



# BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

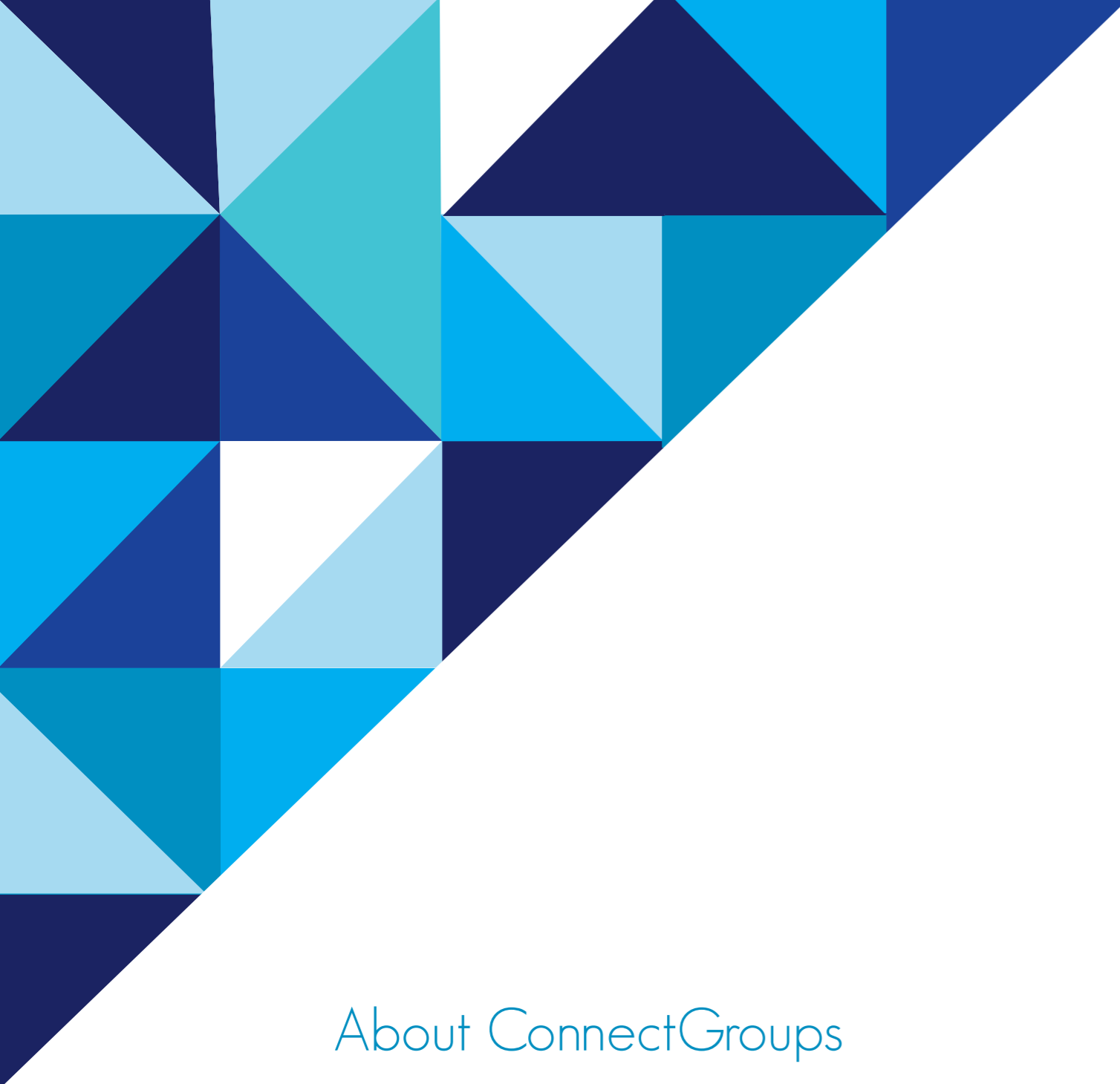
For the Support Group Sector



**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals



Department of **Communities**  
**Mental Health Commission**



## About ConnectGroups

ConnectGroups is the Peak body for Support Groups in Western Australia, empowering and sustaining community-based Support Groups and the wider community for over 38 years through sector development activities, capacity-building, resourcing, and advocacy.

