



NSW Health
Education Centre Against Violence



NSW Health Sexual Assault Services and New Street Services

Access Strategy for People with Disability 2021-2025

February 2021

Aim of the strategy

The NSW Health Sexual Assault Services (SAS) and New Street Services (NS) *Access Strategy for People with Disability* sets out a framework to guide the work of the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) and SAS/NS to strengthen access to SAS/NS services for people with disability who have experienced sexual violence and/or who have engaged in problematic or harmful sexual behaviours, and their families and carers. The strategy seeks to enhance practice in NSW Health specialist services and to build the capacity of the workforce for disability inclusion. It identifies activities to be implemented in NSW Health SAS and NS services across six key priority areas to better include, respond to and support children, young people and adults with disability. The strategy is founded on a commitment to co-design to ensure that people with disability take a leading role in identifying their needs and preferences and are equal partners in improving services. The implementation of this strategy will be underpinned by a trauma informed approach in order to ensure the safety and dignity of all stakeholders.

NSW Health prioritises diversity and social inclusion across its planning, policies and public health services. ECAV recognises that people will experience multiple forms of disability¹ and is committed to responding to the wide and varied experiences and identities of people with disability. This includes recognising the interlocking and overlapping structures of ableism and oppression according to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, location and age for people with disability in NSW. This strategy and its related activities prioritises representation and human rights based responses for women, young people, children and men of Australia's First Nation people,² culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+ backgrounds alongside regional and remote localities.

While this strategy is primarily focussed on workforce development in health and disability services, ECAV has other training portfolios that are responsible for workforce development in prevention and response to violence, abuse and neglect across a range of additional service settings. These include initiatives such as the Adult Sexual Assault Medical and Forensic Care; Violence, Abuse and Neglect Specialist Support and Counselling; Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Network; Domestic Violence Routine Screening Implementation and Child Protection Facilitator Training. ECAV will be working towards assuring that related training portfolios and initiatives are responsive to the needs and experiences of people with disability.

¹ Disability for the purpose of this strategy is defined as a long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others. Disability itself is not an illness but people with disability may have long-term illnesses, chronic diseases, or co-morbidities that require ongoing attention and management.

² The term 'Australia's First Nation people' refers to both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people that may live in NSW.

Acknowledgements

NSW Health acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Nations People of Australia and the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and future. ECAV is situated on Burramattagal land within the Darug Nation. NSW Health recognises that these are, always were, and always will be, Aboriginal land. ECAV has been working alongside Australia's First Nation Communities since 1985, and is committed to enhancing the quality and accessibility of services to Australia's First Nation people whose lives have been affected by sexual assault, family violence and child abuse.

NSW Health recognises the advocacy and activism of the disability rights movement and acknowledges their ongoing commitment as integral to the foundation and objectives for this strategy.

Evidence of the issue

Statistics indicate that people with disability of all ages are more likely to experience sexual violence than people without disability, however current figures are undoubtedly an underrepresentation.¹ While there is little evidence about the prevalence of children and young people with disability who have engaged in problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviours, it is important to note that children and young people with disability who have engaged in such behaviours are also often the victims of sexual violence themselves, and/or other forms of violence, abuse and neglect.²

Over the last decade, numerous commissions and inquiries into the treatment of people with disability have heightened the focus on violence and abuse. These inquiries identify important recurrent themes, which include meaningfully involving people with disability in mainstream violence policy and practice responses; addressing the siloed approach to policy and service provision to better address violence prevention and response; and developing useful practice to support people with disability who experience violence and abuse.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made many recommendations. These recommendations underpin NSW Health's response to the issue of service support for people with disability who have been victims of sexual abuse and violence and children and young people with disability who have engaged in problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviours.³

Policy, practice and legislative context

The policy context for the NSW Health Sexual Assault Services (SAS) and New Street Services (NS) *Access Strategy for People with Disability* is the NSW Health Integrated Prevention and Responses to Violence, Abuse and Neglect (IPARVAN) Framework. The framework seeks to strengthen NSW Health services in responding to violence, abuse and neglect. IPARVAN maps

the need for change and a public health approach to government reform to ensure people in NSW live free from violence.⁴ The framework also highlights an intersectional approach and identifies people with disability as one of the priority population groups. The NSW Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is a key input to the IPARVAN Framework. This Access Strategy is part of that program of work.

