

Seeing the whole person: Peer Navigation structures redefine peer based support programs

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Background/Purpose:

Since 1988 Positive Life NSW (PLNSW) has facilitated programs that address the social determinants of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in NSW. Through consultation with community, PLNSW has created ways of supporting PLHIV navigating health, welfare and government systems. Addressing the needs of different communities of PLHIV in NSW has led PLNSW to adopt a peer navigation (PN) support model that looks at the whole person, meets clients where they are at, and develops their capacity to advocate on their own behalf.

Approach:

Utilising an innovative consumer consultation and engagement framework mechanism, we consulted with PLHIV in NSW about their spectrum of lived experience and identified a number of changes and emerging issues of importance. The value-added benefit of this process ensures that future services, resources and information programs are co-designed, appropriate, accessible, agile, and PLHIV's knowledge and insights contributed to the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of the PN support model. One of the issues identified was the potential 'silo-ing' of clients and programs. The work of the peer navigation staff was critical to reorienting this wholistic approach looking at the needs of the whole person.

Outcomes/Impact:

Blending PLNSW programs using an adapted PN model de-stratifies, simplifies and connects housing, ageing, employment, social inclusion, treatments and peer support. Outcomes include the identification of gaps, and initiation of PLHIV journeys through PLNSW programs. Working with clients in this way creates space for capacity building in peer education, peer support, social inclusion and health/welfare/government system navigation that sees community members as a whole person.

Innovation and Significance:

Seeing the whole person increases the likelihood of engagement with their health, being retained in care and having issues of significance in their lives addressed in a timely and compassionate manner that improves health, treatment, social, and quality of life outcomes for PLHIV in NSW.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

Nothing to declare.