



Food focus group toolkit

July 2025



Contents

Introduction to food focus groups	4
Strengthened Quality Standards	4
Working together is so important	6
The benefits of working with residents	6
Formal versus informal engagement	6
About the toolkit	8
Consultation	8
Purpose	9
What is a food focus group?	10
What does a food focus group do?	10
Benefits of a food focus group	11
Creating a food focus group	12
How to start a food focus group in your service	12
Key principles and meeting rules	12
Members	13
Making the group inclusive	13
Running a food focus group meeting	14
Putting it into action	15
Extra tips for successfully working with residents	15
Positive stories	16
Culturally specific food and dining story	16
Family favourite recipes story	17
Recreate memorable moments story	17
Survey responses	18

Useful resources and templates	19
Templates	19
Resources	20
More information	22
Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline	22
 Appendix	 23
Checklist – Effective food focus group	23
Agenda template	26
Minutes template	29
Terms of reference template	32
Feedback form template	35

Introduction to food focus groups

The experience of food and dining is important for residents in aged care. It has a direct effect on people's health, wellbeing and quality of life. When people enjoy their dining experience it can lower their risks of:

- malnutrition
- dehydration
- unplanned weight loss.

Listening to people receiving aged care is an important part of improving their health and wellbeing.

Choices must be within reason– reasonably practical for the provider to deliver and meets the requirement of a provider's legislative responsibility.

Communicating regularly with older people can help to improve food, nutrition and dining. Working with older people receiving aged care helps make sure care and services are high quality, person centred and improve health, wellbeing and quality of life. Having a resident food focus group helps providers understand older people's preferences. It helps create dining that older people enjoy, supports their dignity, and encourages them to socialise and take part.

Other benefits include improving trust and making relationships with staff stronger. It can also encourage older people to take part in making decisions about their care and services. This helps give them a sense of control and independence.

Strengthened Quality Standards

The draft [Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards](#) focus on the importance of working with older people.

Setting up a food focus group or another way to collect feedback from older people can help you to meet these outcomes.

NOTE: The strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards are not yet in operation. They will come into effect in line with the commencement of the new Aged Care Act on 1 November 2025.



Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

[www.agedcarequality.gov.au/
providers/quality-standards/
strengthened-quality-standards](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-standards/strengthened-quality-standards)



Standard 2: The organisation

Outcome 2.1 Partnering with Individuals

Outcome statement:

The provider must engage in meaningful and active partnerships with individuals to inform organisational priorities and continuous improvement.

Outcome 2.6a: Complaints and feedback management for aged care workers

Outcome statement:

The provider must encourage and support aged care workers to make complaints and give feedback about the provider's delivery of funded aged care services, without reprisal. The provider must acknowledge and transparently manage all complaints and feedback and use complaints and feedback to contribute to the continuous improvement of funded aged care services.

Outcome 2.6b: Complaints and feedback management for individuals

Outcome statement:

The provider must encourage and support individuals and others to make complaints and give feedback about the provider's delivery of funded aged care services, without reprisal. The provider must acknowledge and transparently manage all complaints and feedback and use complaints and feedback to contribute to the continuous improvement of funded aged care services



Standard 6: Food and nutrition

Outcome 6.1 Partnering with individuals on food and drinks

Outcome statement:

The provider must partner with individuals to deliver a quality meal and refreshment service that includes appealing and varied food and drinks and an enjoyable dining experience.



Working together is so important

Providers should support older people and give them the opportunity to have input into the services they receive. Services should be developed with, and tailored to, the older person. They should take into account each person's needs, goals and preferences. By working with older people, providers can improve their care and services.

Getting the food and dining experience right includes working with residents to:

- understand their preferences
- support them to make choices
- create mealtimes that respect their dignity
- encourage them to be involved in planning the dining experience
- support them to be social and improve their function and quality of life.

Choices must be within reason - reasonably practical for the provider to deliver and meets the requirement of a provider's legislative responsibility.

The benefits of working with residents

Working with residents is good because it:

- supports residents' rights under the Quality Standards
- supports person-centred care
- improves care and services, health and wellbeing and overall satisfaction
- supports change to improve practice
- improves and supports professional and trusting relationships between workers and older people.
- supports high quality and safer care.

