
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Building Collaborative Practice as a vehicle for Cultural Change

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Introduction

The Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) in collaboration with the King's Fund (UK) and four Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in Australia have undertaken a national demonstration trial of the King's Fund "Collaborative Pairs" program, including an independent evaluation. The Collaborative Pairs program is a leadership development program which consumers and health service providers undertake in pairs to develop new ways of working together. The program represents an important tool for increasing capacity in collaborative practice, an essential foundation for co-design and development of effective integrated care models.

Short description of practice change implemented

The Collaborative Pairs Program is designed to support the development of the mindset and practices that underpin a culture of shared leadership and partnership. It is delivered in five workshops with at least one month in between workshops to enable pairs to work on a healthcare challenge.

Aim and theory of change

The program aims to develop collaborative partnerships and to break down the cultural barriers that often exist between those providing services and those receiving them. This is not just about changing a few organisational practices, but instead breaking down vested interests and long-established ways of thinking and doing. There is a robust body of evidence that shows when consumers are involved, decisions are better, health and health outcomes improve, and resources are allocated more efficiently.

Targeted population and stakeholders and Timeline

Seven programs have been delivered with over 40 pairs participating within the four Primary Health Networks. This has occurred over a two- year period. Some PHNs targeted their staff to work with consumer and community leaders and other PHNs targeted pairs from specific areas of strategic priority such as mental health, addiction, rural and remote health for example.

Highlights (innovation, impact and outcomes)

The evaluation found the Collaborative Pairs program was relevant and acceptable in the Australian context. It has enabled new ways of working together and shown potential to effect cultural change between those who provide services and those who use them.

Comments on sustainability and transferability

The evaluation made recommendations in relation to marketing and recruitment, format and structure and ongoing sustainability of the program. The program is currently being trialled using different delivery methods to inform future implementation and to determine how transferable it is to different sectors and settings.

Conclusions (ie key findings)

The concept of Collaborative Pairs was seen by many across PHNs, facilitator and participant cohorts as innovative and exciting. The program demonstrated a positive impact on participants in terms of new skills, thinking and approaches to communication, collaboration and partnership.

Discussions and Lessons learned

The results of the National Demonstration Trial have indicated that the program has relevance in the Australian context and is beneficial in assisting consumers and health service providers engage in new ways of working that drive partnerships that will facilitate change. More work needs to be done in assessing impact and finetuning the program to be delivered in a range of different contexts.