

Enhancing Independence

ECH is embarking on a major three-year project called Enhancing Independence, which is designed to support older people to continue living in the community and optimising their independence by focusing on what they can do rather than what they can't. This is a trail blazing project for ECH, designed to significantly improve the lives of our clients.

What is Enhancing Independence?

Enhancing Independence is based on research that has been carried out interstate and overseas that tells us that many older people can achieve a significant improvement in independent living within a six to eight week period if they are able to access the right services and supports.

Importantly, the research also tells us that the improvements and benefits experienced from this short-term period of restorative services are maintained well into the future.

Enhancing Independence will be relevant for any older person who has experienced a decline in their well-being or independence, not just people who have had a significant illness or injury requiring a hospital stay.

How is ECH Enhancing Independence?

New clients referred to ECH Community Services will find that staff will have a slightly different approach to assessing their needs and providing services. The Enhancing Independence model involves a comprehensive, holistic approach to assessment, as well as clients identifying their own needs and priorities, and in conjunction with an ECH Co-ordinator and an Allied Health Professional, such as an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist, clients will set their own goals for what they want to achieve in the short-medium future. ECH staff will be very much working with clients to help them achieve their goals.

ECH Enhancing Independence aims to not only improve each person's physical function, so they can perform daily activities as independently as possible, but also takes into account how personality, lifestyle patterns and habits impact on each person's independence.

An assistance plan is still developed for each client, but from now on it also reflects goals for improvement or recovery as well as including a range of services needed to assist the client to achieve their goals.

For some people, the goals will be quite simple. Other people will want to achieve much more independence so that they feel in control of their lives and are eventually able to manage with fewer services or without any services at all. Clients who do need ongoing services will continue to be supported by ECH Community Services.

The ECH Enhancing Independence approach includes assistance from home support workers in helping clients to achieve their goals within a short term timeframe. Every three months a client's goals are reviewed. If clients have achieved their goals, new goals may be set, or else a client may only require minimal or no ongoing services. Previous Independence Models have shown that a high number of clients will have reached their personal goals and improved to such a level that they no longer need further assistance and can remain living as independently as possible. Research has also shown that this sort of approach can also greatly improve client self-esteem and overall well being.

Enhancing Independence has been introduced for new clients throughout Community Services. Once the process is working well, it will be introduced to our existing clients, and will then be rolled out across ECH's Independent Living Division, followed by Residential Care.

ECH is excited to have international and national input into the project from a range of professionals who have worked on similar projects.

Where is the project currently?

ECH Co-ordinators, Allied Health staff and Home Support Workers have all recently undergone training in client goal setting and/or enhancing independence approaches for clients.

A new, comprehensive assessment tool is in use for new Community clients coming onto a package, and is being conducted online by the Co-ordinator in the client's home via the new PeoplePOINT software which is being rolled out across ECH. At the point of assessment, the client's goals are documented, and Co-ordinators are utilising Allied Health input to set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) goals to help the client work towards achieving their long-term goals.

Already, we are starting to see the benefits to clients overall well being and their delight in being able to work towards goals which they may have previously thought unachievable.

For further information please contact ECH Inc, telephone 08 8407 5151 or email admin@ech.asn.au