Appendix I

Youth Health and Health Promotion via Social Media

The Green Paper recommends that the health care system requires a much greater focus on primary health care and community care and an ultimate goal of improving outcomes. We need to improve our delivery of health promotion to our target groups whilst using a cost effective manner as this is a large gap in our service. Health promotion and preventative care are vital for our youth, one of the ways in which this can be achieved in Youth Health is by utilising Social Media as a health promotion tool for our target group. Unfortunately at the moment this is difficult to achieve due to policy/protocols etc. New South Wales have developed excellent policies in relation to Youth Health and include the use of social media/technology as a way in to which engage with young people and their families.

Young people's health and well-being has an impact on not only their immediate quality of life, but also future health outcomes and this may place a burden on the future health of our society (AIHW, 2011). The youth of Australia are defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare as those people are aged between 12 and 24 (2011). This period is a time of physical, emotional, social and intellectual change (AIHW, 2011). It is vital in this time to foster positive health and social behaviours so that these behaviours are continued on into adulthood (AIHW,2011). There are a number of key areas which are very prominent in this time of life including sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancy, mental health issues, increased risk of suicide, increased chance of death due to injury as a result of increased risk taking behaviours, alcohol and drug misuse, obesity and body image issues (AIHW, 2011), (Department of Health and Ageing, 2007), (Muir, Mullan, Powell, Flaxman, Thompson & Griffiths 2009). Other social factors which are of significant importance to long term health and well being outcomes include relationships with family and friends, education, employment, income, social participation and the use of technology (AIHW,2011).

The Youth Health Service North West covers a large geographic area, which is the North West of Tasmania, the West Coast of Tasmania and King Island. This is currently covered by one clinical nurse specialist. The target population are adolescents from a range of regional areas, remote areas and very remote areas (Baxter, Gray & Hayes, 2011). This is an added challenge for our service not only do we have a large geographical area to cover, but research shows there are an increased number of risks for rural youth such as increased risk of death due to suicide or injury, decreased access to health care professionals, less probability of meeting minimal education standards and increased levels of adolescents living in poverty (AIHW,2011). Many of the health issues for adolescents are preventable; hence adequate access to primary health services is a very important part of care including preventative health (Tylee, Haller, Graham, Churchill & Sanci, 2007). By utilising technology we may be able to deliver important health promotion messages to those young people who we do not get the chance to see individually, and for those we do it reinforces the health preventative messages.

Technology has the ability to aid services in promoting access to information and services for adolescents and is a very useful platform for health promotion and health education (Campbell & Robards, 2013). Technology is a cost effective manner in which to reach large numbers of adolescents in innovative, efficient and engaging ways, this allows young people to have greater access to health care and information which is vital for their health and wellbeing (Campbell & Robards, 2013).

If we are serious about reaching young people, we should be going where they are – social media is great way to engage with the youth sector and the young people of Tasmania. Many young people feel most comfortable online, and they find out information comfortably using social media and other platforms. By not utilising social media pages as part of our health promotion strategies we are missing out a large element of our target audience.

Research has shown that adolescents are at the forefront when it comes to using social media, 9 out of 10 16 -29 years old use the internet daily with 87% of adolescents utilising social media daily (www.fontpr.com.au).

The objectives of a social media youth health page would include: Providing health awareness and health promotion in areas such as contraception, sexually transmitted infections obesity, drug and alcohol use, mental health and wellbeing, engaging with potential audience, promoting other links for example family planning, headspace, kidshelpline, Australian Drug and Alcohol Foundation etc, the promotion of local events for Youth Health and promoting credible health information and messages.
The Ottawa Charter defines health promotion as 'the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health "(Campbell & Robards, 2013). It is vital to provide effective health promotion to the young people of Tasmania who may engage in high risk behaviours with potentially serious health outcomes.
The Tasmanian Government Communications Policy suggests that there are a number of reasons why it may be more appropriate to publish content on a third party website such as social media networking sites, such as reaching target audiences (2014). Therefore areas such as Youth Health and any health promotion areas of service should be encouraged to develop pages for social media, of course under going strict management of the page to ensure the material delivered is appropriate and a policy is adhered to in regards to the social media page. Several areas have attempted to begin different pages, as told to me by the Media Unit but have been unsuccessful – with research showing this is a cost effective manner and well utilised by our target group , this deserves much reconsideration.

The NSW government have developed an excellent youth health policy 2011 – 2016, one of the priorities is to use creative approaches including multi media and technology in an attempt to engage with adolescents and their families or caregivers (NSW Government, 2010). Perhaps this is a lead we should be following in Tasmania to give our youth a chance to improve their physical, social and emotional well-being and in turn create less burden on the acute care system in future years.

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