Support Groups provide support on a broad range of issues including chronic and genetic conditions, trauma, mental distress, and social isolation. Peer Support Groups play a key role in the promotion of health

and wellbeing, community inclusion, and the value of lived experience.

ConnectGroups is a not-for-profit with a strong track record of responding to identified needs with collaborative practice and innovative service delivery.

ConnectGroups is committed to building connected, thriving communities by advocating for an effective and sustainable Support Group sector.

# CONTENTS

- 4 An Introduction and How to Use this Resource
- 6 Part 1: Support Group Establishment and Maintenance
  - Vision and Purpose
  - Membership
  - Retaining Members
  - Expulsion of Members
  - Accessibility
  - Marketing and Promotion
- 12 Part 2: Support Group Governance
  - Management Structure
  - Legislative and Management Requirements
  - Incorporation
  - Policies
  - Financial Management
- 24 Part 3: Support Group Facilitation
  - Roles and Responsibilities of Support Group Facilitators
  - Skills and Behaviours of Support Group Facilitators
  - Support Group Co-Facilitation
  - Conflict Resolution
- 28 Part 4: Support Group Principles
  - Values, Beliefs and Principles of the Support Group
  - Inclusiveness
- 30 Part 5: Support Group Meetings
  - Meetings
  - Duty of Care
  - Delivery Modes
  - Review and Evaluation of Services



## An Introduction

Community-led Peer Support Groups enable people with a shared lived experience to provide mutual support for their individual recovery and healing.

These groups provide an empowering model where participants gain emotional and practical support in a confidential, non-clinical environment of mutual trust.

Peer Support Groups have the following attributes:

- Group members share a life condition, situation or circumstance that gives rise to shared perspectives and challenges.
- Groups are primarily peer-led and managed by group members who are personally affected by the issue or concern (sharing 'lived experience').

- Groups are largely run and facilitated in an unpaid capacity.

Peer Support Groups are becoming increasingly recognised for their role in the promotion of health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and the value of lived experience.

These groups play a vital role in the community services sector, operating alongside clinical and social services to address the social determinants of health, with benefits for the whole community.

## How to Use this Resource

The Best Practice Standards are a set of standards for setting up and running a Peer Support Group. They provide guidance on issues including governance and accountability.

Adherence to the Best Practice Standards is voluntary, and the resource is intended to be a guide that Support Group leaders and facilitators can refer to as needed.

The online resource is structured so that you can navigate with ease to the specific information you need. You can also print the document in its entirety as a PDF, if preferred.

ConnectGroups' Best Practice Standards can be used as a resource for setting up a new Support Group, training new

facilitators in existing Support Groups, or simply as a set of standards to remain accountable against.

In addition to this resource, ConnectGroups provides sector development for WA's Peer Support Group sector, including networking and training opportunities, and intensive support for established and emerging Peer Support Groups.

For further support and information on Support Group development and management, please contact ConnectGroups on 9364 6909 or email [info@connectgroups.org.au](mailto:info@connectgroups.org.au).



# Part 1:

## Support Group Establishment and Maintenance

*A Support Group is a group of peers/ people who share the same condition or life experience who come together to focus on needs or growth through mutual encouragement with a person allocated as the facilitator.*

*By coming together in an organised way, individuals can both provide and gain support and take the necessary steps to make positive changes in their lives.*

*It is important to allocate sufficient time and energy to the **planning** phase of your Support Group. Consider the purpose and vision of the group, define*

*the key issues of potential members, decide who is likely to be involved in getting the group started, and slowly build your network of supporters and helpers (volunteers).*

*Support Groups can take up to two years to become fully functional with a good membership base. Do not become discouraged if your Support Group is slow to establish; stay focused on why you created it (its purpose), and how to keep it viable.*

### 1.1 Vision and Purpose

***A statement of the Support Group's Vision and Purpose is made available to all existing and potential Support Group members. It is accessible on the Support Group's website and/or social media pages and/or be provided at the time of membership.***

The Vision and Purpose statements are the **foundation** of the promotional and engagement strategy for the Support Group.

