

Community Health Review Bulletin

This is the eighth in a series of bulletins providing information on the Review of Community Health Services in NSW

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General update

Health care reform is currently a high priority nationally. A key aspect of reform is improving primary health care, including people's access to services.

Over recent months, a range of national initiatives have delivered reports and recommendations, which are now being considered by governments and other stakeholders.

In NSW, the findings and strategic options for reform of community-based health services, identified through the Community Health Review, are being considered.

National primary health reforms

National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission

The Commission's final report, *A Healthier Future for all Australians*, was released in July 2009. It is under consideration by the Commonwealth Government.

The Commission made over 120 recommendations to improve the Australian health system. Areas for reform include primary health care, child and family health services, sub-acute care, aged care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, rural and remote health, palliative care, oral health, and mental health, as well as governance, financing, workforce, information technology and education & training.

There are several recommendations to improve primary health care including:

- consolidating policy and funding responsibility with the Commonwealth Government
- establishing Comprehensive Primary Health Care Centres nationally to enable integrated service delivery and cross-disciplinary teamwork (supported by capital investment)
- improving care and health outcomes for the most vulnerable by enrolling target populations (e.g. young families, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, and people with chronic and complex conditions) with primary health care services
- improving local and regional population health planning.

The Commission's report is at: <http://www.nhhrc.org.au/internet/nhhrc/publishing.nsf/Content/nhhrc-report>

Draft National Primary Health Care Strategy

Following its development by an External Reference Group of primary health care experts, in August 2009 the Commonwealth Minister for Health released the draft National Primary Health Care Strategy.

The draft national strategy identifies five “key building blocks” that are essential to a modern primary health care system:

1. regional integration
2. information technology, including eHealth
3. a skilled workforce
4. infrastructure
5. financing and system performance.



These “building blocks” would underpin four priority directions for change:

- improving access and reducing inequity
- managing chronic disease better
- increasing the focus on prevention
- improving quality, safety, performance and accountability.

In relation to primary health care, the draft national strategy aligns with recommendations of the National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission in a number of important ways.

For example:

- Better integrated services at the local and regional level
- Increase the focus on regional planning, priority-setting and delivery to meet the needs of local populations
- Greater focus on prevention and early-intervention through a population-health approach
- Better management for people with chronic and complex conditions
- Better quality & safety and measurement of performance, backed by improved indicators
- Integrated services enabled by appropriately flexible funding, better capital and IT infrastructure, and a skilled and flexible workforce.

The draft national strategy, which is currently being considered by the Commonwealth Government, is available at:

<http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/nphc-draft-report-toc>

National Preventative Health Strategy

The National Preventative Health Strategy was developed by the National Preventative Health Taskforce. It was released in September 2009.

In relation to primary health care, the strategy:

- highlights the need to refocus services toward prevention
- identifies primary health as one of the most important settings in the health system for prevention
- identifies that more primary health encounters should include risk

- assessments and interventions – to detect lifestyle risks early and help to prevent chronic disease
- recognises the need to strengthen and support the primary health workforce if it is to undertake more prevention activity – this would include developing skills, expanding allied health workforce, and developing, implementing and promoting evidence-based clinical guidelines and other multidisciplinary training packages.

The strategy is available at:
<http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/national-preventative-health-strategy-1lp>

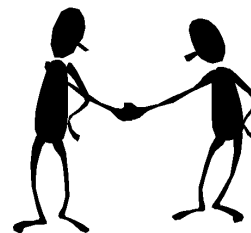
Potential directions for reform in NSW

Following the three reports to the Community Health Review from the Centre for Health Service Development in 2008, and consultation with a range of stakeholders on possible strategic directions for NSW Health's community-based services in early 2009, NSW Health is considering the nature of the reform strategy to be implemented.

A range of developments and reforms are being considered for NSW Health's community-based services.

- A focus on primary health care
- A definition for primary health care across NSW Health, identifying a set of core community-based services
- More consistent streaming of services across NSW. For example:
 - Child, youth & family
 - Chronic disease, aged care & rehabilitation

- Mental health and drug & alcohol
- Oral health
- Priority populations
- Greater focus on population health planning, priority-setting and action at the regional and local levels
- Developing a network of integrated primary health care services or "health hubs" – with the upgrade and development of community-based facilities subject to capital investment
- Stronger local and statewide partnerships and collaboration at the heart of primary health care – this would include NSW Health services, general practice, Divisions of General Practice and statewide GP bodies, non-government organisations, private health services, human service agencies, local government and other stakeholders
- Local and regional partnerships and collaboration centring around "health hubs"



- Greater focus on prevention and early-intervention within primary health care delivery
- Reform that could enable and support patient enrolment, particularly for priority populations (e.g. to support chronic disease management more effectively)

- Improved and more consistent governance arrangements locally, regionally and centrally
- An appropriate set of statewide key performance indicators for primary health care
- Improvements to key infrastructure elements such as quality and safety frameworks, planning tools, information technology and management, and research, teaching and training capacity in primary health care.

Looking across the possible reforms for NSW and those highlighted at the Commonwealth level, there are a number of useful areas of consistency.

The proposal for Comprehensive Primary Health Care Services to be developed nationally mirrors the NSW proposal to create a network of integrated primary health care services or “health hubs”.

The emphasis on regional integration in the draft National Primary Health Care Strategy links well with a greater local and regional focus for population health planning and priority setting, as well as the partnership and collaboration approach, surrounding “health hubs” in NSW.

Increasing the role of prevention in primary health care as identified in the National Preventative Health Strategy is consistent with the proposal in NSW to focus more on prevention and early-intervention in collaborative primary health care services.

Next steps...

NSW Health will continue to develop a response to the Community Health Review during the latter part of 2009. This will take into account national developments in primary health reform.

The aim is to outline a broad strategic framework for reform in primary health care in NSW from 2010. This could involve a first stage of preparatory activity for NSW, which could occur while developments and negotiations become clearer nationally through 2010.

Further information on the Review can be obtained from:

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