The practice context for the NSW Health SAS and NS *Access Strategy for People with Disability* is that referral rates to Sexual Assault Services are significantly below the estimated rates for sexual violence against people with disability. Of the new clients referred to the NSW Health Sexual Assault Services between July 2017 and March 2018, less than 1% identified as having a disability. Data suggests a higher proportion of people with disability do not engage with services due to accessibility issues. Between April 2019 and March 2020, the number of people with disability accessing support from NSW New Street services has been steadily increasing. In March 2020, 57% of New Street clients reported having a disability. Evidence indicates that many of these clients will also have experienced sexual violence and/or other forms of violence, abuse and neglect.

The legislative context underpinning the NSW Health SAS and NS *Access Strategy for People with Disability* is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The *Access Strategy* acknowledges that The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability is currently ongoing, and is anticipated to deliver findings and recommendations in 2023. These recommendations and findings will likely influence this Access Strategy.

Response to the issue

The Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) leads the design and implementation of the NSW Health SAS and NSS *Access Strategy for People with Disability*. The strategy draws on:

- findings of an extensive Needs Assessment⁵ which reviewed the evidence from existing research on positive practice to improve service accessibility for children, young people and adults with disability requiring specialist therapeutic services in relation to sexual violence as well as children and young people with disability who have engaged in problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviours
- consultations with 40 expert stakeholders about policy and practice

A report on the Needs Assessment can be found [here](#).

Six priority areas for action are identified which will be addressed over the 5-year life of the strategy:

Priority area 1: Establish a co-design mechanism

The Needs Assessment outlined the principles and practice of co-design and co-production and confirmed the need for ECAV to establish a co-design mechanism that embeds the leadership of people with disability in the governance and implementation of the strategy. A Disability Co-design Framework was developed through consultations with peers from disability organisations and is the key mechanism for embedding a co-design approach to the *Access Strategy for People with Disability*.

Priority area 2: Build and maintaining high quality resources

Evidence from the Needs Assessment established that making available accessible resources about sexual violence and/or problematic or harmful sexual behaviours will facilitate access to services for people with disability. In addition, resources can be used by service providers and service users to explain and understand elements of service provision and practice. It was also established that making resources accessible to people with a diverse range of disabilities is essential for accessible service provision. Resources relating to adults will be separate to resources relating to children/young people.

Priority area 3: Improve service provision, expertise and knowledge

The Needs Assessment confirmed that in order to improve access to SAS/NS services, it is important that these services are well known across the community. Evidence from the Needs Assessment also highlighted the need for disability and SAS/NS services to improve frameworks for information sharing across sectors. In addition, it was established that there is a need to build capacity for disability services to identify and respond effectively to all forms violence. There is also a need to build capacity for SAS/NS services to effectively support people with disability who have experienced sexual violence and/or who have problematic or harmful sexual behaviours.

Priority area 4: Promote and embed disability inclusive service design

Evidence from the Needs Assessment confirmed that the reason people with disability who have experienced sexual violence and/or who have problematic or harmful sexual behaviours do not seek support is because services are not inclusive of their needs. Disability inclusive service design thinking must assume disability in potential clients rather than seeing disability as an 'exception'.

