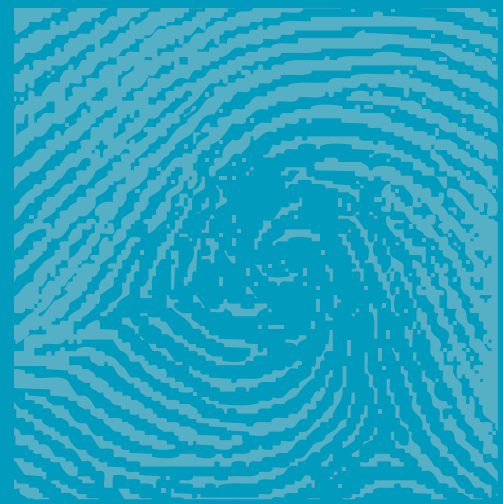


Responding to People with Multiple and Complex Needs Project

Project findings and future directions July 2003



Background

In January 2002, the Department of Human Services established a project to develop and implement new strategies to respond to people with extremely complex needs.

The target group criteria focused the project objectives on people who have multiple and complex needs:

- in two or more program areas, including disability, housing and support, health, child protection, juvenile justice, mental health and drug treatment services, as well as components of the criminal justice system
- not met or sustained by existing services
- whose challenging behaviours place themselves, staff and the community at risk; and
- who require long term responses from a range of human service areas.

This fact sheet outlines the outcomes of phase one of the project and the aims of phase two.

Phase one research and analysis

Phase one of the project focused on research and analysis and developed a proposal for future service delivery to this client group. This phase was completed in February 2003.

The research and analysis included:

Profiling of target group

A total of 247 people were identified as meeting target group criteria with key features including:

- a relatively young group with 44 per cent of individuals aged between 18 and 35 years

- (all had) two or more presenting problems that included intellectual disability, mental illness or disorder, acquired brain injury and/or significant substance abuse
- challenging behaviours, including aggressive and assaultive behaviour, self-harming and risk taking, and anti social behaviours
- ninety per cent had at least one incident of harm to either self, staff or community in the past year and 47 per cent had incidents of harm recorded for all three
- high volume users of emergency services, particularly police, ambulance and hospital emergency services
- seventy-one per cent had current or past contact with the criminal justice system
- varying housing arrangements, with a marked lack of housing stability and more than 35 per cent were reported to be homeless or living in short term or crisis accommodation
- ninety-one per cent were socially isolated, with few having any regular contact with family
- fifty-five per cent had chronic health problems, often related to their chaotic and unstable lifestyles.

Case studies

Twenty-one case studies provided information about longitudinal patterns of service use, service response outcomes, annual costs over time and future service requirements.

Literature review

The literature review was completed in September 2002. It highlighted the policy and service delivery challenges associated with the target group and work undertaken or initiatives introduced in other jurisdictions.

Consultations

Opinion leaders and key stakeholders from a range of government and non-government organisations and other significant bodies were engaged in the project's comprehensive consultation strategy.

In addition to individual stakeholder interviews, two statewide forums, held in May and September 2002, were well attended, stimulated a high level of interest across the service sectors and provided effective platforms for identification and solution testing.

Project findings

The project found that there are continuing poor service outcomes for this group, for example:

- While the service system works well for most people and improvements in the range and availability of specialist and targeted services have been introduced, the response to this population is often crisis driven, unplanned and uncoordinated.
- For many within the target population, assessment has been fragmented or incomplete, or resulted in multiple and/or disputed diagnoses.
- Comprehensive cross-sector case planning has been lacking for many within the target group.
- In the absence of an effective cross-sectoral response to this particular group, there is an increasing reliance on one-off accommodation and intensive support and supervision responses for individual clients, usually developed at very high cost.

There is a consistent view that while the majority of these clients will have long term and high level needs for services, often at greater cost than many clients in the service system, outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing can be significantly improved.

Phase two future directions

The project findings suggest that an innovative response is required to the significant challenge of building a more effective response to people with multiple and complex needs.

The proposed new service response will target individuals 16 years and older with multiple and complex needs. It is centred on a specialist 12-15 month intervention that aims to:

1. stabilise housing, health, social connection and safety issues
2. pursue planned and consistent therapeutic goals for each client
3. provide a platform for long term engagement in the service system.