Formal versus informal engagement

Working with residents can be done in a formal or informal way. There are benefits to both ways, as both can provide a valuable source of information.

Asking for input and feedback from residents helps providers to keep improving. Having a feedback plan that staff and residents know about can stop food and dining-related problems because of poor communication.

Successful engagement includes:

- communicating with residents (in person or by other ways that suit the person's needs)
- listening
- supporting residents to have input, give feedback and make complaints
- acting on input, feedback and complaints to make changes.

Formal ways of engaging

- meetings and forums (such as food focus groups)
- interviews
- surveys
- comment cards and feedback forms.

Informal ways of engaging

- conversations (comments and staff observations)
- workers sharing meals with residents to talk about ideas and feedback.

“Feedback is taken on board. We complained about the soup, and they changed it and last night it was really good.”



About the toolkit

This toolkit has a range of printable resources, including a fact sheet, checklist, feedback form and meeting templates. The resources can help providers work with older people to improve their food and dining.

Consultation

We asked people involved in aged care to help to create this toolkit.

To develop this toolkit, we worked with:

- aged care providers
- workers
- experts
- older people receiving care and their representatives.

Last year, we did an online survey to find out what people know about food focus groups and other ways providers can work with people living in aged care services. We were particularly interested in learning how providers were involving residents and designing programs with them.

We wanted to:

- find real-life examples
- find out about existing food focus groups
- understand the different ways services were using food focus groups
- understand what works and what doesn't
- find out more about the challenges and barriers people faced when starting a group.

We also had expert consultation on this toolkit by:

- Christine Hopwood, member of the Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Expert Advisory Group
- dietitians and speech pathologists of the Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Advisory Support Unit.

“Between our voices, which we sometimes have to put on megaphone, things have improved with our food.”

Purpose

This toolkit:

- promotes the benefits of working with residents around food and dining, and how this supports person-centred care
- supports providers to start a food focus group, which is a formal way of working with residents to improve their food and dining experience.

Residents should have a way to:

- provide input and ideas
- raise concerns about their food and dining experience.

And they need to be able to do this in a way that works for them.

Starting a food focus group (as well as using other formal and informal ways of working with residents), gives you a channel to learn about residents' satisfaction. They can also help you:

- identify what is working well and not so well
- work out how you can design programs and strategies together that meet the needs and preferences of your residents.

You can adapt the recommendations in this toolkit to your service based on:

- what your residents want
- the type and size of your service.

“ I used to be on the food committee so I understand the chefs can't please everybody. I sympathise with the cooks. We would meet monthly and had a cook come and listened to what the residents were saying.

What is a food focus group?

A food focus group is a formal way of working with residents to get their input into menus and the dining experience. They are sometimes called a resident food committee.

The groups are usually made up of residents and their representatives, and sometimes staff members. Groups meet to discuss issues around food and dining in the aged care home. Resident members of the group can:

- decide what format the meeting has
- lead the meeting
- put together meeting agendas and minutes.

A food focus group creates a communication channel between residents and the provider. The group supports residents to give their opinions on the design of menus and their dining experience.

They help encourage residents to have choice and make decisions about their food.

They are a great way to improve and innovate the services you deliver.

What does a food focus group do?

A food focus group can:

- plan menus and give input into developing menus
- taste new menu items, including those that residents have suggested
- discuss ways to improve the dining experience (atmosphere, choice of crockery, cutlery and table linen, decoration)
- turn residents' food and dining complaints into practical actions and changes
- organise special events
- develop resident food surveys and help design comment cards to get feedback
- review feedback and what's being done to improve residents' dining experience
- support a culture of feedback and change
- have a 'food champion' or 'dining room ambassador' who supervises the food service in the dining areas. As well as talking with residents about their mealtime experience and sharing feedback with the management team
- get feedback from other residents not in the group and work together to come up with solutions.

Benefits of a food focus group

An effective food focus group:

- supports open communication between residents and food service, clinical and other staff as well as management
- encourages residents, staff and the provider to collaborate
- creates a safe, respectful and positive environment where the provider and staff are happy to hear people's concerns, and welcome residents' input and feedback
- helps residents to have a voice about their experience
- is a way for all residents to provide ideas and feedback
- develops an agreement for making decisions
- creates a list of activities to keep improving the service (even little changes can make a big difference)
- gives residents an opportunity to work with each other and staff members in a meaningful way.

