

HASS Consultation

14 September 2010

1. Overall themes

Consensus from service providers and consumer groups that the standards retain an emphasis on the following areas:

- Consumer participation
- Complaints and appeals
- Rights and responsibilities
 - Incl. confidentiality and privacy
 - advocacy
- Direct Service Delivery and Case Management;
 - equitable access to support services
 - engagement, assessment and case planning
 - responsive support
 - empowering and capacity building approach
- Building partnerships and integrated networks for better advocacy

There was also agreement across both groups that there was a critical lack of appropriate housing options available. Also current funding agreements/resources limit the capacity of services to support consumers so access to other services such as AOD, Mental Health, etc which does have a bearing on housing outcomes.

2. Service Providers consultations

General comments

- "Current standards very pre-accreditation". HASS needs to be simplified; overall is too detailed
- Needs to be more like QIC
- Significant duplication between and within standards
- Some sections are more about organisational accreditation, good governance, corporate standards
- Flexibility required in standards to acknowledge different approaches, capacity and scope of services
- Need to take disparity of service size, service purpose and service funding into account with interpretations
- Standards should be based on broader principles.
- The signposts are very descriptive and too detailed. Ventures into content such as what might be included in a Vision or Mission statement
- Standards generally do not cover the degree of client complexity that services see ~ 60%
- Staff with appropriate skills for tasks rather than singling out specific roles such as intake and assessment
- Singling out specific guidelines such as HEF, when guidelines are actually necessary for all areas of work

Specific comments

- Rights and responsibilities
 - Should be separate issues
 - Common to all divisions – just different target audiences

- No need to repeat rights and responsibility for children, young people, women etc – needs to have a standard about upholding the rights of all clients
- Need to somehow retain an emphasis on the following:
 - Consumer participation
 - Complaints and appeals
 - Appropriate documentation and other information about accessing service system
 - Direct Service Delivery and Case Management;
 - equitable access to support services
 - engagement, assessment and case planning
 - responsive support
 - Building partnerships and integrated networks for better advocacy

Resources and wider access issues

- Availability of housing options
- Issue of additional support that is required for people accessing homelessness; so access to other services such as AOD, Mental Health, etc can have a bearing on housing outcomes.

Project process issues

- Consultation process needs to be extended to regional Victoria. Best to lengthen consultation process and do it well.

3. Consumer Group Consultation

Important elements of service delivery

Client rights and responsibilities

- Information about these need to be in accessible formats for all people which allows people to understand them and to have them upheld
- Available in other languages
- Different intellectual capacities/different levels of understanding
- People with disabilities (hearing)
- Knowing that they are allowed to complain and how to do this
- Confidentiality needs to be upheld

Service Access

- Services need to be located in areas where people can easily access them (well signposted etc)
- First contact with services needs to be welcoming, supportive, empowering
- Needs to be recognition of children's needs as well regarding accommodation near their school, childcare centres

Approach

- Staff should be respectful and treat clients seeking support with dignity. They should also listen and treat people with kindness
- Staff need to take time to care
- Staff need to recognise the strengths that clients have

Information – clear and accessible information needs to be made available to people early on about

- What services are available to them - clear and timely
- The role of an advocate and their right to use one
- Eligibility criteria and waiting lists – be more transparent about this process as it is very competitive. People were aware that women and children came first but were not sure how resources were allocated beyond this

Assessment

- Immediate needs should be assessed quickly
- Staff needed to have a good understanding of the service system and be available to help navigate people through to the services that best matched their needs
- Family violence needs to be assessed and safe and secure places provided (intervention orders not enough)
- Need to provide safe environments within the housing/refuges (prevent bullying)
- People need to be supported to link in with other services not just given a number to follow up (feel very vulnerable/unable to negotiate service system at this time)
- Outreach support to help people access other services
- People's holistic health and well-being issues need to be assessed and addressed

Service integration and ongoing support

- Need to provide support to clients beyond finding them housing to help address the issues that may have contributed to their homelessness in the first place. Or connect people in to services that can help
- Staff need to know what is available and how to access it
- Information and support provided to the client in accessing these services
- Staff need to follow up to see if person has been able to get access
- Focus on long term solutions – not just be severed once housing is provided

Consumer participation

- Consumers having a voice is very important
- Feeling valued
- Can be a significant support to finding a way out of homelessness
- Peer education model has worked well because it:
 - Provided training
 - Structure (PD, volunteer agreements)
 - Skill development
 - Peer support
 - Builds self-esteem
- Can provide people with a reference when they are looking for work.

Accountability –

- how to make private providers of rooming houses more accountable. Recognition that lack of resources meant that people were being sent to these providers

Funding agreements and resources (CHP commentary)

- Funding agreements can mean that people are being exited into homelessness after 6-8 weeks
- Limited housing options can make it hard to fulfil some standards