

Building a Joined Up Human Services Support System

System Based Initiative

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the Joined Up Human Services (Joined Up) project, will report on the role of information and communications technology (ICT) to support the function of the Person Based Initiative, Lead Support Coordination Service (LSCS). Testing the application of an ICT platform will allow us to understand the benefits for clients in sharing of client information for service and support coordination.

The Housing Connect Client Management System, the Australian Department of Social Services' Data Exchange Framework and applications used elsewhere has been explored. A tender seeking a suitable ICT platform was undertaken in late 2016, resulting in Conekter being chosen as the ICT platform to test the Systems Based Initiative.

Through the System Based Initiative we have identified and are currently testing:

- At the 'front-end' service level, will ICT support an integrated client management approach by enabling the coordinated sharing of personal information, enhancing referral processes including the development of an agreed sector wide common intake and assessment referral tool, and where appropriate, enabling complex case coordination; and
- At the 'back end' of the system, will ICT better enable de-identified data to be used for service planning, reporting, evaluation, and research (where relevant).

The need to improve the response to people with complex and sometimes exceptional needs was highlighted through the 2014 community consultations for joined up human services. The consultations involved face to face regional focus groups in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie and an online survey, which gained almost 600 responses. The majority of participants indicated that more collaboration was required between agencies, and that clients struggled to manage multiple services and case workers.

Both clients and carers indicated they would like to see more collaboration between agencies and a generally more coordinated approach.

Service providers wanted:

- one contact point for clients;
- better capacity to share information between individual workers and across organisations; and
- an increase in streamlined referral systems.

The consultations for joined up human services highlighted that for streamlined referrals, coordinated case management and longer term service planning to be successful, an electronic platform was required to facilitate the approach. It was also clear that a joined-up system would benefit from being able to better gather and share information at all levels including:

- the client-provider interface, and
- at the service infrastructure level where personal information is converted to de-identified data for the purpose of research, service planning, reporting and evaluation.

An ICT platform will give workers and service providers across the service system access to a common assessment tool, and potentially an electronic platform to support shared client case coordination and referral processes.

Key features of this initiative include:

At the practice level:

- Building on consultations undertaken in Phase One of Joined Up, we have identified an ICT Platform that will enable the coordinated sharing of client information, including referral processes, and where appropriate, the ability to keep common case notes.

At the data infrastructure level:

- Progressing the initial work commenced on statistical linkage keys in Phase One of the project identify any issues and work collaboratively to resolve them.

The work of System Based Initiative will work with leads for the other Joined Up initiatives to ensure common data definitions, and that the selection of the electronic platform fits the purpose of each initiative and that meets acceptable standards and protocols for access and information sharing.

If the System Based Initiative is successful the following outcomes will eventuate:

Clients will:

- Experience coordinated case management and a simplified referral system;
- Have to tell their stories less times (particularly in sensitive instances where clients are or have been affected by factors such as family violence, homelessness and substance abuse);
- Have better access to the right support at the right time and for the right duration; and
- Have better outcomes through a focus on early intervention, primary prevention and looking at the whole person.

Service providers will have:

- A better understanding of whole-of-client needs;
- Partnerships that link, integrate and leverage existing support capability into flexible networks to meet people's needs;
- Common practices around assessment, information sharing and reporting;
- A multi-disciplinary approach with shared professional objectives and mutual respect for skills and expertise; and
- Better capacity to effectively use limited resources.

Communities will experience the benefits of:

- Improved resilience in vulnerable populations;
- Changed life paths for people with complex needs;
- A more efficient use of resources in the community; and
- More people moving out of disadvantage.

Further project information and updates are available through this link:

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/joinedup