Reporting on the group's actions and how well they worked helps create a culture of improvement. It gives residents confidence that the provider is willing to listen.

It's important to work on areas where there are issues but also make sure the group celebrates success. This keeps people motivated and improves everyone's experience.

“Staff ask residents if they like meals to get feedback and they act on it... Food committee even comes to room and gets feedback and acts on it.



Creating a food focus group

A food focus group is usually made up of residents and their representatives. It can also include staff members. The group creates a channel to communicate between residents and the provider. It helps improve food and dining service quality in aged care homes.

There are different activities a food focus group can do. Regular meetings give the group an opportunity to meet and discuss food and dining issues.

How to start a food focus group in your service

Setting up a food focus group can be simple and there are lots of different ways to do it.

Your service can adapt the suggestions in this toolkit to meet the needs and preferences of your residents.

It's important to make sure you record decisions about the food focus group and share them with residents. This makes sure everyone understands what the food focus group is and what it will do.

Key principles and meeting rules

A food focus group should have a set of key principles and 'meeting rules'. These make sure the group is fair, supportive and positive.

This is a good starting point, but you might want to add to the list to suit your service:

- Everyone has the right to take part.
- Everyone has the right to be heard.
- Everyone at the service can contribute directly to the group or through a group representative or feedback form.
- The group represents the diversity of the residents.
- People with communication difficulties or cognitive impairment are included and we have strategies to support them to take part.
- Everyone can share feedback, ideas and concerns in a safe environment.
- Communication between group members will be clear, open and respectful.

Meeting rules can include, for example:

- Members take turns speaking and stay on topic.
- The group records, takes action and reports back on feedback, ideas and issues.

Members

A successful food focus group is managed by residents. It has a wide mix of members who represent the resident community. Think about things like:

- making sure the group has a direct way to communicate with management
- making sure residents have the opportunity to join the group at any time
- promoting membership regularly through bulletin boards, flyers, social calendars, posters and in conversation
- including information about the group when new residents arrive at the service
- making sure residents run group meetings, with selected staff members (chefs, food service staff, dietary manager) invited
- not having more staff members than residents. Other staff members (nursing staff, lifestyle and activity staff, members of the management or executive team) are only invited as guest speakers or for assistance. For example, residents may ask staff to help with taking minutes
- inviting carers and family members if some residents need extra support
- using a good facilitator to help guide meetings (this could be a volunteer or staff member, such as a lifestyle coordinator or assistant).

Making the group inclusive

When organising and running meetings, think about the needs of the members. These things can help you make sure the food focus group is inclusive and accessible:

- Make sure communication is clear and open.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon or industry acronyms.
- Make sure printed information has large and easy to read fonts.
- Avoid colours that are hard to read – like yellow.
- Make information available in a range of formats and languages.
- Think about the different languages and cultures of your residents. Organise an interpreter if needed.
- Make sure that all group members can hear the discussion.
- Give everyone an opportunity to be heard.
- Make sure there is a different way for residents who have difficulty communicating or aren't comfortable speaking in a group to be able to give their feedback. For example:
 - have someone (family representative or carer staff member who knows the resident well) come with them to the meeting and speak for the person
 - allow people to give written feedback
 - have a way for residents to give anonymous feedback.
- Promote upcoming meetings to make sure all residents know about them.
- Provide physical support for residents who need it.

Running a food focus group meeting

Below is a list of things to think about when planning and running the meeting.

Choose a type of food focus group that suits your service and the preferences of your residents, such as:

1. **'Town hall' style** – you invite all residents to attend. This works best in smaller aged care homes.
 2. **Representative** – a few residents go to meetings to represent all residents. This works well in larger aged care homes. You need to have a process for involving all residents, such as regularly scheduled sub-meetings in each residential area to share information.
- Think about using a blended model, a combination of the town hall and representative models.
 - Give group members roles and responsibilities. Key roles can include a chairperson or facilitator, secretary, minute-taker and general members.
 - Prepare and circulate an agenda before each meeting. Usually, the group's chairperson or facilitator will prepare the agenda. The agenda should include items that the residents have come up with.
 - You need to keep minutes at each meeting to record key ideas, feedback and actions.
 - Record minutes in a detailed or general way, depending on the preference of the group.
 - Have a specific minute taker attend each meeting as an observer.
 - After each meeting, give the minutes to all residents or make them available in a place everyone can access.
 - Write down key actions and track them.
 - Decide on a regular meeting location.
 - Decide how often the group will meet. It can be helpful to schedule meetings around key menu development dates.
 - Decide on how the group will vote to reach agreement on key decisions.