These statements will help recruit and retain members and enable current and potential members to understand the Groups reason for being.

***Vision:*** This describes the clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from the work of the Support Group.

***Purpose:*** The Purpose Statement (also known as the Mission Statement) provides a clear direction and defines what your Support Group is, why it exists and its reason for being.

[Click here](#) to view an information sheet that will support you in writing your Vision and Purpose Statements.

### 1.2 Membership

***Any conditions on membership are clearly defined and made available to all existing and potential Support Group members.***

Membership conditions may include but are not limited to:

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Alignment to Support Group core purpose (e.g.: Health Condition)

Assessment of potential members is undertaken by the Support Group's Committee. Where there is no Committee, it will fall on the Founder of the Support Group which will also be the Support Group Facilitator.

In both cases, the assessment will ensure alignment to the Support Group and form a screening process. New members are invited to fill out a membership form, which includes all terms and conditions. Only those that meet the criteria are permitted to join.

The screening process, undertaken either by telephone, Zoom, or face to face, ensures that potential members will likely benefit from participation and will not cause harm to themselves or other members. Group members are informed of this process and its necessity. The assessment processes is also culturally appropriate.



### 1.3 Retaining Members

**A strategy for retaining members is in place.**

Member retention is crucial to the long-term success of the Support Group. Member retention relies on a personalised approach to build a good relationship with each of your members, ensuring that you are providing them with a valuable service that is meeting their needs and expectations.

Ways in which you can actively work to retain your membership base include but are not limited to:

- Implementing a simple questionnaire asking members what they would like from the Support Group.

- Making it a priority to regularly talk with members to find out the aspects of the Support Group they are enjoying and the aspects they are finding challenging
- Ensuring you implement necessary changes to the Support Group as soon as the need arises
- Ensuring the Support Group remains sensitive to members' emotional needs
- Creating a friendly and accepting atmosphere and culture
- Ensuring that the workload of the Support Group is shared
- Being flexible and understanding – remember that not all members will be consistently active within the Support Group due to other life commitments

### 1.4 Expulsion of Members

**Processes for expelling a Support Group member is in place.**

Continued inappropriate behaviour by a member disrupts the ability of a Support Group to function effectively. In rare instances it may be necessary to expel a member from the Support Group.

It is best practice that your rules of association (if Incorporated) or your membership policy include expulsion procedures.

Inappropriate behaviour can include but is not limited to:

- Attending meetings while intoxicated
- Demonstrating violent or intimidating behaviour
- Refusal to comply with the code of conduct or guiding principles of the Support Group
- Intentionally acting in a manner that is against the best interest of the Support Group

The Support Group's code of conduct outlines the behavioural expectation of group members and is referenced when a member is exhibiting inappropriate behaviour.

### 1.5 Accessibility

**Members can access venues and technology as needed to participate.**

Physical meeting space is neutral, safe, comfortable, inviting, private and easily accessible to all.

Where possible, the meeting space has a private area for members who may need some time out should they become distressed during the meeting.

Where required, members have access to technology and guidance on its use if needed for participation.



## 1.6 Marketing and Promotion

### **Support Groups are promoted through relevant agencies.**

Effective, targeted promotion is important for the growth and maintenance of your Support Group for the following reasons:

- Finding new members, volunteers, fundraisers, and supporters
- Increasing public awareness of your Support Group – what it does, and who it is for
- Gaining recognition and support from agencies who can assist to further your cause
- Gaining referrals to the Support Group from associated agencies

The Support Group is promoted where possible to Community Groups, Local Councils, medical professionals, and Government Agencies that may encounter the activities of the Support Group such as hospitals, General Practitioners, allied health providers (psychologists, counsellors, social workers,) Aboriginal health services, schools, businesses, sporting groups, aged care providers and community hubs.

Consider subscribing to community, social service, and relevant government agency directories which will provide details of the Support Group to the public.