Priority area 5: Educate for leadership and partnership

The Needs Assessment demonstrated that in order to drive change across the SAS/NS services, there is a need to develop leadership and partnership around disability inclusive

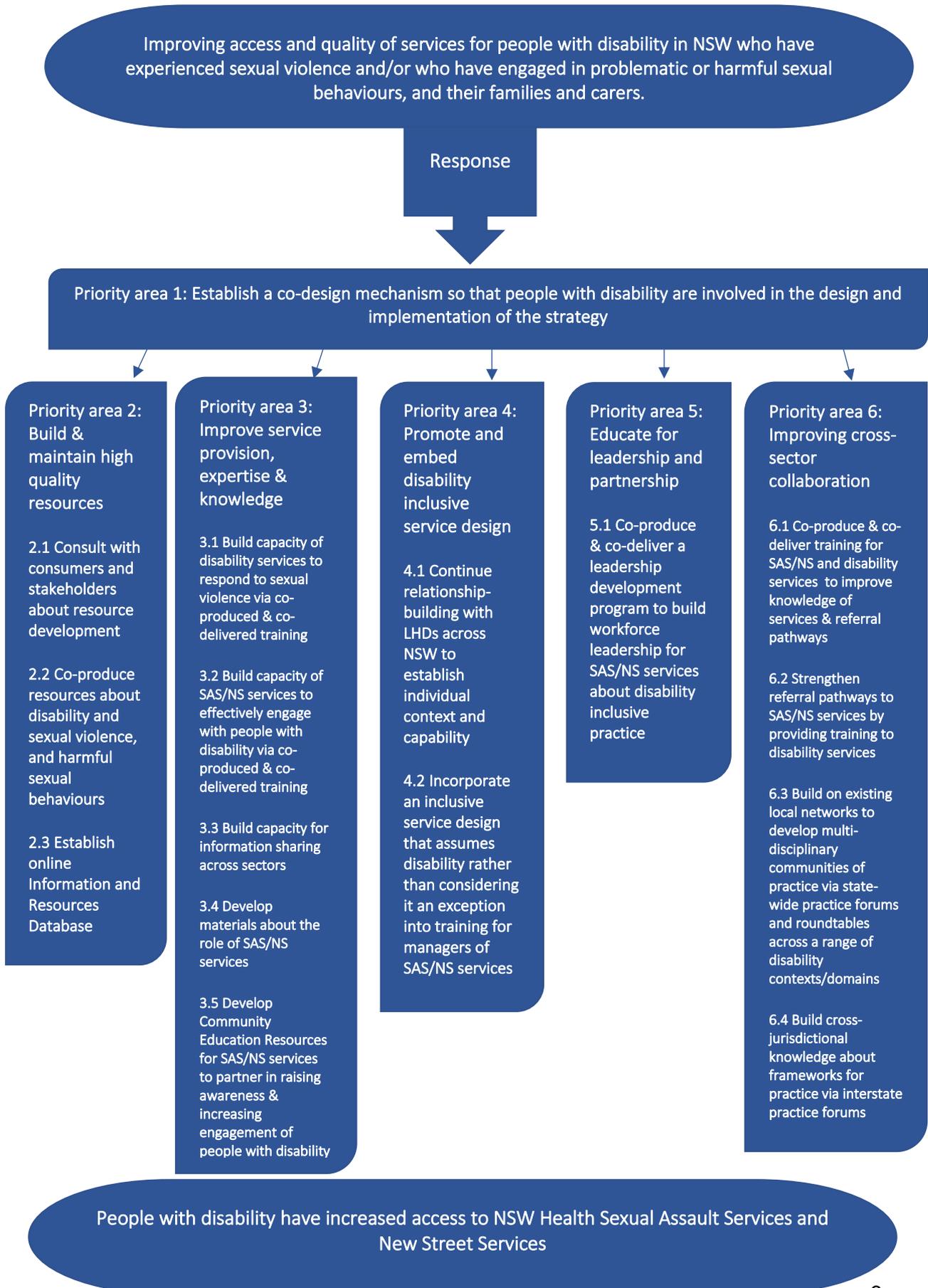
practice. Building leadership capability in key areas has been shown across many fields to improve quality in support for people with disability.

Priority area 6: Improve cross sector collaboration

Evidence from the Needs Assessment established that in order to improve the use of SAS/NS services by people with disability, there is a need to promote and support cross-sector collaboration between SAS/NS and disability services, as well as a range of other disability contexts/domains.

