

## Developing a Health & Community Services Directory

*People with lived experience of recovery and/or mental illness need freely accessible information about health and community services in order to author their recovery journey.*

### 1. Current approaches to providing information about health and community services<sup>1</sup>

#### a. Way Ahead

The NSW Mental Health Association developed and updates on a yearly basis “Way Ahead” – a directory containing up-to-date information on more than 2000 mental health and welfare related services across NSW. This accessible resource is currently available for \$70 per head.

*However, a person needing to know about programs immediately cannot access the information quickly, directly and freely through the Mental Health Association’s website. MHA is currently waiting on funding approval from the Minister to enable free online access and are also investigating its own capacity to make this resource more accessible and current.*

#### b. ServiceLink (via HSNET)

HSNet (Human Services Network) is a free, secure website for staff working in the NSW human services sector, providing a central location for sharing information across government agencies and CMOs.

ServiceLink is an online directory of human services across NSW available to members of HSNet. The directory provides organisational and service information across a variety of sectors including health, welfare, community services, education, disability, aged care, legal and housing.

*However, a member of the public cannot access this information. Moreover, access to this information requires a login address and some basic training to navigate the site due to some complexity and the breadth of the information which covers the broader human services sector.*

#### c. Health Services Directory (via NSW Health)

NSW Health’s Health Services Directory enables users to search for health services, according to service name, service type (“Mental Health Service” is a service type; other examples - “oral health services”, “aged care”), location (suburb), postcode, phone, Area Health Service, and sector (“public health services”, “private health services”, or “NGO”).

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<sup>1</sup> From the MHCC Sector Mapping Report (2010)

In 2010, this directory included 443 mental health services across NSW, of which 438 were categorised as “public health services”, 3 categorised as “private services” and 2 categorised as “NGOs”. There may be some categorisation errors – but it is clear that *mental health CMOs are not well or accurately represented in this Directory*.

#### **d. Mental Health Coordinating Council**

The Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) annually updates a ‘Membership Directory’ that provides basic details all member organisations and this can be accessed here: [MHCC Membership Directory](#). MHCC also has information on their website that summarises and provides contact details for providers of key Commonwealth and State funded community sector mental health service programs across NSW and this can be accessed here: [Community Managed Mental Health Programs](#). These programs include:

- The Personal Helpers and Mentors Service
- Recovery and Resource Services Program
- Day to Day Living in the Community
- The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative
- The Mental Health Family and Carer Support Program
- The Mental Health Respite Program
- Mental Health Community Based Services.

#### **e. General Practitioners**

General Practitioners also have difficulty knowing about MH CMO programs. Local Divisions of GPs and the new Medicare Locals develop local service directories for GPs to access and for their own community engagement purposes.

*However, Local Divisions of GPs do not have the capacity to continually update service directories as CMOs change and new programs emerge. CMOs are encouraged to send contact and referral details to their Medicare Local.*

#### **f. Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Directory<sup>2</sup>**

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (CRCC) provide free and confidential information on community aged care, disability and other support services available locally, interstate or anywhere in Australia. Members of the public can phone or visit the CRCC or search on-line for services.

When doing an on-line search, it is noted there is no “mental health” category in the search parameters for “service type”, but “*mental health*” is included as a service sub-type. Search results (by suburb / postcode) show only the service’s name and whether it is local, regional, statewide or national; although there is no indication of what the service does in the results, there is a link to further information about the service.

## **2. No “one-stop” shop for information**

There is no one-stop shop for such information, and it is essential that CMOs develop relevant, local information to assist:

- people with lived experience of recovery and/or mental illness to author their recovery journey

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<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth Government (2011) <http://www9.health.gov.au/ccsd/>

- carers to know where to seek support
- services to provide effective referral and coordination
- members of the public and employers to find relevant information
- General Practitioners to provide appropriate referrals

### 3. Purpose of the Health & Community Service Directory

*To have free, easily accessible information for consumers, carers, other service providers, employers, the general public, and other stakeholders about places, services, and activities which will assist people with lived experience of mental illness in their recovery journey.*

### 4. Developing a local directory

- Include services and community facilities that reflect consumer needs and goals.
- Consider how a larger directory can be drawn upon by consumers who want to individualise a directory for themselves.
- Use, as much as possible, existing directories (shown in Section 1, above) for health services
- Check government websites for updated information on current local providers of community managed mental health programs, following announcements on successful tender applications.
- Tap into the Local Councils in the areas in which your CMO operates

Local Councils usually have a community directory which includes the ability to enter search terms such as “mental health”, eg

<http://www.lakemac.com.au/page.aspx?pid=126&vid=1&dpt=ComDirSearch>

- Engage with your service partners to see what is already available; coordinate the development and maintenance of a directory which is free, easily accessible, up-to-date and relevant

- Use an online service

E.g. My Community Directory which is currently accessible in all communities across Queensland (with other states to be added soon).

<http://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/CommunityOrganisationMembership.aspx>

### 5. Monitoring and Updating the Directory

Ensure there are resources available, and mechanisms in place, to keep the directory relevant and current, or it will make it even more difficult for consumers and carers to navigate the system.