### **Marketing and promotional materials are culturally appropriate and can be understood by the public.**

Promotional materials are produced in language which is easily accessible to the wider community.

Where information is translated, it is presented at an appropriate level of understanding.

Information is culturally appropriate and collaboration with relevant community groups is undertaken where needed.

Marketing and promotional materials show sensitivity to the issues faced by the Support Group members.



## Part 2: Support Group Governance

*Governance is a structure of rules, practices and processes used to direct and manage a Support Group.*

*Good Governance ensures that your Support Group remains accountable, responsive, inclusive, and efficient.*

*Good Governance for a Support Group means having processes such as:*

- *A Committee / Management Committee / Board of Management*
- *Support Group Facilitators*
- *Policies and procedures*
- *Clarity around roles and responsibilities*
- *A Strategic Plan and Action Plan (a road map of activities)*

### 2.1 Management Structure

***A Support Group Committee is established.***

A Committee is a group of people appointed to manage the Support Group on behalf of its members. Establishing a committee is a practical way to structure and manage the work of a Support Group.

It is important to establish a Committee to:

- Ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the Support Group
- Enable essential tasks to be fairly and evenly distributed amongst Committee members
- Help prevent burnout of those members who routinely take on most of the Support Group's operational activities.
- Ensure the Support Group is transparent and accountable
- Enable the Support Group to be sustainable

The key Office Bearers of a Committee are:

- Chairperson
- Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer

***Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members are clearly defined.***

Written job descriptions or role statements are provided to all office bearers with the responsibilities of key personnel clearly defined and agreed upon.

The following page provides examples of the roles and responsibilities of key office bearers.



### *Chairperson*

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring each meeting is run effectively and conducted in accordance with the constitution. The Chairperson is responsible for setting the agenda in collaboration with the Secretary, convening the meeting, and ensuring that all Committee members are completing their allocated tasks. The Chairperson ensures that all Committee members have an opportunity to contribute to the discussions and make recommendations. The Chairperson cannot make decisions on behalf of all Committee members.

### *Deputy Chairperson*

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson takes on the role of the Chairperson solely at the Committee meetings. It is essential for the Deputy and Chairperson to establish a strong collaborative working relationship. As part of succession planning, it is often the Deputy Chairperson to be groomed to take on the Chairperson role at the end of their tenure.

### *Secretary*

The Secretary is the key administration officer of the Committee. The Secretary is responsible for setting the agenda with the Chairperson and distributing to the Committee, taking and circulating the minutes of each Committee meeting, maintaining records, calling all meetings, ensuring that correspondence is kept up to date, communicating with the Chairperson on matters arising from correspondence, agenda items and actions required, and distributing meeting minutes. The Secretary is responsible for coordinating all matters relevant to the Annual General Meeting and any Special Meetings that may be required. The Secretary is also responsible for having a copy of the Constitution and referring to it as required at the Committee meetings.

### *Treasurer*

The Treasurer oversees the financial administration of the Support Group. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that all financial records are maintained and stored securely, preparing, and presenting financial reports, and overseeing income and expenditure for the Support Group. The Treasurer does not have the authority to approve expenditure without the sign off of the Committee.

### ***Key personnel are qualified to perform their roles.***

Key personnel have the required skills and are offered the appropriate training to effectively perform their role. There are several Government and Community organisations, including ConnectGroups that offer low or no cost education sessions and workshops on governance, facilitation and the roles and responsibilities of Committee members.

### ***Appropriate ratio of Facilitators to members must be maintained.***

A minimum of two (2) Facilitators per Support Group is maintained to assist with self-care, peer review and demands of the role.

Consideration is given to the number of Support Group Facilitators required for the size and nature of the Support Group. Two (2) Facilitators should always be present. The ideal ratio is one (1) Facilitator for every eight (8) participants (with the minimum of two). With more than 16 participants, a third Facilitator is recommended. This also addresses succession planning and potential burn out of Facilitators.

Consideration is given, where possible, of inclusion of Facilitators of all genders.

