

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Cahoots collaborates with participants and their support networks throughout the design, planning and delivery of Cahoots services to ensure each participant's needs, goals and interests are considered and catered for.

The policy provides direction for Cahoots when considering a referral or request for support and services to the organisation or considering the exit of a participant from the organisation.

This policy replaces the Individual Needs Management Policy.

This policy applies to all current and potential participants, their support networks, staff and volunteers.

The Community Engagement Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Definitions

Entry means the process through which a participant enters into a specific service and support arrangement with Cahoots.

Exit means the point at which a participant leaves Cahoots, no longer requires Cahoots services and supports or transfers to another service provider.

Participant means a person accessing Cahoots supports and services, including all potential, current and previous participants.

Participant's Representative means the person nominated by the participant to act on their behalf. This may be a parent, carer, advocate or legal representative.

Service means a Cahoots service, including day supports and overnight supports.

Stakeholders means the participant, their support network and/or other service providers.

Support network means the people who provide assistance, offer advice and emotional support to the participant. The participant's support network may include, but is not limited to, family, carers, legal decision makers, friends, advocates, guardians and other service providers.

Transition means preparing for and supporting the participant to enter or exit Cahoots or referral from another service or to another service, where appropriate.

POLICY STATEMENT

Cahoots is committed to providing participants and their support networks with information and support during the process of accessing, transitioning into or exiting a Cahoots service or the organisation overall.

Cahoots will:-

1. Ensure all participants and their support networks are provided with the necessary information and explanation in the appropriate communication formats relating to their access, transition to or exit from our service.
2. Ensure the participant entry and exit process for services are transparent, fair and non-discriminatory.

3. Ensure collaboration with other providers occurs to facilitate the transition to, or from, our services, as applicable.
4. Maintain a person-centred approach to assessment and planning processes, and recognises that each participant has a legal right to make choices and take risks in order to develop skills and build confidence to reach their full potential.
5. Support participants to make informed decisions about the services they access and the activities they participate in during a service. Service entry, access to supports and/or withdrawal of supports will not be made solely on the basis of a dignity of risk choice that has been made by the participant or their support network.

Access to Support

Cahoots provides services for individuals aged 5 years and above.

Services are provided in specific age groups (Kids, Teens, and Adults) as well as services designed to support participants with differing support requirements.

Cahoots will work with each participant to assist them in accessing the supports that are most appropriate for them to meet their needs, goals and preferences.

Participants and their support networks can obtain information on Cahoots services, sample itineraries, support ratios, potential learning outcomes and pricing via the Cahoots website or by contacting Cahoots by phone or email.

Cahoots will assist participants and their support network to:

- Understand the services provided and available by Cahoots.
- Determine if a service will meet the participant's needs.
- Progress through the Service Intake process.

A participant will participate in the Service Intake process to determine if:

- a) The participant's goals and aspirations can be met through the services Cahoots provides.
- b) The participant meets the age and care ratio requirements for the services available, as detailed on Cahoots website.
- c) The participant is living with a disability or is considered vulnerable or at risk due to a range of health and/or personal factors.
- d) At the time of assessment, the participant's support needs can be met by Cahoots staff.
- e) At the time of assessment, the participant's behavioural support needs can be met by Cahoots staff.
- f) The participant is able to meet costs associated with the service, taking into consideration funding packages, personal financial circumstances, and sponsorship opportunities.

Access Considerations

Advocacy

Participants and Participant's Representative are welcome to include their support networks and advocates in their decision-making processes. Where a participant requires or requests an advocate, they will be provided with the Cahoots Advocacy List and supported to access one of their choice.

Sufficient time

The participant and their support network will be given sufficient time to consider and review their options and seek advice, if required. This occurs before signing our Service Agreement and at any stage of support delivery, including assessment, planning, provision of supports, review and exit from our services.

High Intensity Daily Personal Activities

Cahoots is not currently registered with NDIS to provide High Intensity Daily Personal Activities. As such, Cahoots does not employ staff trained to support participants with these care requirements. A participant may request an external formal support person attend Cahoots services to provide the care required. These requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the support needs of the participant can be safely and effectively met in the Cahoots service environment.

