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# Empowering family members, friends and carers of people with a mental illness

Initiative Type

Service Improvement

Status

Deliver

Added

27 August 2019

Last updated

24 March 2021

URL

<https://clinicaexcellence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/empowering-family-members-friends-and-carers-people-mental-illness>

## Summary

Developing a Partnership between Kyabra (Non-Government Organisation specialising in family and care support) and Bayside Community Care Unit (Metro South Addiction and Mental Health Service)

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to implement the Wellways as an evidenced based practice program in the delivery of family and carer support at Bayside CCU. The project has successfully navigated healthcare system challenges to deliver change, improvement and innovation in the health service and has presented at the Clinical Excellence Queensland Showcase 2019.

### Key dates

Apr 2018

Aug 2019

### Implementation sites

Metro South Hospital and Health Service

### Partnerships

Wellways Melbourne, Kyabra, Bayside Community Care Unit - Residential Mental Health Rehabilitation Facility linked with Metro South Addictions and Mental Health Services

## Key Contacts

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## **Aim**

- To engage, empower and enhance quality of life of family members who care for people experiencing mental health conditions.
- To improve and enhance relationships and interventions between family members, carers, patients at the Bayside CCU.

## **Benefits**

- Participants feeling more empowered to care for both themselves, and, to support their loved one who experiences mental health concerns.
- Participants having knowledge and skills surrounding mental health conditions and how to navigate and advocate in the mental health systems.
- Participants developing ongoing and sustainable supports with others who similarly experience supporting a loved one with a mental health condition.
- Utilising an evidenced based program and lived experience workers to implement carer specific and highly valued evidence based training to empower our family members.
- Ensuring our interventions with family members are purposeful, meaningful and evidenced based.

## **Background**

The Queensland Mental Health Commission estimates that one in five Queenslanders experience a mental illness or substance abuse disorder in any one year<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, more than 85,000 Queenslanders access clinical mental health services through the public health system each year, and over 300 000 receive treatment in the private system. Timely access to a range of health and social services plays a crucial role in addressing mental health issues and can prevent acute episodes from developing into more severe long-term conditions.

## **Solutions Implemented**

- A Memorandum of Understanding developed between Kyabra and Bayside CCU / Metro South Addictions and Mental Health Service re. offering, delivering and evaluating Wellways

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Building a Future Program to Metro South Addictions and Mental Health family members/carers.

- Bayside CCU Social Worker worked with Kyabra as well as other Metro South Addictions and Mental Health clinicians to identify, offer and engage family members who support loved ones who experience mental health conditions in considering the Wellways Building A Future Program.
- Kyabra facilitators trained in Well ways building a Future Program and who also have lived experience as carers delivered the Wellways Building A Future Program - run on day per week for 3 hours for 12 weeks. Bayside CCU and Kyabra reviewed evaluations from participants from all 3 cohorts of the Wellways Building A Future implementation.

## Evaluation and Results

Wellways program evaluations used by Kyabra in the delivery of the Wellways Building A Future Program. These evaluations sent to Wellways organisation in Melbourne as well as kept by both Kyabra and Bayside CCU. This assisted in the overall evaluation of the Wellways Building A Future Program, as well as, the evaluation of the ongoing implementation of the Wellways Building A Future Program through an ongoing partnership between Kyabra-Bayside CCU.

Overall from all 3 cohorts of participants family members valued -

- Being able to share my experiences with others who are in a similar position - know I'm not alone, and learn from their experiences to help me;
- Learn and remind them to self-care;
- Feel more knowledgeable about the mental health system and conditions which they and their loved one navigates;
- Develop skills to 'listen more' and 'respond better' to their loved one;
- Have an ongoing support group of participants to continue connecting with beyond the formal ending of the Kyabra-CCU program.

For the CCU -

- Partnership enhanced the relationships and subsequent interventions with family members, CCU team, and consumers.
- Less 'crisis' phone calls from family members who engaged in Wellways Building A Future program. More considered and solution focused conversations between family members-CCU team- Consumer.

## Lessons Learnt

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Importance of ongoing conversations (via email/phone/in-person) between CCU-Kyabra to ensure needs of both services and participants are addressed throughout the program;

- Valued role of an MOU to facilitate and guide relationship expectations and commitment.
- Ongoing value of maintaining connection with Wellways Organisation in Melbourne to ensure program fidelity is maintained.

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