Key elements

The new service model includes the following key elements:

Regional gateway and referral process

Referrals will be directed through Department of Human Services regional offices. Initial screening will ensure that the referral meets the service model criteria and that other available service options have first been considered or tried.

A consistent approach to screening and managing referrals will be a key objective.

Multiple and complex needs panel

An independent panel will be established to consider client needs and engage the service system in developing and implementing a care plan. The care plan will direct an individualised service response for a 12-month period. Where necessary, the panel can allocate brokerage funds to support a care plan.

Multidisciplinary assessment service

A small, specialist assessment service will be established to undertake a comprehensive assessment of client need, seek consensus among relevant service providers in relation to service requirements, and draft a practical and achievable care plan, for the panel's consideration.

Intensive case management

A small number of new intensive case management options will be introduced to take on the lead case management role when the panel determines that other services are not available or not able to meet the client's level of need.

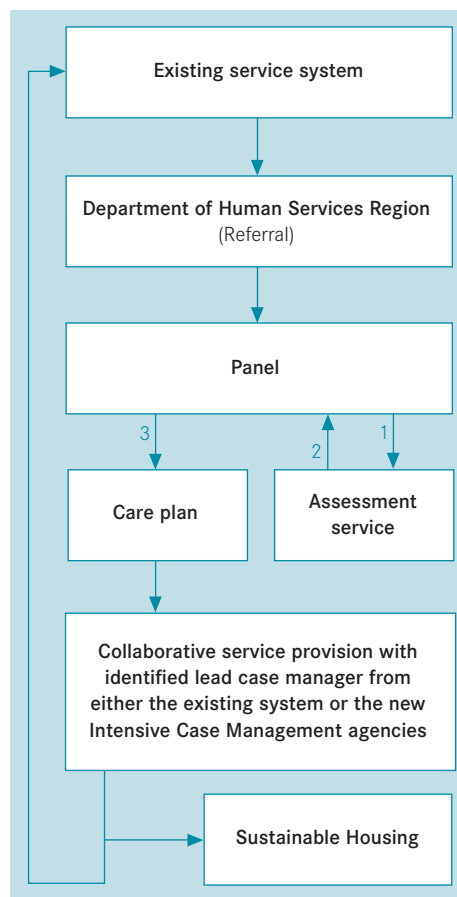
This service option will establish the primary (provider) relationship with the client, provide an intensive level of support and monitoring, and work in partnership with other services to meet the objectives of the care plan.

Legislative change

The multiple and complex needs panel should be established through legislation to enable the panel to authorise access and sharing of relevant client level information to enable an informed and coordinated service response.

A legislative mandate will be a significant factor in the panel's capacity to bring different elements of the service system together and broker agreement about appropriate and achievable care plan objectives.

Multiple and Complex Needs Service Model



Ongoing work

Improved capacity in the existing service system

Existing services will continue to be the primary service providers to this target group. A key element of the strategic response must be to continue to build capacity to work effectively with this client group across the service system.

Sustainable housing

The project findings emphasise the importance of alternative and sustainable housing options for this client group.

Work has commenced, in conjunction with Housing and Community Building, to:

- integrate and link the intensive case management options with existing transitional and community housing and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program support
- identify cost-effective, sustainable accommodation models for future development.

Evaluation framework

Though the new approach is built on known best practice and the considered views of key stakeholders, there is a clear need to develop a strong evidence base upon which to develop and refine future service responses.

A targeted evaluation over a two to three-year period is proposed as a key component of the implementation plan. The evaluation will fully analyse the effectiveness of the model and enable modification, if indicated, to maximise client and service system outcomes.

Further information

Further information is included in the following documents:

Responding to people with multiple and complex needs - phase one report (July 2003)

Responding to people with multiple and complex needs - client profile data and case studies report (January 2003)

Literature review - to inform a Department of Human Services project on responding to people with high and complex needs, Thomson Goodall Associates (September 2002)

Copies of these reports are available from Angela Mihalakos on 03 9616 7588 or visit our website at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/complexclients