Consideration is given, where possible, of inclusion of Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically diverse (CALD) Facilitators for Support Groups with Aboriginal or CALD members.

### ***The way in which the Support Group operates is clearly defined.***

Any conditions on the way the Support Group operates are clearly defined and made available to all existing and potential Support Group members; for example:

- Time frame – will the Support Group be ongoing or time limited?
- Membership – will the group be open to all or only available to clients of a particular organisation? (e.g. Support Group for outpatients of a particular hospital.)





## 2.2 Legislative and Management Requirements

### **Regular Supervision and debriefing of Support Group Facilitators is provided by qualified personnel.**

Debriefing is the opportunity for the Facilitator to discuss their experiences of facilitating a Support Group with the purpose of clarifying their thoughts and feelings, encouraging reflection on their actions and thought processes, and incorporating tools to move forward and problem solve.

Facilitators should have access to regular debriefing sessions to assist in building resilience, increasing personal well-being, and reducing burn out.

Where there are two or more Facilitators, time should be set aside after the meeting for Facilitators to debrief with each other. It is here that the Facilitators can discuss the events of the meeting and work through any issues including group dynamics, leadership, roles, and personal triggers.

If a significant event or issue occurs that has negatively impacted the Facilitator, formal debriefing should be offered.

### **Risks are identified and minimised.**

Risk management is the identification, evaluation and prioritisation of potential risks followed by the coordinated use of resources to minimise and control the impact if these risks do occur.

View examples of potential risks on the next page.

<i>Potential Risk</i>	<i>Risk Management Strategy</i>
Accident and Injury	Public liability insurance cover
Unsuitability of Support Group to members and potential members	Referral pathways developed
Emergency situations	A crisis protocol is developed (for both members and Facilitators)
'Burn out' of Support Group Facilitators	Regular supervision and debriefing provided
Media requests	Media guidelines that clarify what can be said and who is to be the media spokesperson



## 2.3 Incorporation

To become Incorporated means registering under the 2015 Associations Incorporations Act for your Support Group to become its own legal entity. Being Incorporated allows the Support Group to enter contracts as an independent ‘legal person’, removing liability from individuals within the Support Group.

Becoming Incorporated is completely voluntary and is not a necessary process for your Support Group to undertake.

There are advantages to becoming Incorporated but there are also many obligations and the decision should not be taken lightly.

ConnectGroups’ resource, [An Easy Guide to Becoming Incorporated](#) will explain what Incorporation means and address questions and concerns about becoming incorporated.

## 2.4 Policies

**Appropriate policies are developed and made available to Support Group members.**

A policy is a set of general guidelines that outline your Support Group’s plan for tackling an issue. The primary goal of having a set of policies is to put in writing what your Support Group expects from its committee and members in terms of the behaviour, actions and processes they take in specific situations.

Below are suggested policies that Support Groups are recommended to include but are not limited to:

- Membership policy
- Code of conduct
- Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement
- Guiding Principles
- *Health and Safety policy*
- *Risk Management*
- *Complaints and feedback*
- *Financial Management*

**Note:** *The policies in blue are suggested for Incorporated Support Groups only.*

### *Membership*

A membership policy outlines the membership requirements and terms and conditions of membership to your Support Group.

The terms and conditions may include but are not limited to:

- Eligibility requirements
- Admission of members
- Fees
- Membership rights and responsibilities
- Termination of membership



### *Code of Conduct*

A written code of conduct is important for your Support Group as it clarifies the Support Group's values and principles, linking them with the standard in which members are expected to conduct themselves. The code acts as a set of rules outlining the norms, guidelines, and responsibilities of, or proper practices that members must follow to remain a part of the Support Group.

The Code of Conduct:

- Defines the culture of the Support Group
- Sets standards and expectations for members to follow in terms of their behaviour
- Lets potential members know the values of the Support Group so they can determine if they want to join the Support Group

It is recommended that the Code of Conduct is reviewed annually with the membership to ensure currency and relevancy.

[Click here](#) to view a sample Code of Conduct.

