Development of a Consortium Service Model - a Snapshot of the Gold Coast Experience

“The foundation or the building blocks that had been cemented over the previous 10 years was imperative to the success of the development of the consortium service model”

History

From the early to mid 90’s representativeness from SAAP services met monthly in the Brisbane South Region for the purposes of informing the SAAP Ministerial Advisory Committee representatives. The meetings were always well attended and relationships were good between service providers.

In 1997 the Gold Coast was identified, along with 4 other regions across the State to pilot the Local Area Projects. A significant outcome of the GC LAP was the further development of the regional network, which became the GC SAAP network. It now had some structure, a greater sense of purpose and members began having more input into policy and program development.

This was further enhanced through the Sub-regional Service Integration Project which built on the work of the LAP. In particular it took the SAAP network to the next step with more active input into planning and program development. As a network we began to identify gaps, and agree on a way forward to address them together rather then as individual service responses.

Initiatives of that era include:
- Access and Equity project
- Youth at Risk Alliance project
- Increase in funding for young women in the DV sector
- The transitional housing initiative, with the community rent scheme service managing property and tenancy issues.
- The birth of the Housing Options Projects for young people
- The SAAP Assessment and Referral tool

The Development of the Consortium

When the Homelessness Initiative was announced by Government in 2005 we were prompted by others in the sector to think about forming partnerships to develop a service model that would meet the criteria for a service HUB for the Gold Coast.

That was the easy bit really. The issue was discussed at a SAAP Network meeting and from that those interested in forming a partnership formed a sub-committee to do the initial work. Recognising that we were now thinking of homelessness as broader than the SAAP program the network invited others join the partnership - these included NGO housing providers, Gold Coast City Council, other NGO’s with an interest in homelessness service provision.

The Consortium was formed! A MOU was entered into by members and terms of reference developed to guide the project.

Consortium members then became the steering group for the project (later to become the ongoing reference group).

Gov and NGO service providers were invited to attend a forum. At the forum the ideas for the service HUB were outlined and workshopped to get support and new ideas from participants.
We faced some challenges - not the least being how to set up and operate a service hub for the Gold Coast given the linear nature of the strip and then needing to include Beenleigh, a very different community with strong links to Logan. Two Beenleigh services are members of the Consortium.

Other challenges included putting the submission together. We were fortunate to have received secretarial support and expert advice from a peak group at no cost.

There were some frustrations, however nothing that was insurmountable.

Outcomes included:

- An outreach service model that would service the whole of the Gold Coast region
- A series of access points (within services) throughout the area from which services could be delivered.
- Strong support from GC City Council and new relationships with GCCC local law officers
- Lots of sector development - it was during this process that the SAAP network broadened its membership and is now the GC Homelessness Network.
- Formation of another partnership arrangement and development of a model for the delivery of services for the Early Intervention initiative. - successful.
- We are working with Community Renewal to develop a response to homelessness in the Southport / Labrador area of the Gold Coast.
- An increased awareness of homelessness in the area.

Summary

The key strengths of the work involved with developing the consortium include:

- Relationships! Relationships! Relationships! Respectful and solid and hard work for a period of time
- Strong local leadership, particularly drawn from the SAAP service system
- The value of the strong foundation on which to build the consortium - the early work, which at the time we had little idea would be so valuable.
- A well established network of committed service providers and the value of including the GCCC, housing providers and other NGO’s - thinking outside the BOX.
- A good understanding of the region, the gaps in service provision and the issues facing people who are homelessness.

One of the greatest challenges was having the time to do the work involved with developing the parameters of the project, the submission and the networking. It would have been great to have had paid secretarial support; or better still a project worker to assist with that work, maybe some assistance to back fill and release someone to do the ground work. Much of the work was done outside normal working hours.

The Gold Coast Consortium in now nearing the end of the establishment phase of the project - the Homelessness Outreach Support Team or HOST.