

Is the current delivery model of Social Spoons café meals project the best model to support clients of ISCHS engaged in Case Management?

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BACKGROUND

Social Spoons is a café meals project run by Inner South Community Health Service (ISCHS) in Melbourne, Australia. Social Spoons provides its members with a café stamp card, similar to a coffee loyalty card, to access subsidised café meals at supportive and welcoming cafés in their local area. Members of Social Spoons are people living within our Inner South community who are hoping to increase their involvement in general community life. The meal subsidy is an incentive to encourage our members to dine with others and link them into existing programs and health services to promote better health and social connectedness amongst our broader community.

Social Spoons aims to *improve social connectedness within the Inner South community by creating supportive environments, strengthening community relationships and developing personal skills.*

Social Spoons provides each member with a 'Key Workers' who takes members to the partner cafés and links them into local socially inclusive activities based on each member's personal interests. 8 out of 12 Social Spoons members involved in the 6-month pilot project are engaged in Case Management:



OBJECTIVES & RATIONALE

The purpose for facilitating this focus group was to determine whether *the current structure for Social Spoons is the most beneficial to the ISCHS client and Social Spoons member.*

There were two major reasons for completing this work:

1. To ensure our Social Spoons model complied with Public Health best practice from a key stakeholder consultation perspective;
2. To document experiences with this new model to feed back to the Victorian Social Café Meals Project (SCMP) network.



METHODOLOGY

A **focus group** was facilitated on Wednesday 22nd February in the Conference Room at Southport.

Participants:

- Five ISCHS case-managers from across the Mental Health, Community Support and PHaMS teams.
- One case manager from St Kilda Junction Clinic (Community Mental Health Service) - written responses

Consent was obtained for the focus group to be recorded for analysis purposes. The transcription was themed, categorised and coded. These four themes emerged.

RESULTS

THEME 1:

The role of the Social Spoons key worker is beneficial to meeting program objectives of social inclusion, provided communication is adequate with the members' Case Manager.

Participating case managers revealed a range of benefits including:

- Peripheral support from an additional worker
- The peer relationships
- A reduction in worker-dependence
- No additional workload for case managers

"A lot of our clients have gotten into this because their recovery goals have included increasing independence. Because it really all ties into that. The peripheral support again. Getting out there and that type of thing."

"My client found this out through the peer worker and they kind of organized the art group and I wasn't involved in that. I actually found that that was a really positive thing for him and that... I just think hearing it from someone new. And... I think we can be saying the same things over and over again."

"There is the value of having peers suggest stuff... has so much more weight than anything that we ever provide... ever."

Interestingly, 80% of participating case managers had met their clients at one or more of the partner cafés.

"You're actually sitting somewhere that they're feeling independent and they're independent." ... "And it's great isn't it too at the end of it you go up and you each pay for yourselves."

THEME 2:

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Social Spoons is a successful tool for enabling clients engaged in Case Management to achieve their social and physical health goals.

Case managers presented a range of achievements that they've seen amongst their clients as a direct result of being involved in Social Spoons. These achievements included improved dietary quality, more cooking at home, greater social connection, increased self-confidence and attendance at new community groups.

"It's almost mainstream (...not mental health focused). I mean, that's how my client describes it. She feels like she's in the mainstream services."

"One of my clients has started cooking for himself at home since doing the program."

"I don't know if it's necessarily community participation but I think it's flowed onto them wanting to join other groups as well. I think probably having those peer interactions. If oh, I can go here for that art group or there for that art group. Just getting a bigger range of information from more people. And getting more confidence to go to those groups."

"And also for her (SS member) I was able to use um...the money thing as she never has money and she likes to get a coffee from 7/11 for \$2 and I said for 50 cents more you can have a coffee and something else you know so it was given me a... an opportunity to get her thinking about doing things in an alternative way. Looking for the quality of what she's getting."

THEME 3:

The selection and recruitment process of partner cafés needs to consider additional barriers experienced by clients engaged in Case Management.

One consideration that case managers felt was key to the success of this current model was the **geographical location** of partner cafés.

"She (SS member) was used to coming here and the market. And I think Zappa, it sounds like a small distance but I think it did stretch her out. Even though it's the same suburb. I think it did expand her exposure to the area."

Another consideration is that case managed members are **inconsistently able to engage** in the program. Hence, the presence of **supportive café staff** to accommodate this flexibility is crucial.

"My clients' really enjoyed using the card but um... has also had a lot of time unwell. Her appetite isn't big enough to take a full serve at Bunyip for instance and he (café owner) said oh, we do half serves and she said oh fantastic. So that's about learning that your dollar can go further."

"My client described both those (staff) at Bunyip and Zappa as reaching out to her. She doesn't have to do all the work to try to interact with them. Both those guys are pretty social which is good. Makes it less intimidating."

Another consideration is to provide a **quiet café environment over the weekends**.

"My client (is) not wanting to come here (to the cafes) on the weekends when it's really busy. If she comes on the weekends she can't interact with the staff."

THEME 4:

Social Spoons members need to remain connected to the program beyond their 6-month membership.

Case managers highlighted the need for Social Spoons café meals project engage its members beyond the 6-month official membership period. They felt that by maintaining engagement, the achievements made throughout their membership time are more likely to be sustained into the future.

Case managers suggested a range of solutions to facilitate this ongoing engagement:

- A discount card for partner cafés
- A newsletter update on partner cafés
- Regular café sessions for old and new members
- A buddy (peer mentor) program

"Could they still have something to present to the staff to show that they've been part of the program? To show that they're still welcomed and need to be a little bit looked after."

"The cafés would probably love that contact too. They'd love to know that some of these little faces they will see again."

"It would be good feedback for the new members to hear from the phase 1 members about their experiences. You're not sure what you're getting into. That's pretty powerful."

"I think less formal would be easier for my client to stay involved. If it was more formal, it might be a bit intimidating."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain a key worker role to support Social Spoons members in achieving their social inclusion goals, regardless of whether the member has an existing case manager.
- If the member is engaged in case management, key workers are to maintain transparent communication channels to ensure the client/member is not subject to competing agendas
- Maintain active involvement of consumer representatives in the planning and implementation of Social Spoons. If possible, increase the number of peer, volunteer or consumer representatives involved to enable all Social Spoons members the opportunity to interact and connect.
- Consider the additional barriers that clients engaged in case managers face in attending the partner cafés when recruiting new partner cafés; geographical location, supportive and accommodating staff & quiet café environments on weekends
- Ensure Social Spoons members remain engaged in the program beyond the 6-month membership period by offering a discount card for use at partner cafés, a regular newsletter with updates of partner cafés, communal café sessions and the opportunity for a buddy system for graduates to introduce new members to cafés.

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