



Communities of Practice guide and template

How to use this tool

This tool is designed to help you set up a Community of Practice (CoP) in your organisation.

- Use it as a **guide and template** to bring people together who want to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas about applying the *Aged Care Act 2024* and the *Aged Care Rules 2025* in everyday work.
- You can follow the steps to **plan, start, and run your CoP**, including who to involve, how often to meet, and what topics to discuss.
- The tool works best when it is used as a **shared effort**, not something for one person to manage alone. Everyone in the group contributes and learns together.
- Bring **real-life examples** to your discussions - what worked, what could be improved, and how the Act was applied successfully.
- Use the tool to **share systems, processes, and practices** that are helping your team or organisation, so others can learn and adapt them.

Establishing a CoP within your organisation helps share insights, practices, ideas and experiences, supports learning, provides a sounding board to embed the Act as part of everyday work and enables continuous improvement to ensure you are delivering rights-based and person-centred care.

Bring real-life scenarios to discussions to explain how situations were handled, highlight areas to improve, and show where applying the Act led to positive outcomes. Share processes and systems your team is developing that are working well, so others can learn from them.

Embedding the Act and continuous improvements, means ongoing change, learning from peers and adopting practical strategies that can be a big help especially when schedules are full and demands are high.

What is a Community of Practice?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a common role, interest, or challenge and come together regularly to learn from one another and improve their professional practice.

A CoP will focus on best practice and create new knowledge to empower an area of professional practice and interact regularly to achieve this goal. Interaction can take place virtually (synchronous and asynchronous) or in face-to-face meetings.

CoPs are not formal training sessions. Instead, they are peer learning environments where staff can:

- reflect on real situations
- share experiences
- explore different approaches
- identify improvements together.

The benefits of a CoP

A CoP creates a safe and collaborative environment where staff can discuss how changes are working in practice and identify opportunities to strengthen care and service delivery.

CoPs can help organisations:

- support staff to apply legislative and policy changes in practice
- share solutions and learn from real-life scenarios
- identify areas requiring additional training or guidance
- strengthen collaboration across teams
- identify trends and give evidence to support practice changes
- capture valuable frontline insights
- embed continuous improvement into everyday practice.

The CoP lifecycle

A CoP typically follows a continuous learning cycle:

1. **Reflect on experiences**
Staff share situations or challenges they have encountered.
2. **Share insights and perspectives**
Members discuss how situations were handled and what they learned.
3. **Identify improvements**
The group explores ways to improve processes, communication, and/or practice.
4. **Test and apply changes**
Ideas can be trialled in practice.
5. **Review outcomes**
The group reflects on what worked and what could be improved further, and notes it in the improvement log

This cycle supports continuous learning and improvement across the organisation.

When to establish a CoP

A CoP may be particularly useful when:

- new legislation or policy requires staff to adapt their practice
- teams are experiencing similar challenges
- organisations want to capture **frontline insights**
- staff would benefit from **peer discussion and shared learning**
- organisations want to strengthen **continuous improvement practices**.

CoP sustainability

To keep your CoP sustainable, and your members engaged, consider the following tips:

- rotating the facilitator to share ownership
- allow anonymous scenario contributions to encourage openness
- celebrate small wins/improvements
- invite guest contributors occasionally
- keep meetings short, focused and on topic

Communities of Practice Toolkit

A practical guide for providers

This toolkit supports organisations to establish and run CoPs. CoPs create structured opportunities for staff to share experiences, reflect on real situations, and identify improvements as organisations embed the changes introduced through the *Aged Care Act 2024* into everyday practice.

CoPs help organisations move from learning about the changes to applying them confidently in practice.

Quick start checklist

Use this checklist to quickly establish a CoP within your organisation.

- Identify the focus or topic of the CoP (for example: applying the Act in practice, responding to incidents, person-centred care, documentation or reporting).**

- Invite a mix of staff roles to participate (e.g., workers, nurses, team leaders, work health and safety staff).**

- Nominate a facilitator/convenor and note taker.**

- Schedule regular meetings (monthly or every two months works well).**

- Agree on safe discussion ground rules.**

- Encourage members to bring real-life scenarios or questions.**

- Record key insights and improvement actions.**

- Share learning across the wider organisation.**

Steps to establish a CoP

Step 1 – Define the focus

Identify the topic or area of practice the CoP will focus on.

Examples may include:

- applying the Act in practice
- responding to incidents, concerns or feedback
- supporting older people's rights and decision-making
- improving documentation and reporting
- person-centred care approaches
- protecting privacy.

Step 2 – Identify participants

CoPs work best when they include people with different perspectives.

Participants may include:

- care workers
- nurses
- allied health staff
- team leaders or supervisors
- work health and safety or governance staff.

Participation should be voluntary where possible to encourage engagement and openness.

Step 3 – Select a facilitator

The facilitator helps guide discussions but is not responsible for solving every issue.

Their role is to:

- guide discussions
- encourage participation
- keep meetings focused
- ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute
- capture improvement opportunities.

Step 4 – Decide the meeting format

Consider:

- meeting frequency (monthly or every two months works well)
- meeting length (45–60 minutes)
- whether meetings are **virtual or in person**.

Consistency helps build trust and engagement.

Step 5 – Establish ground rules

Ground rules help create a safe and respectful environment.

Examples include:

- respectful and constructive discussion
- no blame or judgement
- focus on learning and improvement
- maintain confidentiality where required
- allow everyone the opportunity to contribute.

Roles and responsibilities

Facilitator / Convenor

The facilitator supports the group to work effectively.

Responsibilities may include:

- organising meetings
- guiding discussion
- encouraging participation
- helping identify improvement opportunities
- ensuring discussions remain focused and productive.

Secretary / Note Taker

The note taker supports documentation of discussions.

Responsibilities may include:

- recording key insights and actions
- maintaining the issue and improvement log
- sharing meeting notes with members.

Members

Members contribute to the success of the CoP by:

- sharing experiences and scenarios
- raising challenges or questions
- contributing ideas and solutions
- sharing learning with their teams.

Example discussion scenarios

Real-life scenarios help bring learning to life.

Examples may include:

- A worker is unsure how to respond when an older person declines a recommended care activity.
- Staff notice delays in incident reporting and want to explore how the process could be improved.
- A positive example where a worker supported an older person to make their own decision about daily routines.
- Feedback from an older person suggesting communication could be improved.

The group may discuss:

- What happened?
- What worked well?
- What could be improved?
- What did we learn?

Template – CoP charter

Organisation Name	
CoP topic/focus	
Objective of the CoP	
Participants	
Meeting frequency	
Facilitator/Convenor	
Secretary/Note taker	

Template – Example meeting agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Reflection – what has worked well since the last meeting
3. Scenario discussion (real case example)
4. Challenges or questions from members
5. Sharing useful resources or tools
6. Identifying improvement opportunities
7. Actions and next steps

Template – Issue and improvement log

Issue or Scenario	Key Insights	Action Required	Responsible Person	Follow-up Date

Sharing learning across the organisation

Insights from the CoP should be shared across the wider organisation so that learning benefits the entire workforce.

This may include sharing insights through:

- team meetings
- internal newsletters
- training sessions
- updates to policies or procedures
- shared resource folders or knowledge libraries.

Sharing learning helps ensure that reflection leads to improvement across the organisation.

Signs your CoP is working well

A successful CoP may demonstrate:

- active participation from members
- open sharing of experiences and ideas
- identification of practical improvements
- increased confidence among staff
- improvements to processes or practices over time.

CoPs support organisations to learn from experience, strengthen practice, and continuously improve care and services.