Mealtime Management Plan

Where a potential participant is identified as having swallowing difficulties and dysphagia but **does not** have a current Mealtime Management Plan, the participant will be unable to attend a Cahoots service until such time as a plan is developed.

Behaviours of Concern

Cahoots operates within a group care, community based, recreational setting. During intake and assessment, Cahoots will make judgments on whether our staff are able to provide the support required by participants with exceptional behaviours of concern. These judgments take into consideration the health and safety of other participants and staff, as well as the dignity and goals of the respective participant.

PROCEDURE

SERVICE ENTRY

Step 1: Register interest

To access a Cahoots service, a participant must first register a request for service.

Registering a request for a service can be made in the following ways:

- Phone request - 1300 103 880.
- Email request - info@cahoots.org.au.
- Online via Cahoots website (www.cahoots.org.au) Register Your Interest Form.

Information collected at this stage will be:-

- Participant's Name
- Participant's Representative's Name
- Whether the participant has previously registered or attended a Cahoots service.
- Contact details of the enquirer.

A Cahoots Family Relationship Officer (FRO) will contact the participant or Participant's Representative to outline Cahoots services, service booking process and book a Service Intake Appointment.

Step 2: Service Intake Appointment

A FRO will book a Service Intake Appointment as preferred by the participant or Participant's Representative.

On confirmation of the Service Intake Appointment, Cahoots will email to the participant or Participant's Representative:-

- A Participant Support Plan to be completed online prior to the Service Intake Appointment. Note; the Participant Support Plan may be completed at the Service Intake Appointment but will extend the length of the appointment.
- Request an interpreter service for the appointment.

The online Participant Support Plan is the start of creating the participant's Support Plan with Cahoots. Information collected at this stage includes; carer and emergency contact details, support worker preferences, participant goals, medical conditions, communication methods, diet, personal care requirements, mobility, behaviour, daily living routines and interests.

In submitting the online Participant Support Plan, the participant or Participant's Representative confirms their consent for Cahoots to collect, use and store the participant's personal information to determine a participant's eligibility for services. Personal information will be used in accordance with Cahoots Access to Personal Information Consent Policy.

At the Service Intake Appointment;

1. The Participant or Participant's Representative will be:
 - Explained the information gathered from the service intake will enable Cahoots to assess the service and supports suitable for the participant; i.e. All Abilities, Medium Support, High Support.
 - Explained the documents that will be created for signing after the Service Intake Appointment. (i.e: Support Plan, Participant Risk Assessment and Action Plan, Service Agreement, Medication Purpose Form, Medication Administration Consent Form, Participant Code of Conduct)
 - Explained the compulsory documents that may be requested after the intake to further assess a participant's level of support. (i.e: Seizure Management Plan, Behavioural Support Plan, Mealtime Management Plan, Medication Plan, Doctor's reports)
 - Explained that once compulsory documents are signed and returned, a service-based assessment will be booked to further assess the participant's level of support.
 - Explained that after the service-based assessment, a FRO will contact the participant with the outcome of the assessment, and if suitable, offer and process a service booking. (A participant may book a overnight or day support prior to the Service Intake Appointment but the booking is subject to the outcome of the service-based assessment)
 - Asked a range of questions that help determine the participant's goals, identify if the participant has any specialised care, needs and preferences.
 - Use the Participant Risk Assessment and Action Plan to identify the participant's risks to develop strategies to treat known risks.

This information will allow Cahoots to determine the level of support required within the Cahoots environment and build the participant's Support Plan.

2. The Participant or Participant's Representative will be explained Cahoots policies and procedures, including accessing these documents:
 - Confidentiality policies using the language, mode of communication and terms that the participant is most likely to understand. (Privacy Policy, Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure)
 - How participant information is stored and used, and when and how each participant can access or correct their information and withdraw or amend their prior consent. (Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure, Access to Personal Information Consent Policy)
 - The complaint and feedback procedure. (Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure)
 - The importance to understand the participant's Code of Conduct. (Code of Conduct – Kids and Teens or Code of Conduct - Adult Participant)
 - The importance to read the Health and Infection Control Policy. (Health and Infection Control Policy)
 - The importance to read the Medication Management Policy. (Medication Management Policy)
 - The importance to read the Cancellation Policy. (Cancellation Policy)
 - The importance to read, if applicable, the Restrictive Practice Policy, Complex Care Needs Policy and Procedure and/or Behaviour Support Policy and Procedure.
 - The service agreement and procedure.