The strategy's priority areas for action are grounded in partnership with people with disability and their organisations to ensure a human rights approach. This partnership is guided by a co-design framework which underpins all strategy activities including governance, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The NSW Health Sexual Assault Services (SAS) and New Street (NS) Services Access Strategy for people with Disability



Practice Principles for accessible services

Clear evidence of practice principles to guide service provision emerged from the literature and the interviews conducted for the Needs Assessment. These apply to both sexual assault services and services for children and young people who have engaged in problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviours.

1. Activating a human rights-based approach
2. Improving access and accessibility
3. Recognising and responding to barriers
4. Countering discriminatory attitudes
5. Recognising and responding to capabilities
6. Taking a holistic approach
7. Using a trauma-informed approach³
8. Applying an intersectional lens

Co-Design Framework

The co-design framework is central to embed a co-design approach for the strategy. It sets out the strategies and processes utilised to operationalise ECAV's co-design approach. The key components of the co-design framework draw on existing evidence of current best practice in co-design and co-production in disability and were established through consultations with peers from three disability organisations: Council for Intellectual Disability (CID); Disability Diversity Alliance (DDA); and Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH). This co-design framework draws on two key bodies of experts.

Co-Design Advisory Committee (CDAC)

The CDAC will comprise people with a range of disabilities across the age spectrum, with particular attention to encouraging representation from Aboriginal, CALD and LGBTIQ communities. The role of the CDAC is to provide overarching strategic advice on the implementation of the NSW Health SAS and *NS Access Strategy for People with Disability* and the co-design framework and process, centring on:

- applying a human rights framework to the design and operationalisation of the strategy
- monitoring and evaluation of strategy priority outcomes

³ A trauma-informed approach is based on an understanding of the ways trauma affects people's lives, their service needs and service usage. It incorporates principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trust and empowerment.

- linking and connecting with the disability community
- identifying membership of the co-production expert panel

Co-Production Expert Panel (CPEP)

The CPEP will consist of a panel of people with a range of disabilities, skills and expertise, and/or lived experience of disability. The role of the CPEP is to contribute to the production and implementation of key resources and activities for the NSW Health SAS and NS Access *Strategy for People with Disability*. CPEP members will be recruited under the advice of the Co-Design Advisory Committee.

This Access Strategy and its accompanying documents are flexible in order to enable the co-design process in which this work is undertaken. This flexibility will also allow for the findings and recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability to be incorporated as relevant.

Priority areas

Priority area 1: Establish a co-design mechanism

In the first year of the strategy (2021) ECAV will develop and implement a co-design mechanism that will ensure that the knowledge and experiences of people with disability are meaningfully involved in the design and implementation of the *Access Strategy for People with Disability*. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Establish a Co-Design Advisory Committee led by people with disability to oversee the co-production, implementation and evaluation of the strategy
- Build a Co-Production Expert Panel to contribute to the production and delivery of key resources and activities in the strategy

Priority area 2: Build and maintain high quality resources

In the second year of the strategy (2022) community members and services throughout NSW will have access to high quality resources about disability and sexual violence and problematic or harmful sexual behaviours. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Consult with consumers and stakeholders to determine gaps in existing resources, preferred formats and further development of resources

- Develop co-produced resources for people with disability, their families and carers, as well as disability and SAS/NS services
- Develop a review mechanism to support the maintenance of high quality resources.

In the third year of the strategy (2023) community members and services will have access to comprehensive and accessible information about disability and sexual violence and harmful or problematic sexual behaviours. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Establish an accessible Information and Resource Database which will be available on a NSW Health website

Priority area 3: Improve service provision, expertise and knowledge

In the first year of the strategy (2021) SAS/NS and disability services will have improved relationships. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability, SAS/NS and disability services to:

- Develop networking/relationship-building between SAS/NS and disability services

In the third and fourth years of the strategy (2023,2024) disability, SAS and NS services across NSW will have increased knowledge and skills to identify and respond to sexual violence against people with disability and to support people with disability who have experienced sexual violence and/or who have problematic or harmful sexual behaviours. To realise this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to develop two training modules: one for disability services and the other for SAS/NS services. The training module for SAS/NS services will include sub-modules to enable specific attention where required to supporting a) adults who have experienced sexual violence; b) children and young people who have experienced sexual violence; and c) children and young people experiencing problematic or harmful sexual behaviours via the development of sub-modules:

