adults living with a disability. Participants generally exit the service around 35 years. Some services and programs provided by Interchange Inner East have specific age restrictions. This is usually a condition of the initial allocated funding for the program and also assists with compatibility and like interests.

### Group Dynamics

Interchange Inner East offers a number of group based recreation and social support services. These services aim to provide respite support to families whilst supporting young people with disabilities to extend their social contacts, friendships and experiences. Within these activities it is imperative that consideration is given to compatibility and group dynamics to ensure services are effective, enjoyable and safe for the whole group.

### Matching criteria

For some volunteer based services (host program, specialised care, camps) and 1: 1 based services (Flexible Family Support) Interchange Inner East uses a matching process to ensure that the capacity, skills and interests of volunteers and staff members are used to the maximum benefit. The matching process involves families, people with disabilities, volunteers and Interchange staff.

### Availability and capacity to provide a service

At most times the requests for service far outweighs the availability of places within a service. Access to services will be restricted at times to ensure an equitable spread of the available resources to those participants seeking them. Determination of who is able to access services is made using the equity criteria.

### Safety and risk assessment

When it is determined that a service or group cannot be operated because it is not safe or the risks associated with the service provision is too high then people's access to service will be affected. Issues such as staff and volunteer availability, weather conditions, behavioural issues, transport, etc. could all affect access to a service.

### **Response to Intake enquiries and applications**

Interchange Inner East will allocate a person responsible for receiving and responding to all service enquiries. Based on the nature of the enquiry the allocated Intake officer will send or email a package of information including Interchange's Services and Programs Information brochure providing information on eligibility criteria, access to advocacy, access to interpreters, the complaints procedure, program costs and an application form. On receipt of an application Interchange will respond in writing within 10 working days. Where a service cannot be provided the written response will include-

- The reason for refusal
- The placement on a waiting list-if applicable
- Contact details of alternative services/DHS
- Right of review/appeal
- Statement that if the persons circumstances change that they may reapply and this reapplication will be taken on its merits.

### **Assessment**

Initial assessment provides:

- A determination of eligibility for Interchange Inner East services

- Identifying needs of families
- Information in regards to participants support needs
- Information in regards to priority indicators

Ongoing assessment provides:

- Ongoing understanding of a families support needs
- Updated information about participants support needs
- Referral to other services
- Priority assessment information

### **Access to Advocacy**

Interchange Inner East is committed to ensuring clients and families are aware of their right to use an advocate of their choice, or an advocacy service, to assist them in decisions about Interchange services. The Interchange Service and Program Information brochure will be provided in response to access enquiries. The brochure includes a statement outlining Interchange's commitment to supporting clients and families right to access an advocate of their choice and provides contact details for a Disability Advocacy service in the Eastern Region.

### **Waiting List**

Awaiting list for Interchange Services is maintained and regularly reviewed according to resource availability.

### **Refusal**

On occasion, and after consultation and assessment, a decision is made that Interchange is unable to support the needs of a prospective or current client. In such circumstance the client/family will be supported to clearly understand the issues and provided with information, referral and support to seek the further assistance from government –through referral to DHS, Regional Intake and Response team. Interchange will also provide information and referral to alternative support services.

### **Referral**

Where a request for a service cannot be met under the above criteria Interchange will provide relevant information about alternative services and contacts including assistance with how to seek support/information from The Department of Human Services, Disability Client Services Intake and Response.

### **Service Exit**

Due to age restrictions on some program areas, clients do reach a time when they leave the service. Interchange, in consultation with the client and their family or advocate, will seek to ensure that exit from Interchange services is a planned and person-centred process which includes advocacy support and referral to other services/supports. From time to time services may be withdrawn because of eligibility requirements, program and funding issues, for safety reasons or changed client needs.

### **Equity**

Interchange aims to provide an equitable distribution of its service resource across all eligible families. However where demand is greater than the available service, a priority system needs to be implemented to determine priority of access whilst addressing more global equity issues of social and community disadvantage. The priority indicators for access to Interchange Inner East services are as follows:

- The need to strengthen or support the role of the family, carer or persons support network
- The need to provide support to ensure safety and well being of the person with a disability, their family / carer and the community
- Immediate and potential benefit of the support to reduce the likelihood for more intensive assistance in the future
- Impact on the individuals / family's wellbeing if service not available
- The provision of other services made available to the individual and/or family from within Interchange and across other services if known
- The existence of multiple disadvantage-
  - People with multiple disabilities and complex support needs
  - Financially disadvantaged persons
  - Indigenous people
  - People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

In order to determine priority Interchange relies on -relevant information through its assessment process. Assessment occurs throughout a person's involvement with Interchange and is an ongoing information gathering process.

### **Diversity**

Interchange acknowledges and values cultural diversity and recognises the need for clients and family members from a non-English speaking background to be supported to understand and access available information and service options.

Interchange will work collaboratively with CALD agencies and networks to facilitate access to specialist services. This will be done through information provision, support and guidance from interpreter services/in-language resources, and staff education. Where appropriate, Interchange will offer peer support to meet the range of language and ethno-specific needs. Where necessary, Interchange will explore funding support for such services.

Translations will be provided, where practicable, to support clients and family members from CALD backgrounds. In the absence of information in a client's preferred language or when a client is unable to read or understand their preferred language, an interpreter will be used to explain written information or Interchange will endeavour to source information in accessible or pictorial formats.

### **Financial Disadvantage**

Interchange is committed to ensuring that financial disadvantage is not a barrier to accessing services. Interchange will work with the individual client/family experiencing financial hardship to develop a manageable payment plan or an agreement to reduce fees/costs.

If a Program Coordinator becomes aware of, or suspects, financial disadvantage they should discuss the issue with the Program Manager or Executive Officer. The Coordinator may be instructed to complete an application for consideration of financial disadvantage. Program Coordinators are not authorised to offer payment plans or the reduction of fees without the authority of senior management.

### **Rights of families and people with disabilities-**

- To be given clear information about available services
- to be assessed for access to services without discrimination
- to have an advocate of their choice to represent their interests
- to consent to or refuse any service offered

- to pursue any complaint about service provision without retribution and have their complaint investigated
- to information privacy and personal confidentiality and respect
- to be able to access personal information, kept by the agency, on request
- to have opportunities to provide feedback and participate in the development of Interchange services

**Responsibilities** of families and people with disabilities-

- to treat staff, volunteers and other participants with respect
- to avoid unnecessary or late cancellation of booked shifts or activities in order to assist Interchange to provide consistency to staff and retain good staff
- to ensure Interchange has the information required to provide for participants health and safety
- to participate in service development including the provision of feedback about the service
- to respect the diverse range of religious and cultural beliefs within the Interchange community
- to raise issues of concern and to participate in their resolution
- to adhere to Interchange Inner East's Policies and Procedures

**Reference:**

Disability Services Act 2006-section 49-51 Accessing Disability Services  
DHHS. Undue Financial Hardship Guidelines. Revised January 2014