“ We have a pretty good choice. We can ask for things at the residents' meeting. For example, I brought up that we hadn't had bacon in the morning for a while and they started serving bacon again.

Putting it into action

It's important to prepare an agenda before the meeting, with standing agenda topics. This is a helpful way to plan, prepare and keep meetings on track. The chairperson asks the group members for anything they would like to discuss in the meeting.

The chairperson gives the secretary of the group items for the agenda. This could be a staff member, such as a lifestyle coordinator or administrative assistant.

The secretary prepares the agenda and gives it to the chairperson at least 2 days before the meeting. They then check to make sure key items are covered, checking against previous meeting minutes and updating with progress on any follow-up actions since the last meeting (if any). They then share the agenda with group members before the meeting.

During the meeting, the secretary takes minutes and records any follow-up actions from the meeting discussion. After the meeting, the secretary types up the minutes and shares them with the group. They also update the action log. They give this to the chairperson who reviews and approves it to be shared with the group. The group gives the action log to the service's management to review and follow up any actions.

It is important to remind people that food focus groups are just one way to provide feedback and input into food, nutrition and dining at the service. Not everyone will want to take part in the group. Residents don't have to wait for a meeting to raise issues or ask questions. They can do this through other feedback channels at any time. Your service should have other ways that people can raise a problem or concern.

Extra tips for successfully working with residents

There are many more ways providers can support and improve how they engage with residents. For example:

- Make sure staff understand what working and engaging with residents means for their role and how they can help improve things.
- Make sure staff have the skills to engage well with residents with different needs and backgrounds.
- Encourage staff to talk with residents at mealtimes to get real-time feedback about their meal, dining experience and food choices.
- Create opportunities for staff to share residents' feedback with food service staff.
- Encourage residents to attend food focus group meetings.
- Provide support to food focus group meetings where needed. For example, converting handwritten notes into digital documents for printing, photocopying and providing quiet private space for the meetings.

Positive stories – food focus groups

These positive stories are examples of best practice that we've found through our monitoring activities. Some have been shared with us by service managers and clinical care staff. Others have been collated from active food focus groups.

Culturally specific food and dining story

One service providing culturally specific care and services for Chinese Australian residents, started a food focus group to get their residents' feedback.

Residents and their representatives gave feedback in the food focus group asking that the provider serve Chinese meals every day. They also asked to celebrate traditional festival days. Through the food focus group, the service involved residents in developing the menus. The chef and catering team worked with the food focus group members to find out what traditional festival days were important to them and what traditional foods they should add to the menu.

Now they celebrate traditional festival days like Chinese New Year, the Moon Festival, Christmas and the Dragon Boat Festival. Foods include traditional and favourite foods from various parts of China and include:

- yum cha specialties
- steamed rice dumplings
- dim sims
- spring rolls
- moon cakes
- char siu
- beef tendons
- BBQ pork
- Peking duck
- pork buns.

Food focus group meeting minutes showed residents and their representatives 'love' the food year-round. Especially, the opportunity to celebrate the important festival days with traditional food. The chef and catering staff reported higher job satisfaction, knowing that the effort they put in to design the menu with residents had a positive impact. They look forward to working with residents in the food focus group to keep improving the menu and food service.

Family favourite recipes story

One service has made recipe changes through feedback from their food focus group.

They invite family members to the group meeting and encourage 'family favourite' recipes. During the meeting, they discuss their favourite meals while enjoying the special snacks prepared by the chef. The dietitian supporting the service goes to the meetings to work alongside family members in recipe or menu changes.

The chef and dietitian take the provided recipes and review their menu. The group has agreed that once a month they will have a 'family night' where familiar dishes are included.

