

Margins 2 Mainstream Submission Template

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER AND CARER PARTICIPATION : A SYSTEMS CHALLENGE

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ABSTRACT

Listening to the perspective of consumers and carers and promoting effective participation is becoming an important dimension in the development of child and adolescent mental health services.

But what constitutes effective participation?

How can an organisation develop it?

How can participation become integral to organisational functioning?

How can an organisation maximise benefits and manage challenges?

What are the best models?

A 'one-style-fits-all' model of participation may not be a realistic framework to promote participation. To that extent, it is important to be informed by the particular features of the organisation. The best model for any organisation is one that takes into account that service's unique characteristics and works well for both service and service user.

Consumer and carer participation is now beginning to be embedded in policy, program and service delivery across the mental health service system, but it continues to be a major challenging in it's implementation.

This presentation summarises the processes involved in the development and implementation of a particular model within a large Victorian metropolitan child and adolescent mental health service. It outlines the developmental phases that needed to be undertaken by the organisation, and the particular conditions that were critical to supporting the work.

Though initially developed within a CAHMS context, the basic guidelines and strategies drawn from this experience can be equally applied to all human service organisations. They address issues such as -

What is required of the organisation?

What is required of management?

What is required of staff?

What is required of consumers/carers in consultant or other participation roles?

The presentation was developed to accompany 'Building Bridges'ⁱ, a 2007 report on the Consumer Participation Program of The Royal Children's Hospital Integrated Mental Health Program (RCH IMHP) which has taken a leadership role over the last ten years in the development of consumer participation strategies in the CAMHS system. In recent years, there has been increasing demand for consultation and advice by other organisations both within the CAMHS system and across the wider child and family sector.

In this context, the service felt it was important to capture the development and learnings of the RCH IMHP participation program but to do so in a way that would provide useful guidelines and recommendations for other services.

This presentation highlights guidelines to effective consumer and carer participation and identifies actions needed to implement effective and sustainable participation strategies in services.

Methodologies: Program design, implementation and transferability of learnings and practice; Building capacity of workforces, communities and organisations.

Determinants: Social participation

Charter Recommendation: Consumer and carer participation must be integrated into program planning and service delivery to ensure that participation becomes a fundamental aspect of mental health service delivery.

1. i Absler, Deborah, (2007). Building Bridges: Consumer Participation Program Report, The Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service, Flemington, Victoria.