This discussion will be recorded in Cahoots customer relationship management system and Support Plan.

A Service Intake Appointment may take up to two hours to complete and can be undertaken by phone, via teams or face-to-face at Cahoots head office.

Once determined that the participant is willing to proceed and their support needs can be met, a written Service Agreement will be created in accordance with the Cahoots Service Agreement Policy and Procedure.

The Service Agreement, together with other documents/forms (plans, consent, code of conduct, link to our policies and procedures), will be emailed to the participant or participant's representative for signing and return. The participant will be provided a copy of the signed Service Agreement, Support Plan, Participant Risk Assessment and Action Plan, Participant Code of Conduct, Medication Consent Form and Consent Form.

Step 3: Service-Based Assessment

Following the Service Intake Appointment, the participant will attend a Service-Based Assessment at a day support. This session is approximately four hours.

This assessment is designed to introduce the participant and their support network to a Cahoots service, meet Cahoots staff, allow Cahoots staff to confirm the level of support required and identify any adjustment to the supports required.

A Participant Support Needs & Service Suitability Assessment Form will be completed by the FRO, the support worker, Facilitator and service coordinator and returned to the Family Relationship Officer for review and follow-up.

Following the Service-Based Assessment, a Family Relationship Officer will review Facilitator's feedback, obtain feedback from the participant and their support network, and clarify information or request additional information.

Where Cahoots may not be able to provide a participant the necessary and required support, Cahoots will work with other providers to assist the participant obtain services elsewhere.

Cahoots will provide participants with clear and concise information about access to services, capacity and continuity of support. This process will be transparent to ensure an appropriate exit from the organisation.

Step 4: Book a Cahoots Service

A Family Relationship Officer will book the participant into a Cahoots services or will confirm any bookings that were made prior the Service Intake Appointment.

SERVICE TRANSITION AND EXIT

Cahoots recognises that a transition of supports may be required for several reasons which may be planned, temporary or unplanned.

Cahoots participants will receive support with planning and managing:

- Expected or unexpected transition to another service provider.
- Transition from another service provider.
- Exit from Cahoots services.

Where required, a Participant Exit and Temporary Transition Planning Form will be used.

Planned Transition

A planned transition occurs when the participant or Participant's Representative inform Cahoots that the participant has chosen to change service providers. This can include entering or exiting a Cahoots service.

A Family Relationship Officers or Service Coordinator will ensure a safe and effective planned transition is undertaken with the participant and their support network by:

- Providing information, collaborating with, and supporting the participant and their support network during the process of planned transition into or exit from a Cahoots service.
- Collaborating with other providers regarding the transition to, or from Cahoots a Cahoots service.
- Obtaining consent from the participant or Participant's Representative for the sharing of information with other providers, where required.
- Identifying transition processes for the participant and ensuring their application and review.
- Ensuring the planned transition is effectively planned, managed and implemented.
- Documenting the transition process in the participant's electronic record and communicated with stakeholders.
- Identifying known health risks and risks associated with the transition in collaboration with the participant and their support network, by conducting, responding to, and documenting risk assessments.
- Periodic review of the transition process occurs, and adjustments are implemented and communicated to the participant and their support network, as required.

Temporary Transitions

Temporary transitions may occur when:

- The participant and their support network decide they will take a "break" from Cahoots services for a range of personal reasons such as trialling a "new" service provider or a new recreational activity.
- The participant and their support network inform Cahoots that there has been an unexpected change to the participants health, medical or behavioural support needs. As a result of this change, they are in the care of another provider and unable to use Cahoots services for a period of time.

In these instances, and with the participant's agreement, a Family Relationship Officers or Service Coordinator will support the participant and their support network in the same manner as a "Planned Transition".

Where the participant chooses to re-engage with Cahoots services following an absence due to changes in health, medical or behavioural support needs, a full reassessment of support needs, including risk assessment will occur.

Unexpected Transitions

An unexpected transition occurs during a Cahoots service when:

- The participant's health, medical or behavioural support needs change unexpectedly resulting in an emergency or escalating situation.
- The participant's known health care risk (i.e., seizure, anaphylaxis, asthma etc) occurs unexpectedly resulting in an emergency situation.