Recreate memorable moments story

One service asked their food focus group to think about their favourite dining experiences and share what made them special. Many residents mentioned eating with their partners and family members for special occasions like 'date night'.

With this feedback, the service trialled a 'couple or family dinner' where the lifestyle coordinator supported residents to make an invitation and send it to their partner or family member for a special dinner in the private dining room.

The chef prepared the resident's favourite meal, and the resident and their partner or family member could dress up and enjoy a special candlelit dinner.

The food focus group minutes showed many compliments and positive feedback. One resident said that the couples dinner had been her highlight of living at the service and something she looked forward to.

“ I enjoy the food we eat here. We can always talk to the staff if we have any issues, and they listen to us. I am never worried about speaking up.

Survey responses

In 2021–2022, we worked with the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN). We surveyed 365 older people living in residential aged care across Australia about their food and dining experience.

The [Analysis of food and dining experiences in residential aged care services](#) report explains the key findings of the survey results. It gives a view into what residents think about the food and dining at their aged care home.

Below are some of the responses where residents talked about how they appreciated being able to give input.

- I used to be on the food committee so I understand the chefs can't please everybody. I sympathise with the cooks. We would meet monthly and had a cook come and listened to what the residents were saying.
- The meals are good here, they know what I like, I like mince and vegetables. I like everything but the curry which is spicy. The presentation of meals is excellent and it looks and tastes good. There are forms that you can fill in with things you want them to know, things you like or don't like.
- Between our voices, which we sometimes have to put on megaphone, things have improved with our food.
- Variety is really good – the Chef asks how things are, and there are forms to fill out (feedback).
- Staff ask residents if they like meals to get feedback and they act on it... Food committee even comes to room and gets feedback and acts on it.
- Feedback is taken on board. We complained about the soup, and they changed it and last night it was really good.
- There is a monthly meeting with the director of care and a feedback box is available.
- We have a pretty good choice. We can ask for things at the residents' meeting. For example, I brought up that we hadn't had bacon in the morning for a while and they started serving bacon again.
- I enjoy the food we eat here. We can always talk to the staff if we have any issues, and they listen to us. I am never worried about speaking up.



Analysis of food and dining experiences in residential aged care services

[www.agedcarequality.gov.au/
resource-library/analysis-survey-food-
and-dining-experiences-residential-
aged-care-services-final-report](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/analysis-survey-food-and-dining-experiences-residential-aged-care-services-final-report)

Useful resources and templates

Templates

Fact sheet – Setting up a food focus group

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/setting-food-focus-group



Checklist – Effective food focus group

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/effective-food-focus-group-checklist



Agenda template

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/agenda-template



Minutes template

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/minutes-template



Terms of reference template

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/terms-reference-template



Feedback form template

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/feedback-form-template



Resources

Consumer advisory body – meeting discussion guide

This discussion guide supports older people to talk with their providers about the food, nutrition and dining experience they receive. For more information about strengthening provider governance responsibilities visit our webpage on [strengthening governance](#).

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/consumer-advisory-body-meeting-discussion-guide



Being part of a consumer advisory body – a resource for aged care residents

This resource provides tips for being in a consumer advisory body.

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/being-part-consumer-advisory-body



Consumer advisory body – a fact sheet for older people

A fact sheet for residents that explains a provider's responsibility to offer to set up a consumer advisory body, the purpose of the consumer advisory body and how to get involved.

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/consumer-advisory-body-fact-sheet-consumers



Older people's engagement in aged care (literature review)

This literature review looks at published peer-reviewed articles and strategies, reports, guidelines and toolkits understand existing models of co-design that have been successfully used in Australia and internationally.

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/consumer-engagement-aged-care-literature-review



Consumer engagement in aged care (survey report)

We ran surveys from 24 June 2019 to 22 July 2019. This report describes the key themes and findings from online surveys of aged care residents and aged care providers, about best practice for engaging with residents.

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/consumer-engagement-aged-care-survey-report



Resources

Food and dining preferences – template

This template resource helps aged care providers to understand the food and dining preferences of their residents. Print this for residents to fill in, with help from staff, family, carers, or allied health workers, where needed.