- Co-produce and co-deliver an *Improving Service Expertise*⁴ training module for disability services to build their knowledge and skills in identifying and responding effectively to sexual violence
- Co-produce and co-deliver an *Improving Service Expertise* training module for SAS services to build their knowledge and skills in effectively supporting people with disability who have experienced sexual violence

⁴ Suggested title for training module

- Co-produce and co-deliver *Improving Service Expertise* training model for NS services to build their knowledge and skills in effectively supporting people with disability who have problematic or harmful sexual behaviours

ECAV will work in partnership with NSW Health Local Health Districts to enable prioritisation of attendance for SAS/NS workers.

In the fourth year of the strategy (2024) knowledge about the role of SAS/NS services will be made available in community and service contexts. In addition, SAS/NS services will have increased knowledge and skills in using frameworks for information sharing across sectors and in partnering to raise awareness and increase engagement of people with disability. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Develop promotional material about the role of SAS and NS services
- Develop a communications strategy for SAS/NS to promote services and resources
- Develop and deliver an *Improving Information Sharing*⁵ training module for disability, SAS and NS workers to understand and use frameworks for information sharing across sectors
- Develop community education resources that will assist SAS, NS and disability services to partner in raising awareness of sexual assault and harmful sexual behaviours and to increase the engagement of people with disability and the services they use

Priority area 4: Promote and embed disability inclusive service design

In the third year of the strategy (2023) managers of SAS and NS services will have increased knowledge and skills about disability inclusive service design. To realise this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Utilise and expand existing networking and relationship building with all LHDs in NSW in order to establish relevant context and capability
- Co-produce and co-deliver a *Disability Inclusive Service Design*⁶ training module for managers of SAS/NS services
- Develop a 'Disability Access Audit' for SAS/NS services

ECAV will work in partnership with NSW Health Local Health Districts to enable prioritisation of attendance for SAS/NS workers. In addition ECAV will support Local Health Districts to engage in other methods of promoting inclusive service design. This includes but is not limited

⁵ Suggested title for training module

⁶ Suggested title for training module

to the development of a Disability Access Audit (physical, informational and attitudinal) that draws on relevant aspects of the Violence Abuse Neglect Service Standards Audit Tool (Self-Assessment Audit-Tool) and disability-specific service audit tools.

Priority area 5: Educate for leadership and partnership

In the third year of the strategy (2023) SAS and NS services will have increased leadership in disability inclusive practice. To accomplish this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Co-produce and co-deliver a *Leading for Disability Inclusive Practice*⁷ training module for SAS/NS services to build workforce leadership in disability inclusive practice

ECAV will work in partnership with NSW Health Local Health Districts to enable prioritisation of attendance for SAS/NS workers.

Priority area 6: Improve cross sector collaboration

In the fourth and fifth years of the strategy (2024, 2025) SAS, NS and disability services will have increased knowledge and skills about integrated cross-sector collaboration. To achieve this ECAV will work in partnership with people with disability and SAS/NS services to:

- Co-produce and co-deliver a *Collaborating in Practice*⁸ training module for SAS/NS and disability services to enhance knowledge of existing services and referral pathways
- Develop and deliver with SAS/NS services a *Strengthening Referral Pathways*⁹ training module for disability services to strengthen referral pathways to SAS/NS services
- Build on existing local networks between SAS/NS services and disability service providers to develop multi-disciplinary communities of practice through co-designed state-wide practice forums and roundtables across a range of disability contexts/domains
- Build cross-jurisdictional knowledge about frameworks for practice via interstate practice forums

ECAV will work in partnership with NSW Health Local Health Districts to enable prioritisation of attendance for SAS/NS workers.

⁷ Suggested title for training module

⁸ Suggested title for training module

⁹ Suggested title for training module

References

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