A significant role in the treatment of patients with drug and alcohol problems ....or money for jam?

P Bowden\textsuperscript{1}, C Hillery\textsuperscript{2}, P Novotna\textsuperscript{3}, X Zhao\textsuperscript{1}, C Newman\textsuperscript{2}, N Phung\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} Drug Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, \textsuperscript{2}Population Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, \textsuperscript{3}Legal Aid NSW

Work and Development Orders

Do Work & Development Orders assist patients who attend our Drug and Alcohol service?

Do they assist clinicians to deliver services more effectively or do they cause a headache for staff and an easy means for patients to write off debt for very little effort at all?

In 2015 Legal Aid and Population Health committed to increasing access to WDOs for residents of Western Sydney.

They approached Drug Health to participate.

Work and Development Orders (WDOs)

WDOs in Drug Health

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What is a WDO?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Maximum Bureaucrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid work for or on behalf of an approved organisation</td>
<td>$30 per hour worked. Bureaucrats can cut it for free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical or mental health treatment in accordance with a practitioner's treatment plan</td>
<td>$1000 per month. (For full compliance, or proportional for part thereof)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational, vocational or life skills course</td>
<td>$50 per hour to a maximum of $1000 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial or other counselling (including attending case management meetings)</td>
<td>$50 per hour to a maximum of $1000 of fine debt per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol treatment</td>
<td>$1000 per month. (For full compliance, or proportional for part thereof)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a mentoring program (for under 25s)</td>
<td>$1000 per month. (For full compliance, or proportional for part thereof)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Patients frequently had undisclosed fine-related debt.

Most clinicians had some knowledge of WDOs.

WDO uptake increased, with participation in some teams greater than others.

Factors clinicians said influenced their participation in WDOs included previous positive experiences with WDOs, length of treatment, practical or ethical concerns and the presence of a WDO ‘champion’ within a team.

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Key Findings

Fine Debt in Western Sydney

As of January 2016, there was over $214,000,000 of debt in Greater Western Sydney, which is equal to Approx. One Third of Total Fine Debt in NSW.

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Legal Aid
NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW Health
Western Sydney
Local Health District
Fine Debt in Western Sydney

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>Client count</th>
<th>Total postcode fine debt ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>8,525</td>
<td>$12,348,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacktown</td>
<td>27,176</td>
<td>$53,339,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holroyd</td>
<td>13,356</td>
<td>$23,110,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>1,203</td>
<td>$2,298,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hills Shire</td>
<td>10,239</td>
<td>$19,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60,499</td>
<td>$110,372,353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SDRO Oct 2016

What did we do?

Survey 2015 & 2016

Focus Groups

Training
50% patients have fine debt. All have been offered WDOs

$0-5K= 64
$5-10= 15
$10-$20k=9

10 have added new WDOs (11%)
Case Example

When Fines Are Not Paid

**Cycle of Fine-Related Debt**

- **More Debt**
  - When fines are ignored, enforcement orders are issued, increasing the amount owed

- **Sanctions**
  - Driver's licence suspended
  - Further RMS restrictions
  - Garnish wages & bank accounts
  - Sheriff seizes goods

- **Indirect Impacts**
  - Job loss
  - Security of housing
  - Stability of relationships
  - Limited access to services

- **Reoffending / Jail**
  - Reoffending or driving on a suspended licence results in more fines or even jail. This prolongs cycle of disadvantage

- **Health Impacts**
  - Mental Health issues
  - Exacerbates current conditions
  - Unhealthy behaviours i.e. sleep & diet problems, substance use
State-Wide Evaluation of a WDO Scheme

**Reduced Reoffending**
82.5%
Did not receive another fine since their WDO was approved

**Improved Mental Health**
Client stress, anxiety & feelings of hopelessness & despair were reduced

**Improved Self-Esteem**
Increased self-esteem, agency & self-efficacy of participants

A TOOL FOR ENGAGEMENT
WDOs engage clients in appropriate treatment or activities that they may not otherwise engage in

**SUPPORT FOR THE WDO SCHEME**

- **95%**
  Sponsors said the scheme had helped reduce the level of stress & anxiety their client felt about their fine debt

- **87%**
  Sponsors said the scheme enabled clients to address the factors that made it hard for them to pay their debts in the first place

Our Service Investigation: Most staff had heard of WDOs

Q1: HAVE YOU HEARD OF WDOS?

- **15%**
  Yes

- **85%**
  No
Increased understanding of WDOs

Q2: FAMILIAR WITH WDO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015 (%)</th>
<th>2016 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident - I understand them</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increased use of WDOs

Q5: NUMBER OF CLIENTS REFERRED BY ROLES BY YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015 (NO.)</th>
<th>2016 (NO.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology/Counselling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase in referrals from nurses (and counsellors) between 2015-16
Most staff thought WDOs were worthwhile

**Approx. 65%**

Said WDOs were worthwhile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Worthwhile</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total value of WDO fine amounts 2015-2016

- FLEET ST OTP PARRAMATA
- CAM CUMBERLAND
- AUBURN & MT DRUITT COMMUNITY
- MERIT

- 2015
- 2016
Impact of experience with WDOs

Relief & gratitude of patients
• “I had no idea they would have such financial problems. They are so burdened by them… it such a relief”
• “Patients are so appreciative, sometimes they cry”

Interrupting downward problem spiral/ reducing problem burden
• “It helps patients get out of the quagmire”
• “I had a patient with the sheriff at the door. The WDO stopped all that”
• “It’s not too overwhelming so they can deal with it”
• “A WDO allows access to a payment plan. Without it, your bank account can be suddenly emptied and you have no food!”

Pride in achievement
• “It’s nice to print the certificate in the end. I didn’t think they would care about it but they do!”
• “I remember people taking a lot of pride in reducing their debt. They remember reducing their debt as a major outcome of completing the program.”

Ease of use/ excellent support
• “They are easy to manage. You can always phone for support”
• “The SDRs are so nice. They call clients and check if they are OK. They also contact therapists and help with suggestions. They talk with you about clients you might have to close.”

Assists with treatment
• “To get your driver’s licence back is such a good thing – you can find work!”
• “One client worked out his own treatment care plan, he really thought it through”
• “Compliance with dosing and attending appointments definitely improves”
• “It helps with avoidance. Patients can start to plan.”
• “It’s a drawcard to keep clients engaged for first 2 sessions.”

CONS
Practical Concerns Extra time & work, negotiation skills.
• “Patients can be demanding “Here’s my debt. Fix it!”
Ethical Concerns Social rules “It’s too easy!” They should be doing it anyway!” Secondary gain concerns “They should want to come!”
• “Ambivalence about allowing subsequent WDOs. (Clinicians believed 50% had new debt. Evidence: new Order rate=11%)
• Lack of standardised guidelines”

Impact of experience with WDOs

In 2016:
Clinicians with no experience of WDOs were:
• more likely to have a negative opinion about supporting WDO clients in D&A or
• be uncertain/ambivalent about supporting WDO clients in D&A
• less likely to rate such support as worthwhile.

Clinicians with experience of WDOs were:
• more likely to rate supporting WDO clients in D&A as worthwhile.

\( \chi^2 = 9.888, df = 3, p < 0.025 \)
Conclusion:

Provide sponsorship & engage support from SDRO
Have a WDO ‘champion’ within a team
Enthusiasm follows