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| Entry Title |
| In Partnership - Promoting Health through Strategic Partnership in Local Government in SWAHS |
| Abstract |
| Local Government is an important and rapidly developing setting for addressing urban planning and regeneration, community and social planning to influence NSW Health's major prevention priorities of injurious falls among older people, tobacco control and obesity. Well-developed partnerships within this setting are a key to sustainability and success. Conducting an appropriate formal needs assessment, development of robust partnership agreements and establishment of agreed governance structures are demonstrating effectiveness. The SWAHS model provides a blueprint for other AHS in developing and maintaining sustainable partnerships within this setting. |
| Aim |
| Improved health and well being of local communities through sustainable partnerships between local Councils and SWAHS Population Health Services by improved relationships and development of formal partnership agreements and communication structures. |
| Nature of the Problem |
| <p>Area Health Service staff and Councils have worked together for many years on a range of initiatives. Predominately this has been at an operational level and dependent on the goodwill and interest of individual workers. Directions were not always strategically aligned with respective organisations.</p> <p>To have more meaningful strategic partnerships with Local Government, the method and level of engaging Councils required consideration including aligned strategic directions with clear purpose, defined roles and responsibilities and commitment to resources. The importance of meaningful and purposeful partnerships with Local Government was identified through population health planning processes for improving the way we do business and engaging others in addressing the health of our communities.</p> |
| Extent of the problem |
| <p>A SWAHS Local Government Partnerships Group was established with membership from population health services and the Western Sydney Region of Councils to identify issues and improvements required. A partnership needs assessment was conducted using a purposeful sample of Mayors, General Managers and Senior Planners from the nine Councils within the SWAHS boundaries. Qualitative methodology was used to gather information by way of an open-ended questionnaire through structured face-to-face interviews. Data was grouped and themed identifying key issues and recommendations for addressing. Key results included the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed aims and objectives for improving health in the community; ▪ Shared understanding of respective organisations' structure, principles, drivers and planning processes through joint workforce development; ▪ Formal processes for communication and intervention and contribution and entry points; ▪ Agreed projects that improve health and wellbeing, reducing duplication and utilising shared resources and ▪ Formal partnership agreements with clearly identified purpose, directions, roles and responsibilities, governance, agreed projects, resources and evaluation methods. |

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| <p>Strategic importance</p> |
| <p>The NSW State Health Plan identifies the importance of working beyond the health system to work collaboratively in planning better linkages and service coordination. Local government (LG) plays a key role in creating environments that improve health and wellbeing. They are a major intervention setting for issue-based programs such as prevention of injurious falls among older people, obesity and tobacco control. Strategic partnerships through the development of formal partnership agreements with all Councils within the AHS boundaries presents an integrated regional approach for joint planning to identify and act on mutual obligations for sustainable and healthier communities.</p> |
| <p>Planning and implementing solutions</p> |
| <p>A need analysis was conducted and this formulated a series of recommendations. The findings were circulated to all participating local councils for verification, agreement and a request to identify their three major priorities for progressing.</p> <p>Agreed recommendations for action and priorities for the individual Councils were compiled into an action plan identifying tasks and responsibilities to be progressed by SWAHS Population Health Services.</p> <p>Sydney West committed resources towards the implementation of identified projects.</p> <p>The Partnerships Working Group was responsible for conducting a mapping exercise of current work carried out with AHS staff and Councils to identify purpose and relevance to future directions. They continue to be responsible for progressing the action plan and coordinating responses to draft LG plans and policies that influence changes for the benefits of health. The Working Group through the Chair (Manager Health Promotion) reports on activities to the SWAHS Population Health Leadership Group chaired by the Executive Director Population Health and Strategic Direction with representation by senior managers of each of the Population Health Services. This group reports directly to the Chief Executive on progress. The Working Group has also begun to feed LG and community issues identified through the partnership work into the Area Health Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Joint workforce development strategies have been considered, integrated into the action plan and commenced and Partnership Agreements between the nine Councils and SWAHS are progressing. These agreements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A formal commitment via Memorandum Of Association (MOU) sign off by SWAHS Chief Executive and Executive and Council General Manager and elected officials e.g. Mayor; ▪ Governance structure through joint Council/SWAHS MOU Steering Group and ▪ Identification and scoping of MOU projects and project working groups. |
| <p>Outcomes and Evaluation</p> |
| <p>Evidence of Success include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear understanding of LG needs for a successful partnership through results of LG Consultation Report. ▪ Functioning SWAHS governance structure indicated by Executive and Management support through minutes of the SWAHS Population Health Leadership Group and LG Partnerships Working Group and LG Partnership Action Plan. ▪ Implementation of workforce development strategy assisting health's understanding of LG key policy initiatives and organisational inter-relationships in order to engage appropriately. |

- Signed MOU by SWAHS Chief Executive and Lord Mayor of Parramatta City Council at Council event. MOU progressing with agreed governance structure, implementation of projects and agreed evaluation/review mechanism.
- Progression of further three MOUs (Penrith, Blacktown, Baulkham Hills).
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) completed on the Greater Granville Regeneration Strategy.
- Agreed HIA to commence on Lithgow Council Draft Strategic Plan.
- Councils participation in HIA training.
- A number of submissions developed in response to major Council draft plans, evaluated in terms of impact and results presented at recent Public Health Conference.

Joint projects being progressed including:

- Data sharing to improve access and use of data at LGA level.
- Business Tobacco Survey (research supporting expansion of smoke free areas).
- Public Health Protection Plan (pandemic planning).
- Transport Access Guide for Parramatta CBD.
- Integration of healthy urban design guidelines and HIA assessment tools into Council's policy and planning frameworks.
- Establishment of joint Sharps Taskforce and service agreement.
- Joint EOI to examine the possible role of a Health Planner in regional LG centres.
- Successful in receiving over half of the NSW Health LG project seeding grants.

Sustaining change

Local Government partnerships have been identified in the SWAHS Service Strategic Plan as a key program initiative that ensures Executive continued support. Management support and resourcing for coordination of the SWAHS Local Government Partnerships Group, which reports to the SWAHS Population Health Leadership Group and chaired by the SWAHS Executive Director of Population Health and Strategic Directions identifies a sustainable internal process.

The governance structures built into the MOU's create a sustainable framework for maintaining and monitoring improvements delivered by the partnership agreements. Accountability mechanisms are also contained within each project and within the overarching MOU governance structures.

Future Scope

Local Government is an important and rapidly developing setting for addressing urban planning and regeneration and community and social planning to influence NSW Health's major prevention priorities (falls among older people, tobacco control and obesity). The model described by SWAHS provides a blueprint for other AHS in developing and maintaining sustainable partnerships within this setting.

The process for MOU development has been tested and refined with Parramatta Council and is being transferred to other Councils within SWAHS with further refinement and improvements as appropriate. This partnership model is highly transferable and may be used between any agencies. SWAHS will develop MOU Guidelines in 2008, providing a generic resource for other agencies to support partnership work in the LG setting.