



Briefing Document: Advokey Program

“Empowering people with self-advocacy and health system navigation skills”

A collaboration led by Xstitch Health and ESG360

Overview

The Advokey program aims to disrupt the cycle of homelessness by focusing on the health-related barriers that prevent individuals from securing and maintaining long term housing. By partnering with a local GP practice and pharmacy, the project provides participants with access to health services, streamlines health records and empowers individuals to overcome health literacy challenges.

The program utilises a peer-led approach whereby individuals with lived experience are engaged to provide support and follow-up to participants. In doing so, Advokey prioritises long-term health improvement pathways over immediate healthcare access, aiming for a scalable model that demonstrates cost-effectiveness and encourages provider & resident participation.

Background

The program was developed by Dr Gaj Panagoda, a medical practitioner, and Dave Lyons, a pharmacist who runs 38KPR, a residential service for older men experiencing or at risk of homelessness, in inner-Brisbane.

Gaj and Dave met in the MBA program at QUT and during their studies, they conducted formal research and interviews with homeless individuals, which have highlighted the following issues impacting their capacity to find and sustain housing:

- Limited social and family networks
- Feeling overwhelmed, leading to difficulties in daily activities, seeking support, and accessing services
- Limited capacity to self-advocate due to factors such as status anxiety, poor health literacy, and cultural barriers
- Lack of familiarity with support services and assistance options
- Barriers to understanding and navigating complex systems (eg health, private rental market, social services).

Having developed the Advokey program and formed partnerships with health and social service providers, Dave and Gaj are now seeking funding to conduct a pilot study to be conducted over a 6-month period at 38KPR. The pilot study will optimise the delivery model, measure and report outcomes and strengthen partnerships with primary health providers, hospitals and housing service providers.

Key Activities

1. Streamlining Health Information:

- Partnering with a local GP practice and pharmacy to establish and maintain clear, concise, and current health records for each participant.
- Educating participants as part of routine primary health treatment on how to navigate health, social service, and support systems.
- Facilitating communication between healthcare, social service providers, and other support systems.

2. Promoting Skills Vital to Successfully Maintaining a Tenancy:

- Supporting participants to overcome barriers to self-advocacy.
- Providing skills in nutrition, cleanliness, and daily activities, along with guidance on seeking support when needed.
- Improving skills through a "leadership for behavioural change" model. This leverages the skills of community members in peer-lead behavioural change (e.g a qualified resident cook to develop basic meal preparation options).

3. Reducing Inefficient Healthcare Use:

- Utilising partner GPs, pharmacists, nurses and allied health workers for simple interventions to decrease ambulance and emergency department usage for minor issues.
- Decreasing disengagement with the health system by creating communication pathways with local hospitals and primary health providers.

4. Creating an End-to-End Referral and Exit System:

- Strengthening partnerships with existing referrers to 38KPR and developing partnerships with housing providers.
- Establishing a scalable system for other residential services, including the development of a "Key Worker" role to coordinate activities.

Potential Future Activities

- Establishing interim discharge destinations from local hospitals, supported by a structured framework.

Want to Know More?

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