The unexpected transition may result in the participant returning home to the care of their support network or if required, transferred to a hospital. Where the participant is admitted to hospital, they must be discharged into the care of their support network.

The risk of unexpected transitions, including known health care risks, is identified, documented, and responded to during the participant's planned transition into Cahoots services and prior to them accessing a Cahoots service.

A Family Relationship Officer or Service Coordinator will support the participant and their support network in the same manner as a "Planned Transition".

During a Cahoots service when a participant's health, medical or behavioural support needs change unexpectedly, the service Facilitator will activate the participant's Personal Emergency Response Plan and associated health care plans, where indicated.

Following an unexpected transition an incident report is completed and a process of investigation, review of the transition process and adjustments are undertaken by a Service Co-ordinator, as required and communicated to the participant and their support network.

Service Exit

When a participant chooses to, or is required to leave a service, the participant exit process will be transparent, fair and non-discriminatory.

Participants may exit from Cahoots by their own choice, at any time.

When a participant leaves Cahoots, regardless of the reason, Cahoots can assist them and their support network by providing information and/or facilitating referral to an alternate service provider, where requested.

Where a participant is transferring to another service provider Cahoots will work collaboratively with the participant, their support network and new provider. A Family Relationship Officer and/or Service Coordinator will support the participant and their support network in the same manner as a "Planned Transition", outlined above.

Withdrawal of Supports

Where Cahoots determines that a participant's support needs cannot be safely met within the service environment, and that continuing the service would pose an unacceptable risk to the participant, other participants, or staff, the Operations Manager in conjunction with the Service Coordinator will initiate a process to consider the withdrawal of supports following a full review of the circumstances and risk assessment.

Throughout the process, open communication and consultation will occur with the participant, their support network, and if requested, an independent Advocate.

As an initial step, withdrawal of supports will be temporary. Where services are withdrawn temporarily, Cahoots will plan to undertake a review of the participant's support needs and will work with the participant, their support network and allied health professionals to develop and establish strategies that are effective in the Cahoots support environment.

Appeal

Participants, whose services are withdrawn, have the right to appeal. Appeals should be directed in writing to the Community Engagement Manager and a final decision will be made by the Operations Manager. Participants who successfully appeal will be supported to continue accessing Cahoots. Participants who are not successful in their appeal will be advised in writing.

If a participant is unhappy with the outcome of their appeal, they will be directed to Cahoots feedback and complaints process.

SERVICE RE-ENTRY

Participants who have chosen to exit Cahoots have the right to re-access services within one month of exiting without the need to undertake the intake and assessment process.

Cahoots will review the participant's Support Plan, Risk Assessment and Personal Emergency Response Plan within the last 12 months.

If a participant wishes to re-enter the service after 12-months absence, the intake and assessment process will be undertaken.

Communication

This policy will be communicated in an appropriate way to:

- Participants and their support networks through Cahoots e-newsletter, website, intake process, easy to read flyers and accessible on request.
- Staff and volunteers through inductions, professional development and staff meetings.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years in consultation with participants and their support networks together with staff and volunteers. This policy is not intended to be a static document and Cahoots commits to its ongoing development as part of continuous quality improvements, and as policy and legislation changes dictate.

Reference and Related Documents

- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators (current version)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- National Standards for Disability Services
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Equal Opportunity Act
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Cahoots Support Plan Policy and Procedure
- Cahoots Participant Agreement and Consent Pack Policy and Procedure
- Cahoots Behaviour Support Policy and Procedure
- Cahoots Complex Care Needs Policy
- Cahoots Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Cahoots Mealtime Management Policy and Procedure
- Cahoots Participant Support Plan, Risk Assessment & Action Plan
- Cahoots Participant Support Needs & Service Suitability Assessment Form
- Cahoots Participant Exit and Temporary Transition Planning Form
- Cahoots Advocacy and External Support Contacts

Versions

No.	Approval Date	Description of Amendment
1.0	4/5/2023	Policy created, replaces Individual Needs Management Policy
2.0	5/03/2026	Reviewed and updated policy to improve clarity, update terminology, align intake processes with current documentation, and update role titles and review dates.

Owner	Approver	Next Review
Community Engagement Manager	CEO	March 2028