



A second wind for JGOS

Partners include:

- Department of Housing (DoH)
 - NSW Health (including Area Health Services)
 - NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO)
 - Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW
 - Department of Community Services (DoCs)
- and as agreed locally:
- Aboriginal and community housing providers
 - Non-government mental health service providers
 - SAAP services

The Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) is a multi-agency, multi-sector initiative which aims to coordinate the delivery of services to people living in social housing who have mental health problems and disorders and who have ongoing support needs. This memorandum of understanding (MOU) is an agreement from the partners to work together for the benefit of individuals assisted by these agencies.

JGOS has a chequered history failing to establish clear outcomes in a number of areas but was re-launched in 2003 in a new expanded form. Still undergoing full implementation it has been broadened to encompass housing, support or health services delivered by non-government agencies and includes a specific focus on Aboriginal client service. The new JGOS also includes a defined role for systemic advocacy in assisting tenants as well as greater consumer participation and overall improved systems of confidentiality.

JGOS has been developed to improve the outcomes for individual consumers and for their improved health and wellbeing. Early intervention aims to avoid homelessness or tenancy becoming destabilised. When working well it strengthens networks between Health, Housing, NGOs, Aboriginal Housing and SAAP workers through shared responsibility for problem solving. Ideally, stakeholders in each region collectively meet on a regular basis to discuss and resolve individual client cases as necessary and apply a collaborative and considered response.

Community Consultation

The new arrangements for the Guarantee of Service are being gradually implemented during 2005 and began with a series of public information forums held around NSW from June to September 2005. The DoH have clearly put in a big effort to set up the forums which were intended to inform all stakeholders about the new expanded JGOS, gain feedback and local knowledge while providing a base for future local processes.

Challenges

MHCC members attending the forums have expressed disappointment at an absence of some of the key JGOS partners at the forums they attended, causing a lack of stakeholder

confidence. Implementation and participation appear to be the real challenges for JGOS as full support by all of the players is necessary to form collaborative partnerships to enable flexible, client focused responses.

A lack of support to enable people to participate in JGOS seems to be a major barrier to wider involvement, as already overworked and over-stretched services are expected to contribute their time without any extra resources being made available.

Resource & Information Kit

Another big improvement in the new JGOS is the development of a range of practical resources and a comprehensive information kit to assist all stakeholders to implement the JGOS. The 'Kit' will soon be widely available.

The information kit will provide a flexible training tool for use by local partners. It will also help to clarify roles and responsibilities and provide practical help for solving problems and sustaining communication with other partners, despite the inherent differences. It is designed to work in a range of delivery environments including multi-agency and train-the-trainer.

Evaluation

MHCC is pleased that a formative evaluation process has been implemented into the new JGOS in 2005-06 which will identify improvement opportunities, particularly at the governance and service system levels. It is anticipated that a separate outcomes evaluation will be undertaken in 2007-08. Both evaluations will be informed by an overarching evaluation framework, which is currently being developed and informed by the Strategic Partners Committee and the Implementation Reference Group.

As MHCC is a member of the JGOS Implementation Reference Group we hope to be able to provide recommendations which will help to further establish the newly expanded JGOS and its successful implementation and encourage you to send your comments for inclusion to: info@mhcc.org.au.

The full Joint Guarantee of Service document is available on the internet at:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/j/pdf/joint_guar_mental.pdf

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