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/my-food-and-dining-preferences-form



Half the story – a guide to meaningful consultation with people living with dementia, their families and carers

From Dementia Australia, this resource has information, tips, and strategies for community groups, service providers, businesses or other organisations to identify opportunities and develop solutions with people affected by dementia.

www.dementiafriendly.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Half-the-story.pdf



Effective co-design with consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

A culturally inclusive aged care practice guide from the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing.

www.culturaldiversity.com.au/files/Effective-Co-Design-with-Consumers-from-Culturally-and-Linguistically-Diverse-Backgrounds.pdf



More information

We have resources to support providers to deliver high-quality, enjoyable food and dining experiences.

Topics include:

- dining
- choice
- swallowing
- oral health
- dementia.

You can access fact sheets, posters, videos, online learning modules and 'Food for thought' good practice advice and examples by visiting our [food, nutrition and dining provider webpage](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/food-nutrition-dining-provider-webpage) or [agedcarequality.gov.au/food](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/food).

We also have food, nutrition and dining resources for older people receiving aged care and for aged care workers for:

- people receiving aged care, visit [Food, nutrition and dining for older Australians](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/food-nutrition-dining-older-australians).
- aged care workers, visit [Food, nutrition and dining for workers](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/food-nutrition-dining-workers).

Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline

Contact our hotline for questions, concerns and complaints about food, nutrition and dining. Approved providers, aged care staff, people receiving aged care and their representatives can use the Hotline.

Callers can speak to dietitians and speech pathologists in the Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Advisory Support Unit who can give expert advice on issues about food, nutrition and dining.

The Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline is available on **1800 844 044**, 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday.



Food, nutrition and dining provider webpage

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/food-nutrition-dining-information-providers



Food, nutrition and dining for older Australians

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/older-australians/health-wellbeing/food-and-nutrition



Food, nutrition and dining for workers

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/workers/food-nutrition-and-dining-resources-workers



Effective food focus group

Checklist



Food focus groups can use this checklist to make the most of the group's work.

An effective food focus group:

- supports **open communication** between residents, food staff and management
- encourages residents, staff and the provider to **collaborate**
- creates a **safe, respectful and positive environment**. One that is open to hearing concerns, and for residents to share their opinions and feedback
- encourages residents to have a **voice** about **their experience**
- is a way for the wider resident community to provide ideas and feedback
- develops an **agreement** for making decisions
- develops a list of **continuous improvement** activities (even little changes can make a big difference)
- gives residents an **opportunity to work** with each other and staff members to make a difference.

Reporting on the actions the provider takes and what the outcome was creates a culture of improvement and increases confidence in the providers willingness to listen.

It's important to work on issues but also to make sure that the group **celebrates success**. This keeps everyone motivated and improves everyone's experience.



#	Checklist	Comments	Actions to improve (if needed)
1	How do you let residents know about the food focus group?	<i>For example, bulletin boards, in-room flyers, posters in the dining room</i>	<i>For example, remind residents of upcoming meetings</i>
2	Is the information about the food focus group clear to residents? How is it shared?	<i>For example, use plain language, large fonts, information in various formats and languages</i>	
3	How often do you promote becoming a member of the food focus group to residents?		
4	What have you put in place to make sure that residents drive the food focus group? (Think about the numbers of residents in the group compared to staff.)	<i>For example, residents run the meeting with some staff members and volunteers</i>	<i>For example, we need to make sure management staff aren't part of the group except when the group invites them. This helps residents not to feel intimidated.</i>
5	Are relevant staff at meetings to give food service and dietary information?	<i>For example, chef, hospitality staff, dietary manager</i>	
6	Does the food focus group have a wide mix of members who represent the resident community? How are you making sure you're being inclusive? (Think about the form of the meeting like town hall, representative, blended.)	<i>For example, the group includes people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds</i>	<i>For example, having regular sub-meetings in each residential area in our larger homes so that more residents can be involved</i>
7	What strategies do you have to support any residents with language barriers, communication difficulties or cognitive impairment to take part?	<i>For example, have their representative come to the meetings with them and give feedback for them</i>	<i>For example, arrange for an interpreter if needed or for assistive communication devices</i>