### *Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement*

A Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement is an agreement Support Group members make to keep certain information confidential. Typically, Support Groups ask that members do not disclose what is discussed in the Support Group or give any details of other members to individuals outside of the Support Group. Often this statement of confidentiality is included in the Code of Conduct that members are asked to sign upon joining the Support Group.

### *Guiding Principles*

A broad philosophy that encompasses your Support Group's beliefs and values and guides it throughout its life in all circumstances. Principles are more explicit than values and guidelines and are meant to govern action.

[Click here](#) to view ConnectGroups' Guiding Principles.

### *Health and Safety*

A written Health and Safety Policy demonstrates that there is a commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of the Support Group's Committee and members.

The policy should cover the following items:

- Risk assessments
- Accidents, first aid and physical and mental ill-health
- Hazards and risks
- Emergency procedures

### *Risk Management*

A Risk Management Policy identifies the process for the management of risks faced by an organisation. This policy ensures that the organisation is proactive in its approach to managing risks and has plans in place if risks are realised. The aim of this policy is to maximise opportunities while minimising risk.

### *Complaints and Feedback*

A Complaints and Feedback Policy is intended to ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly and consistently and are handled with courtesy and fairness.

The complaints and feedback policy should include but is not limited to:

- How to make a complaint
- Who the complaint should be made to
- When a response can be expected
- Steps to take if an individual is not satisfied with the response



### *Financial Management*

A Financial Management Policy covers all the accounting policies, procedures and systems of the organisation. This will ensure that proper governing of the financial transactions takes place.

When developing a financial management policy, it is good practice to incorporate the following principles;

- **Accountability:** The financial systems should be such that it makes the organisation more accountable to its stakeholders
- **Transparency:** Timely and accurate information should be provided
- **Integrity:** All committee members should follow all rules set out in the financial management policy

Please contact ConnectGroups for direction and support to develop your Support Group's policies and procedures.

### *2.5 Financial Management*

***A strategy for effectively managing the finances of the Support Group is in place.***

Ensuring your Support Group's finances are healthy and strong will enable you to support your vision and purpose. The overall financial position of the Support Group is the responsibility of the Committee. For the Committee to efficiently manage the finances of the Support Group, the following should occur:

- Have a strategic plan in place
- Determine the resources and assets you currently have
- Outline all of your expenses
- Develop an annual budget
- Appoint a treasurer to maintain all financial records
- Account for money received
- Account for money spent

Opportunities for committee members to upskill in financial management should be presented.



## Part 3: Support Group Facilitation

*The Support Group Facilitator is responsible for guiding members in a purposeful discussion that helps them to focus on and address the issues that the Support Group was designed for.*

*Support Groups can be facilitated by either a peer (a person who shares the*

*same or similar lived experience as the Support Group members); some Support Groups choose to engage a counsellor or a Social worker in a paid or volunteer capacity depending on the purpose of the Support Group.*

### 3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Support Group Facilitators

***The roles and responsibilities of the Support Group Facilitator are clearly defined.***

Facilitation is the act of helping other people deal with a process or reach a solution without getting involved in the process or discussion yourself.

Facilitators act as a guide and are responsible for helping members find their own solutions and come to their own conclusions by providing indirect or unobtrusive guidance and support.

Written role statements are provided to all Facilitators and the responsibilities of Facilitators are clearly defined and agreed upon.

Roles and responsibilities of Facilitators may include but are not limited to:

- Pre-assessment of potential Support Group members
- Utilising referral procedures for potential members who may not be suitable for the Support Group at that time

- Maintaining confidentiality and respect the individual needs of the members
- Develop and support the activities of the Support Group
- Ensure members understand and adhere to the Support Group's policies and procedures
- Preparing, opening, and closing the meeting venue
- Ensuring members feel comfortable and safe
- Providing direction in structured sessions
- Ensuring all members have a chance to be heard
- Ensuring cultural safety
- Recording and time keeping
- Managing conflicts and group dynamics
- Debriefing co-facilitators
- Managing self-care



### 3.2 Skills and Behaviours of Support Group Facilitators

**The Support Group Facilitator exhibits skills and behaviours that provide a safe and supportive environment.**

The Support Group Facilitator exhibits skills and behaviours that provide a safe and supportive environment to “make it easier” for the Support Group to do its work.

