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Western Sydney Medicare Local and Western Sydney Local Health District Partnership Evaluation

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Reath, J., Burns, P., Brooker, R., Abbott, P. A., Renshaw, B., & Usherwood, T. (2014). Western Sydney Medicare Local and Western Sydney Local Health District Partnership Evaluation.

Abstract

The learning from the evaluation of the partnership between WentWest Limited, functioning as the Western Sydney Medicare Local, and the Western Sydney Local Health District reflects that from other similar health partnerships both nationally and internationally. Most obvious is the enormous complexity of the undertaking, compounded over recent times by policy change and the uncertain future of primary health care organisations. In spite of this the Partnership has clearly articulated its vision of coordination and integration of healthcare across western Sydney as described by the WentWest Chair - "Think as one system and act as if there are no barriers!" The common geography and therefore population health needs of the two organisations is certainly a key factor in building a shared vision and agreeing on common priorities. The western Sydney Partnership highlights the power of mutual respect, trust, and collegiality and the importance of previous relationships and joint activities. The Partnership has been facilitated by strong governance and leadership particularly through the Partnership Memorandum and the Partnership Advisory Council. The western Sydney Partnership teaches us that difference in organisational size, governance and structure doesn't preclude partnership, though integration of health services takes longer to achieve and the health outcomes related to this, even longer. At this early stage of the Partnership it appears that the focus on health priority areas is an effective way of implementing key activities and achieving early outcomes, though the need for adequate resourcing limits the number and range of these areas that can be actively engaged at any one time. Though such health partnerships are just one element in a very complex system impacting health outcomes in a population, after two years of Partnership between WentWest and the Western Sydney Local Health District, the ground work has been largely established for the Partnership to continue activities and produce outputs that will impact optimally on health outcomes in the west of Sydney. The Program Logic Model approach has proven a helpful way of mapping the Partnership and has also provided a useful evaluation framework.

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