

## Case Study



*"People living with, or affected by, mental health issues enjoying a full and independent life" (PSS's Vision Statement)*

## Continuously improving quality at Peninsula Support Services

Since 1988, Peninsula Support Services (PSS) has been supporting people with psychiatric disabilities and their carers living in the Mordialloc to Portsea service area.

PSS's mission is to provide support to help people maximise their potential through responding to client and carer needs and by fostering independent living skills. This is achieved through the delivery of best practice psychosocial rehabilitation and outreach services.



Employing 28 permanent staff members, PSS supports approximately 425 participants per year in support rehabilitation, intensive outreach and home based outreach services.

PSS provides clients with the support needed to improve and enhance their quality of life.

## Background

PSS maintains a Quality Management System designed to meet the requirements of:

- The National Standards for Mental Health Services.
- Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (PDRSS) Standards.
- Home and Community Care (HACC) National Service Standards.
- The fifteen Principles of Psychosocial Rehabilitation.
- ISO 9001:2008 Quality management systems — Requirements.

Currently the HACC standards are PSS's only contractual requirement. PSS achieved HACC standards accreditation in 2003 and reaccreditation in 2006.

In 2007 PSS also gained accreditation to ISO 9001. Adopting ISO 9001 was a management decision that has provided PSS with the foundation of a robust quality management system that is able to encompass all governance and compliance requirements in the one system.

***"...the continuing successful quality assurance accreditation process with ISO 9001:2000 are all positive indicators of a strong governance and management reporting process" (PSS's Annual Report 2008-09)***

PSS has completed the PDRSS self audit twice and is waiting on advice from the Department of Human Services on whether they are required to have PDRSS accreditation.

## Working well

PSS's quality system was implemented with the support of an external quality consultant who worked with the CEO and managers over 2-3 years exploring and documenting what PSS does. The development of the quality system involved reviewing requirements, rewriting existing documentation and developing new documentation to fill identified gaps.

Jenny Nelson, Manager Service Development and Intake, is responsible for looking after quality at PSS. This includes monitoring quality improvements and reviewing and updating documentation.

Jenny says that choosing to use an external consultant was very helpful. Not only did the consultant contribute much needed quality and systems expertise, they performed a valuable role as an outsider looking in, leaving no stone unturned.

***"We had to explain everything. Someone from outside sees things differently. He looked at how and why we were doing things" (Jenny Nelson, Manager Services Development and Intake)***

PSS's quality system is electronic and staff don't need good computer skills to access it. Each staff member has their own computer with an icon on the screen that they simply double click to open the quality system. They print off what they need, when they need it so what they use is always up to date and they use less paper.

***"PSS continues to monitor and develop programs to meet the needs of our participants, families and carers through our Quality Improvement System" (PSS's Annual Report 2008-09)***



# Challenges

PSS found the first external audit in 2003 against the HACC standards the most difficult because staff didn't know what to expect and the quality system was in its infancy. The second HACC standards audit in 2006 was easier because the organisation was more experienced, the quality system more developed and the auditors more familiar with PSS.

***"External audits get easier as you go"  
(Jenny Nelson, Manager Services  
Development and Intake)***

Not long after its introduction, management discovered that new staff were not clear on how the quality system worked and took some time to find their own way around it. Today PSS has systems in place to make sure that staff are aware of how the quality system works through a comprehensive induction focused on understanding and navigating the PSS quality system.

Increasing staff awareness of the quality system has been an ongoing process at PSS. In the beginning there was a perception that using the quality system meant more work and therefore there was some resistance. Today PSS staff realise that it's not as hard as they thought it was going to be and understand the benefits.

The quality system is continuously evolving in response to changing needs. For example today in the sector there is more emphasis on participant input and the quality system has been updated to reflect the shift in practice and in written documentation.

This in turn led to the identification of the need for a Participant Advisory Group which was documented in the PSS Strategic Plan. PSS then brought in a consultant who helped develop a very active Participant Advisory Group that is involved at management level.

# Quality culture

There are many ways in which PSS has actively integrated the quality system seamlessly into its organisational culture.

These include:

- Prompting staff at each meeting "Are there any quality improvements?" to make them think about quality.
- Recognising that quality for staff is important and building quality into the annual staff reviews to find out what is needed to help staff to do their job.
- Posting quality policy information on office walls to remind people of PSS's mission, vision and quality goals.
- Focusing on the end goal which is helping people to go forward with their recovery.

***"When people can understand the difference it can make in their practice and the positives, then they embrace it. If they can see the why, they can be motivated" (Jenny Nelson, Manager Services Development and Intake)***

PSS's quality system has been a very positive experience for the organisation with significant ongoing benefits.

For example in the sector there has been a big push to do collaborative work with other agencies. In response PSS has worked with other agencies to develop shared recovery plans. Often PSS staff conduct intake interviews not at PSS facilities but at clinician facilities. This innovation makes it easier for participants to access the service and supports relationship building with other agencies.

For staff this has meant more work, but the work is more coordinated and staff can see the benefits for participants – coordinated service delivery with clear boundaries and guidelines.

Helping staff see the benefits for the participants supports organisational change and innovation.

# Messages

*"PSS is privileged to have such dedicated and skilled staff members who not only abide by the organisation's values, but believe in them" (PSS's Annual Report 2008-09)*

Well advanced on their quality journey, PSS has some valuable advice for other organisations:

- Remember that success breeds success and small successes open the door for more success.

*"Quality improvement is about the small things day to day that make a difference" (Jenny Nelson, Manager Services Development and Intake)*

- Notice what is happening in other organisations and learn from it. By reflecting on what other others do and your own practices, you will identify improvements and won't reinvent the wheel.
- Encourage staff to visit other agencies. They will bring back ideas that may be helpful.
- Don't be precious. The way you do things now is not the only way and may not be the best way.
- Implement systems for collecting and documenting every idea so that they can be reviewed and acted on by management.

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