

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Implementation of a comprehensive systems of integrated mental health service delivery in urban areas. Lessons learned from the Inner Sydney Urban Partnership for Health and Well-Being

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Introduction: Notwithstanding the high priority given to the development of systems of integrated mental healthcare in Australia in National and State Policy, little has been done to guide how this should be done, for whom, by whom and to what end. This presentation surveys the challenges involved based on the experience gained by a dedicated group of providers, funders, carers and consumers in NSW through the establishment of an Inner Sydney Urban Partnership for Health and Well-being. This initiative is referenced to other initiatives in Australia, albeit those that have been systematically developed are relatively rare or seldom reported. Learnings are shared and a framework for achieving more durable success in Australian settings is presented.

Method: The presentation is based on an a series of symposia held between 2015-2016, an implementation process undertaken by Synergia between 2016-2017 and a follow-up consultative process undertaken by the author in 2018 for St Vincent's Health Network, Sydney.

Results: From its inception there was considerable enthusiasm for a broad group of providers, funders, consumers and carer organisations working together. In Sydney by 2017 22 NGOs, the Central Eastern Suburbs PHN, Family and Community Services, Consumer and Carer Organisation's had become involved in the collaboration, early draft of protocols and bids for funding made. In addition the services had been surveyed by Professor Luis Salvador-Carulla and his team at SYDNEY University, using the Mental Health Atlas methodology which he had developed. The basis for a robust integrated care network seemed to have been laid. However the loss of key personnel, restructuring within the lead organisation and a lack of shared financial commitment led to an abrupt loss of momentum in the implementation process. The 2018 survey showed however that there were other less obvious factors involved that are referred to under "lessons learned" that may have been equally critical in the outcome at the time. Nevertheless, continuing interest in re-establishing the Partnership was still evident in the 2018 consultation and in fact St Vincent's Mental Health Service has included the initiative in its Strategic Plan and is supporting research to underpin its re-development.

Conclusions:

- Integrated Mental Health care is hugely challenging but is required by both Federal and State policy.
- Stakeholder know that consumers benefit when services work together to focus on their needs and that things can go seriously wrong when they don't.
- We need to learn from our failures as well as our successes.

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- Successful systems change requires vision, strategy, leadership and tenacity
- Policy needs to be delineated into operational objectives and strategies
- Horizontal integration at a Meso level and care coordination at a Micro-level is critical but so are clear Macro-level policy settings and resource commitment in the implementation process.

Lessons learned:

- Lack of priority given to rapid gain, consumer focused initiatives
- Work needed to be done to clarify and communicate the roles of the stakeholder group vis a vis "working partners" and "knowledge affiliates"
- Insufficient attention to specifying and supporting common care pathways
- The MH Atlas could have been utilised as a basis for joint planning given the information contained in it relating to the services and staffing to be integrated.
- Lack of clarity regarding working relationship of the UP to new funding programmes ~ PHNs, NDIS
- There was a need for concrete and continuing support from LHD and Governance partners and direction and resourcing from the State
- Structures can appear robust and enduring but are vulnerable to shifts in support and direction.

Limitations: None

Suggestions for further research: Research on integration needs to occur at Macro, MESO and Micro levels