



Minutes from NIHN Meeting Thursday 18th February 2016

Chair: Anne from PS Family Support

Minute Taker: Kate Ormonde (Nova for Women and Children)

Coordinated: Astrid Gearin (CYDP)

Attended: Kate Ormonde (Nova), Simon Watt (Allambi), Mel Eason (Mathew Talbot), Tendayi Chivunga (Legal Aid), Sophie Hedges (HNE Health), Kimberley Apps (HNE Health PES), Annissa Hooper (Warlga Ngurra), Mark Webber (Hunter PIR), Max (Samaritans), Harmony Wilson (Samaaritans tenancy), Richard Harrison (DHS Centrelink), Gordana Bozinovski (HNE Health), Luke Tregloan (FACS), James Butler (FACS), Learne Brown (Jenny's Place Singles).

Apologies: Astrid Gearin (CYDP), Fiona Edwards (Nova), Barbara Stacey (HNE Health)

- **Acknowledgement to country**
- **Minutes and actions of the previous meeting reviewed**
- **Guest Speaker: ROSLYN COOK Legal Aid**

- Roslyn from Legal Aid discussed their concerns of what Geoff from HTAS bought up at previous NHHIN about additional persons residing in a HSNW property without being declared can incur a debt with rent and possible eviction – It was bought up that some tenants have been given 14 days to respond to letters sent by HNSW about this issue: we discussed the issue of persons not receiving their mail for any reason, children, mental health – we feel 14 days' notice isn't enough and Legal Aid services are available to support with this issue for any HSNW tenant – Legal Aid are providing feedback on this issue to FACS. Legal support available also to support clients that may have limited housing options due to debts with HSNW and have been Blacklisted with Roslyn Cook
- Roslyn talked about legal training for service providers – what training is needed:
 - I. Consumer engagement
 - II. Daylong session/training 'Law for non-Lawyers'
 - III. What would suit the sector??

- Mel Eason informed NHHIN there is a Homeless Persons Legal Clinic every Tuesday by appointment/referral from 1-3pm.
- Other Legal Clinics available:
 - I. Mobile Lawyers/outreach
 - II. Various days mobile app with Legal Aid (would like to get more information)

- **Terms of reference** – LGA – boundaries FACS Boundary or just Hunter – maybe Astrid can clarify this?? Hold over till next meeting
- **NHHIN Chair** – Could this be a community development officer – Agenda item for next meeting – there will need to be a commitment to this bi monthly meeting. (Astrid to be involved with this conversation due to her being current chair and amazing job she does)

- Registry week – gathering details of rough sleepers in our area and responses needed – this is also to be able to track rough sleepers/homelessness. We will discuss more at next meeting but I was given this link by James Butler FACS <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Felicity-Reynolds-Feb.pdf> for information about the tools used when previous Registry Weeks have been run in Australia as well as the supporting evidence behind it.
- James also provided this link for more information on homelessness [Mercy Foundation website](#)
- Council and Housing NSW at NHHIN – there is a meeting called Homelessness Working Group that Mark Webber (PIR) and Mel Eason (Mathew Talbot) can take information too.

Service Updates

Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

- Telephone assessment, advocate with Clients, Menatla health assessment
- Trained Mental Health professionals on phone doing assessment looking if any disability illness, functioning day to day, other srevices involved, regular contact with a GP
- Workers can call back client if not enough credit on their phone but please inform it will be a “private number” calling them back
- If GAPS indentified please follow up with Mental Health line/team
- Encourage clients to use their GP for low level Mental Health issues.

The Big Question

Transitioning clients to affordable accommodation & private rental, what are the opportunities for the people you support?

