

KICKING DOWN SILOS; USING SOCIAL WORK TO STRENGTHEN THE LINKS BETWEEN DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT AND OTHER COMMUNITY BASED INTERVENTIONS

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Introduction: The impact of substance abuse presents a substantial challenge to public health systems. Utilising an innovations grant, The Langton Centre Drug and Alcohol Service developed an integrated care pilot project based around Social Work to find new ways to respond to this issue.

Approach: Community drug and alcohol treatment largely occurs in clinics. The project Social Workers utilised innovative strategies such as assertive outreach to target marginalised populations that were poorly engaged with the traditional setting. The overarching purpose was to use an integrated model of care underpinned by social work approaches to increase the response of public health institutions and to improve overall health outcomes.

Key Findings: The holistic social work perspective complemented the comprehensive approaches present in Drug & Alcohol Services, and with outreach capacity, social workers were able to deliver a much greater range of assessments, treatments and referrals. For the most complex and at-risk clients, social work ethics and specialist skills facilitated statutory interventions, such as involuntary treatment and management of a patient's finances.

Discussions and Conclusions: This led to the development of a robust model that could respond to a variety of levels of complexity and engagement. While no elements of the model were revolutionary, it is uncommon for social workers in Drug & Alcohol Services to function in identified social work positions. Practicing social work involves utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, and intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. This unique approach allows for complex and novel person centred treatment plans to be created.

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