Effective Facilitators have the ability to plan, guide, and manage a Support Group to ensure that the Support Group’s objectives are met successfully with full participation from its members.

The skills and behaviours of an effective Support Group Facilitator may include, but are not limited to:

- Ability to empathise
- Good communication skills, including active listening skills
- An unbiased perspective
- Ability to work collaboratively
- Good organisation and time management skills
- Approachable
- Non-judgemental
- Trustworthy (confidentiality)
- Ability to de-escalate conflict
- Conflict resolution
- Alignment to Support Group purpose and understanding

### 3.3 Support Group Co-Facilitation

**A minimum of two (2) Facilitators are allocated to each Support Group.**

Co-Facilitation is when more than one person is involved in leading and/or planning the Support Group meeting. Co-Facilitation has many benefits both for the Facilitators and the Support Group members including:

- Shared workload between the Facilitators which will help to prevent ‘burn out’

- Each Facilitator brings their own strengths to the Support Group which will enhance the experience for members
- Ability to provide practical and emotional back up to each other for challenging situations
- Increased resources to help manage the Support Group more effectively
- Ability to provide mutual support and debriefing between meetings

### 3.4 Conflict Resolution

**Processes for proactively managing conflict within the Support Group are in place.**

Conflict is an inevitable and normal part of any organisation and happens when individuals disagree or find it difficult to get along with each other. There are several reasons that conflict may arise including:

- Personality differences
- Expectations
- Values
- Misunderstandings
- Frustration
- Uncertainty
- Stress

Conflict in a Support Group often occurs because of a misunderstanding about the purpose of the Support Group, the way in which it works and what it hopes to achieve.

Disagreements and conflicts should be resolved as quickly as possible so that the Support Group can move forward and continue to provide its members with a positive and valuable experience.

Effective strategies for dealing with conflict in your Support Group include but are not limited to:

- Addressing any conflict in a timely manner.
- Ensuring the Groups aims, objectives and goals are clearly defined and have been explained to all new members.
- Anticipate potential conflict before it occurs; ensure that you developed a code of conduct and set of guiding principles that all members have read and signed upon joining.
- Ensure you address the underlying problem; for example, if a member is dominating the discussion find ways to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- Ensure that the facilitators are confident in their role and understand what is expected of them, be sure to utilise training and educational resources to support them.
- Ensure that the workload of the group and its committee is evenly distributed.



## Part 4: Support Group Principles

*The values, beliefs and principles of the Support Group are the pillars of the Support Group and will inform the way that the Support Group services are delivered and received.*

### 4.1 Values, Beliefs, and Principles of the Support Group

***The values, beliefs and principles of the Support Group are identified and made available to all members and potential members.***

There are specific principles that all members are expected to practice and uphold while being a part of the Support Group.

Values and Principles of a Support Group can include but are not limited to:

- Respect
- Inclusiveness
- Non – judgemental
- Non-denominational
- Non-political
- Working in partnership
- Positive, encouraging, and hopeful
- Culturally aware
- Collaborative
- Ethical
- Confidential

### 4.2 Inclusiveness

***A diverse range of people, inclusive of all cultures, religions and backgrounds are welcomed and encouraged to participate.***

Support Groups recognise the importance of individuality and appreciate that increasing the diversity of members can offer the opportunity to bring in new voices, perspectives, experiences, and approaches and add a richness to existing skills and ideas. Strategies are put in place to include ALL people.

These strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Use of an interpreter
- Childcare arrangements
- Allowing members to bring a support person to a meeting



## Part 5: Support Group Meetings

*Support Group meetings provide a valuable opportunity for people to share their personal experiences and to provide a chance to both give and receive emotional support and encouragement.*

*A well-managed Support Group meeting is instrumental to the success and longevity of a Support Group.*

### 5.1 Meetings

***Support Group meetings are managed to achieve the Vision and Purpose of the Support Group.***

Meetings are planned and the structure and frequency of meetings is decided upon in advance.