NHHIN compile responses & send to peaks and relevant politicians and stakeholders for them to action

- Transitional Period – may not be long enough in some cases
- Option to extend transitional period pending stability, engagement, reference issues worked on in place with a buffer for client.
- Advocacy with Real Estates – engagement with these services to break down barriers
- Funding available – Affordable Housing options, more affordable housing developments with allocation of Mental Health tenancies with support in place.
- Bond Loan rollover option if haven’t repaid but needs another bond loan due to going into another rental e.g. if only 3-6 month lease then property sool etc.
- TICA is a barrier – how do we get around this?? More conversations

RESPONSES FROM November 2015 BIG QUESTION:

Please note all these responses have been forwarded to the CEO’s of the NSW Homelessness Peak: Homelessness NSW, DV NSW and Y Foundations.

1. ‘My answer to your question is a resounding yes; Remember the client we went to see this week, someone like that requires more help than we can give them.’
2. ‘The simple answer to this would be YES! Within an outreach capacity, daily support is not at all viable under our current funding structure. While in refuge daily supports are met, however this is still a stretch and is often at the expense of High Effort outreach clients. High Effort clients not only require lots of support/time but additional brokerage funding to assist in meeting their needs.’

3. "Most workers are probably too busy seeing to High Effort clients to reply to this question as I am"
4. "Our service has experienced very high demand since commencement on 1 Nov 2014. Our service is a Hub and we work with a vast range of clients with the youngest presenting client being 13 and the oldest 84. We have opened 509 support periods in this time. Our service is funded to work with 348 men, women and children so we have well surpassed our funded capacity.
5. "In terms of complexity a large number of our clients present with a combination of untreated mental illness, AOD, Gambling, poor rental history, debt, relationship difficulties and involvement with Legal and Child Protection systems. Our team are highly skilled and knowledgeable and we work very collaboratively to provide wrap around services to these complex clients, I would say often the struggle is to co-ordinate and engage with other service providers who are also stretched to capacity and can offer only a limited response to our client's needs. Each of our workers has between 20 to 35 clients on their case load at any one time. Indeed for many of our clients who present in crisis, whether they have an eviction notice from NCAT, a client who has been arrested or families escaping DV, it could take a week or two of daily contact and case management support to help resolve the matter. Therefore leaving our other clients with little or no contact due to other more pressing priorities for the worker. While we have surpassed our targets as prescribed by the funding body, and this has stretched our resources remarkably I believe that employing highly qualified and experienced staff has allowed us to be able to respond in the best way possible given the limitations.
6. I would suggest that a fair majority of our clients would be classed in the High Effort range because of the complexity and intensity of support required. The other thing to note is that clients would cycle through the different levels of support because of the nature of their life circumstances and their ability/willingness to engage with services and supports. I have sent through under separate cover the description that my caseworkers received at recent training they attended which may give you some insight to the descriptors we are working with."
7. "We would struggle to provide daily support to high Effort clients who were not in refuge , The current funding level does not support this happening, especially given the current referral numbers.. demand and supply to not match, no where near it."
8. "Since the reforms and the notions of "No Wrong Door", shorter turnaround in crisis accommodation, "Housing First", and increased expectations of case loads, the majority of clients are "High Needs". This however is not reflected in the support levels in CIMS due to the fact that the case workers are flat out working with these high needs that they do not have the time to reflect on entering the support levels correctly. Caseworkers are forever running around putting out spot fires resulting in high levels of workplace stress. The time spent on the high needs also impacts on the quality of service they can provide to supporting the clients who are settled and need less support to maintain existing housing. I am of the opinion that there needs to be funding available for extra crisis response teams to deal with the complex high needs clients facing multiple barriers around mental health, D&A, family violence etc."

9. "The answer to this question is a big Yes! It seems that we are to push clients in and out of the service as quick as possible, we have numbers we have to meet now and it is no longer about a holistic approach which creates a revolving door. Even trying to bring other services in to assist is a difficult to impossible task because they are having the same issues, not only do we have a huge a list of client referrals, client caseloads, we are also expected to go and chase clients to tick boxes for assertive outreach which means all of this takes time away from the high need clients we have and also have little to nothing to offer in regards to support."

Meeting finished 11.40am

Next Meeting 14th April 2016