8	What other ways do residents have to give feedback if they're not comfortable speaking in a group or prefer to provide feedback anonymously?	<i>For example, via a group representative or feedback form</i>	<i>For example, developing food satisfaction surveys</i>
9	How do you make sure that communication between group members is clear, open and respectful?	<i>For example, have clear meeting rules, have a facilitator to help guide meetings</i>	
10	How do you make sure there is open communication in the group? How do you record feedback, ideas and concerns? And how do you work out what actions to take and how to report these back to the group and all residents?	<i>For example, we make sure there is a direct line to people who make decisions, we share agenda and minutes and keep an action log</i>	
11	How do you measure whether having a food focus group affects change and satisfaction?	<i>For example, by evaluating data you collect in feedback forms before and after the food focus group started</i>	
12	Is there anything else you do to encourage people to have their say about food and dining?	<i>For example, encourage staff to talk to residents during mealtimes to get real-time feedback</i>	





Food focus group

Agenda template



[Insert service name]

[Insert meeting name, e.g. *Food focus group meeting*]

Date and time: [insert date and time of meeting]

Location: [insert location e.g. *Dining rooms*]

Chair: [insert name]

Minute taker: [insert name]

Attendees: [insert names]

Apologies: [insert names]

Agenda

#	Agenda item	Notes for discussion	Time
1.	Review of last meeting's minutes	Read and review last meeting's minutes. Discuss business coming out of previous minutes.	5 minutes
2.	Review of action log		
	<i>Agenda items can include, for example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review menu• special events• dining environment• review mealtimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the upcoming winter menu and encourage residents to give feedback and make suggestions.• Discuss upcoming special meals including monthly specials and Mother's Day meal.• Residents expressed concerns about staff speaking too loud at meals.• Breakfast at 8am, lunch at 12.30pm and dinner at 5.30pm	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">general feedback compliments and complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The roast last Sunday was tough and dry again, residents agreed that there needs to be a change. Chef discussed changing the cut of meat.The addition of freshly baked snacks at morning tea time has been well received, thanks given to the chef.	
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.	Other business		
7.	Consent to share minutes of meeting	Ask residents in attendance if they consent to allow all residents to view and read the minutes.	
8.	Consent to share action log and recommendations with management	Ask residents in attendance if they consent to share action log and recommendations with management.	



Action log:

Date created	Topic	Detail	Person/s responsible	Expected date of completion	Action date of completion
<i>For example: [insert date]</i>	<i>Sunday roast was tough and dry</i>	<i>Chef to research another cut of meat for Sunday roasts to make sure it's tender and soft</i>	<i>Chef</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>

The next meeting will be held in [insert location, e.g. the dining rooms] on [insert date] at [insert time].



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Food focus group

Minutes template



[Insert service name]

[Insert meeting name, e.g. *Food focus group meeting*]

Date and time: [insert date and time of meeting]

Location: [insert location e.g. *Dining rooms*]

Chair: [insert name]

Minute taker: [insert name]

Attendees: [insert names]

Apologies: [insert names]

Summary of discussion

#	Agenda item	Summary of discussion
1.	Review of last meeting's minutes	<i>The last minutes were reviewed. There were no concerns at this time. Seconded by [name of attendee] OR [insert concerns arising from previous minutes for discussion]</i>
2.	Review of action log	<i>Reviewed action log</i>



	<i>For example: Menu review</i>	<i>Winter menu was provided to residents for review before the meeting. Based on feedback, a resident suggested, and the majority agreed, to have more fresh fruit salad. Residents also suggested new items added to the new menu including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>beef pie</i>• <i>mushroom soup</i>• <i>strawberry cake</i>
	<i>Special events</i>	<i>Reviewed menu for Mother's Day. Residents agreed to keep the scheduled menu but to substitute rice with spaghetti.</i>
	<i>Dining environment</i>	<i>Residents said they were concerned about staff speaking too loudly during meals.</i>
	<i>Review mealtimes</i>	<i>Residents agreed with the timing of the suggested mealtimes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>breakfast at 8am</i>• <i>lunch at 12.30pm</i>• <i>dinner at 5.30pm.</i>
3.	<i>Review action form</i>	<i>(completed with management responses)</i>
4.		
5.		
6.	Other business	<i>Residents were reminded they can have a meeting with a dietitian if they have specific dietary needs or concerns.</i>
7.	Consent to share minutes of meeting	Residents at the meeting all consented to allow all residents to view and read the minutes.
8.	Consented to share action log and recommendations with management	Residents at the meeting all consented to share action log and recommendations with management.