The meeting structure allows Support Group members to express their feelings, thoughts and behaviours and explore their needs in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

Support Group Facilitators have a plan in place to follow up with members between meetings if issues or a duty of care arises.

Where appropriate, follow up procedures are in place for members who miss meetings or discontinue their membership. Members are to be advised of this practice when joining the Support Group.

The time and venue for the Support Group meeting is fixed to enable continuity and allow those returning after a period of absence to find the Support Group.

Decide on a time that will make it possible for the most people to be able to attend. Consider your target group and their likely pre-existing commitments such as full-time work, childcare responsibilities, religious commitments etc.

The meeting venue is appropriate and accessible to all members and potential members. Consideration is given to wheelchair accessibility, public transport, and parking options. Consideration is given to adequate privacy of the location, as some Support Group members may wish to be discreet about their attendance.





## 5.2 Duty of Care

### **Processes for proactively ensuring the safety and well-being of Support Group members and Facilitators are in place.**

Duty of care is an obligation to take reasonable steps to not cause foreseeable harm to another person. A duty of care is breached when someone is harmed because of the action (or in some cases lack of action) of another when it was reasonably foreseeable that the action could cause harm. This means that the Support Group must anticipate risks for its members and take care to prevent them coming to harm. Remember that harm encompasses both physical and emotional harm.

Support Group Facilitators complete a risk assessment of the meeting venue and of the Support Group participants.

Facilitators recognise signs that could potentially jeopardise the well-being of members and actively take action to promote the individual's safety by linking them with appropriate help and resources.

Support Group Facilitators are sensitive to unresolved issues that may arise for members and provide appropriate follow-up and referral as needed.

### **The Support Group has the details of relevant services to refer members, as necessary.**

Support Group members may look to the Support Group leaders for assistance in other areas of their recovery journey or life circumstances. Facilitators make themselves aware and have relevant information available to distribute to members.

Services may include, but are not limited to:

- Hospitals
- Housing services
- Financial management services
- Funeral services
- Legal services
- Translation services
- 24-hour crisis services
- Telephone counselling services
- Grief counselling services
- Mental health services

### **Support Group members have individual needs and Support Group services are flexible and adaptable to meet these needs.**

Referral pathways to other support services are made available to Support Group members.

Some members may require additional support between meetings. Provide information on support services that are accessible outside of designated meeting times.

Consider offering un-facilitated casual meet ups in-between designated Support Group meetings such as coffee catch ups, walks and telephone check-ins.

Where a Support Group operates for a fixed period (e.g. 10-week program) members should be prepared for the end of the Group and provided with referrals, as necessary.

Exit strategies are in place for members who are ready to progress to other stages of their process where the Support Group is no longer needed. This is to ensure that constructive group dynamics are maintained.



### 5.3 Support Group Service Delivery Mode

**Where appropriate, Support Group services and meetings are made available through a variety of delivery modes.**

Due to factors such as distance, health conditions, infection control and availability of transport it may be appropriate to offer

Support Group meetings through a variety of modes, including but not limited to:

- Face to face meetings
- Online (Zoom) (link to zoom resources)
- Telephone

### 5.4 Review and Evaluation of Services

**Support Group Committee members and Facilitators agree to undertake an annual evaluation of the Support Group operations and services.**

In order to determine if your Support Group is meeting the needs of its members, it is important to periodically review and evaluate the services it provides.

Evaluation of the Support Group can be undertaken by the Support Group Facilitators, members of the Committee, or an independent third party. The aim

of the evaluation is to determine what the Support Group is doing well, what it could improve on, and if it is successfully meeting the needs of its members and its intended objectives.

Evaluation can be undertaken by:

- Online or paper surveys distributed to members
- Face to face discussions with members

[Click here](#) to view a sample member evaluation survey.



**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals

[www.connectgroups.org.au](http://www.connectgroups.org.au)

[info@connectgroups.org.au](mailto:info@connectgroups.org.au)

(08) 9364 6909