

Communique 5 - Offender Health Services Governance Improvement Project

This is the fifth and final Communique regarding the Offender Health Services Governance Improvement Project (OHSGIP).

The final meeting of the Offender Health Services Steering Committee Alliance (OHSSCA) was held on 1 February 2019. At this meeting members discussed the status of the Offender Health Services Governance Improvement Project (OHSGIP) including the outcome of the Offender Health Services Review and the Department of Health's response to the recommendations emanating from the review.

OHSGIP update

- Members were advised that the independent Offender Health Services Review (OHSR) has been completed and the Report has been finalised.
- The Report was published on the Crime and Corruption Commission's (CCC's) website on the Taskforce Flaxton web page as exhibit 106 on 14 December 2018. (Taskforce Flaxton was examining corruption and corruption risks in Queensland correctional facilities.) The publication OHSR Report coincided with the release of the CCC's Taskforce Flaxton report.
- The OHSR Report is also now available via the Clinical Excellence Queensland's website along with other information emanating from the review including *A consumer perspective*, which Health Consumers Queensland were engaged to develop.
- Key findings from the OHSR include:
 - Health staff strive to provide quality health services for prisoners. Each day these staff provide health care and treatment to a group of people that are not well understood and are in some cases shunned by the broader community.
 - Prisoners generally have more complex health needs with a high prevalence of mental illnesses, communicable diseases, illicit drug use, poor oral health, and chronic diseases when compared to the general population. Compounding this, is that this group generally is socially and economically disadvantaged prior to entering prison and will tend to be more so upon release into the community making them more reliant on social support systems.
 - The efforts of health staff have however been hampered by a lack of leadership which has meant that many system-wide challenges such as overcrowding, insufficient clinic space and differences in operational requirements between Queensland Corrective Services and the Department of Health are not being adequately addressed. The consequence has been:
 - A workforce that at times feel unsupported and frustrated by their inability to deliver the level and standard of services that they strive to provide.
 - A prison population whose health care needs have not been well met.
 - A loss of focus on quality and patient-centred care.
 - Inefficiencies in the delivery of care due to the need to focus on day to day care delivery with no capacity to address issues strategically.
 - Fragmentation in the delivery of services and significant variability in the nature and availability of services between correctional centres.

- The OHSR Report contains a range of recommendations across the following five broad themes:
 1. Relationships and Governance
 2. Workforce
 3. Access
 4. Service Standards and Models
 5. The Correctional Environment and Interfaces with QCS
- The Department of Health has carefully examined the report, has decided to accept or support all the recommendations, and has commenced working on key priorities.
- A key priority is the establishment of an Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing in Clinical Excellence Queensland, a division of the Department of Health. This Office will assume responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations including the establishment of effective collaborative arrangements with Hospital and Health Services, Queensland Corrective Services and other key stakeholders to address the system-wide challenges.
- Whilst the Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing will assume systemwide leadership responsibility, relevant Hospital and Health Services will remain responsible for the delivery of health care for people in prison.
- With the finalisation of the review, the Department of Health's response to the review, and the establishment of the Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing, the OHSGIP has now been completed.
- Dr John Wakefield, Deputy Director-General of Clinical Excellence Queensland and chair of OHSSCA, thanked all the current and former committee members for their contribution in achieving this important milestone and for their commitment to improving the health of prisoners and in doing so the health of the wide community.

Background

The Department of Health, in consultation with key stakeholders, conducted a project to improve the governance of offender health services in Queensland: Offender Health Services Governance Improvement Project (OHSGIP). Further information about this project can be found on the Clinical Excellence Queensland website.

This project was guided by the OHSSCA (pronounced "Oscar") which was chaired by Dr John Wakefield, Deputy Director-General of the Clinical Excellence Queensland.

Membership of the steering committee is cross-sectorial and includes representatives from:

- Hospital and Health Services
- Queensland Corrective Services
- The Office of the Health Ombudsman
- Health Consumers Queensland
- The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union

If you would like further information about this project please email offenderhealth@health.qld.gov.au