

POSTER ABSTRACT

Feeling Better: A Child Protection and Mental Health Literacy Initiative

1st Asia Pacific Conference on Integrated Care, Brisbane, 06-08 Nov 2017

Warren Bergh

Childrens Health Queensland HHS, Australia

Introduction: Evidence shows that children and young people with an out-of-home care (OOHC) experience face challenges related to their mental health at a disproportionate level compared to the general population. On average, being a children/young person in OOHC increases their chance of experiencing a diagnosable mental illness by at least a 36-62%. Further the mental health needs of children and young people in OOHC can be very different from the needs of those in the general population.

Despite the disproportionate levels, at this point there is very limited accessible and easy to understand information for children and young people and professionals about what is mental health and wellbeing in OOHC and what they can do to increase wellbeing. Therefore, in recently sharing her own story about the challenges of being a child/young person in OOHC with mental health issues, Caitlin (a previous consumer of CYMHS) sparked the genesis of the Feeling Better initiative in Late 2016.

Aim/theory of change: Feeling Better is a Child Protection Mental Health Literacy Initiative and is a cross-sectoral and departmental partnership between Evolve Therapeutic Services (CYMHS, Queensland Health), CREATE Foundation (including Young Consultants), PeakCare, and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak. The initiative focuses on:

Increasing awareness of mental health and well-being for children/young people in OOHC;

Establishing a common language and cultural change to encourage children/young people to access mental health and wellbeing support;

Improving the capacity of children/young people to maintain their own mental health and well-being

Improving the capacity of those who interface with children/young people and the larger community to respond to their mental health and wellbeing issues.

Targeted population/stakeholders: In order to achieve this, a number of resources for young people and professionals (e.g., foster carers, residential workers, Child Safety, and NGO sector) are being developed over a 3 phase process. The first being the development of resources focusing on educating children/young people and professionals about specific mental health and wellbeing topics, the second phase focusing on resources outlining what

individuals can do in relation to improving/increasing children/young people's mental health and wellbeing in OOHC. The third phase will be the development of target training for professionals regarding target wellbeing and mental health topics within the child protection context.

Highlights/ Conclusions: Action learning has been, and will continue to be, the foundation of this initiative. Evident by young people and stakeholders being regularly consulted regarding developed resources and asked to identify gaps and what areas to focus on during phase two.

The effectiveness of the initiative will be evaluated over the first 12 months of implementation. Feedback to date has been positive, with Young People being excited to see something that helps them understand what they are going through with a mental health and child protection lens. Stakeholders have provided similar feedback and also have noted the importance of the initiative.

The importance of collaboration openness and the power of consumer driven participation have been some of the key learnings through the development of this important initiative.

Keywords: mental health; child protection