Action log:

Date created	Topic	Detail	Person/s responsible	Expected date of completion	Action date of completion
<i>For example: [insert date]</i>	<i>Sunday roast was tough and dry</i>	<i>Chef to research another cut of meat for Sunday roasts to make sure it's tender and soft.</i>	<i>Chef</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>
<i>[insert date]</i>	<i>Menu review</i>	<i>Update menu to meet residents' preferences in consultation with dietitian and speech pathologist. Review items at the next meeting.</i>	<i>Dietary team</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>	<i>[insert date]</i>

Other notes

[You can add other important details discussed during the meeting here]

The meeting adjourned at [insert time].

The next meeting will be held in [insert location, e.g. the dining rooms] **on** [insert date] **at** [insert time].



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Food focus group

Terms of reference template



[Insert service name]

[Insert meeting name, e.g. *Food focus group meeting*]

The group was established on [insert date]

1. Purpose of the group

[insert information]

For example:

The food focus group supports residents to have input into the menus and their dining experience. It helps give residents more choice about the food they receive. The group discusses food and dining at the service. It creates a way for older people to give the service advice, guidance and make recommendations.

2. Membership

[insert information on the membership of the group, for example, number of members, who can join, who are the voting and non-voting members]

For example,

- Membership is open to all residents who want to join.
- Membership is renewed each year.
- The group has [insert number] members, which represents [number]% of the residents.
- The membership of the group includes:
 - Chair: [insert name]
 - Minute-taker: [insert name]
 - Members: [insert name].



3. Responsibilities and key activities

Responsibilities of the group include:

- [insert responsibilities, for example:
 - *one month before a menu review the chef brings new meals for residents to try and to consider in their menu review*
 - *hospitality manager and chef bring menu review options to a meeting to discuss with residents 4 times a year. This happens after they have discussed the options with the service's dietitian*].

Key activities of the group include:

- [insert key activities, for example:
 - *review menu and give recommendations*
 - *taste new menu items*
 - *organise special events*
 - *look at feedback and complaints from residents and work together to find solutions*
 - *develop resident food surveys*]

4. Key principles and meeting rules

[insert information]

For example:

- *Every person has the right to take part.*
- *Every person has the right to be heard.*
- *Everyone can contribute directly or through another process (for example through a representative or feedback form).*
- *The group represents the diversity of the residents.*
- *We include residents with communication difficulties or cognitive impairment and have strategies to include them specific to their needs.*
- *Everyone can share feedback, ideas and concerns in a safe environment.*
- *Communication between group members will be clear, open and respectful.*
- *We record and action feedback, ideas and concerns and we report these back to the group and the wider resident community.*

5. Meetings

[insert relevant information, for example, the location of meetings, frequency of meetings]



6. Recommendations and making decisions

[insert information on the process, *for example, voting process, communicating recommendations to key decision-makers, who are the key decision-makers*]



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Feedback form

Template



Feedback forms are one of the most common ways residential services ask for feedback.

Many services have feedback forms available:

- in or outside dining areas
- at the front desk
- at resident meetings.

Services use the feedback they get from the forms to work out what to cover at resident meetings, such as food focus groups. They also keep copies of the forms in their feedback register as proof of how they ask for feedback.

You can use this template as another way for residents to provide feedback.

Some residents may prefer to give their feedback in writing because they:

- have difficulty communicating
- aren't comfortable speaking in front of a group
- want to provide feedback anonymously.

You can collect the completed forms through:

- a comment box
- a staff member
- a member of the food focus group
- a 'Food Champion' or 'Dining Room Ambassador'.

Some services choose a person to oversee the food service in the dining areas. They help by talking to residents about their mealtime experience and sharing feedback with management.



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Feedback form

Name:		Date:	
OR Tick this box if you wish to be anonymous			
If you would like help to fill in the form	Feedback taken by:		
	Staff	Staff title:	
	Family representative or carer		
	Food champion or Food focus group representative		
	Other:		
Concern, feedback or suggestion			
Would you like a response?		Yes	No
Signature		Date:	
For office use only			
Staff name, title, department:			
Response			
Signature		Date:	



The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

July 2025



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