

Improving physical health for older mental health consumers through statewide action

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Background



- OPMH Physical Health Practice Improvement Project was initiated to improve physical health assessment and care for OPMH service consumers in line with NSW Health and national policy priorities and the Equally Well Consensus Statement.
- The project was led by the NSW Ministry of Health Older People's Mental Health (OPMH) Policy Unit in collaboration with NSW Health Local Health District (LHD) mental health services, two Community Managed Organisations (NEAMI National and Flourish Australia) and Charles Sturt University. LHD OPMH services 'opted in' to participate in the project being voluntary with a *'start where you can'* approach.
- The statewide project steering group included consumer, peer worker and carer representatives, academic experts, representatives of different health disciplines and LHDs, and other key stakeholders including CMOs and Equally Well Australia.
- Project design was built on our previously successful recovery-oriented practice improvement project, with an adapted version of the WHO Liu et al implementation framework helping to refine conceptual ideas around potential projects.

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- The project was designed to be a collaborative process that engaged consumers, carers, and a wide range of health professionals, including medical, nursing and allied health staff and peer workers.
 - It used a "Model for Improvement" approach, which is a quality improvement framework that utilizes a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle.
 - The project's methodology helped foster collaboration between frontline clinicians, senior managers, academics and consumers to engage in quality improvement projects.
 - Project champions and supporting managers from each local health district were recruited to lead the local projects and to ensure that projects were designed and implemented in a way that was practical and effective for the specific local context.

Participating teams across NSW



Settings where projects were delivered

NSW Health inpatient units



Community mental health centres

People's homes



People involved

Policy makers



Frontline clinicians & peer workers



Older consumers



Health managers



Academic partners

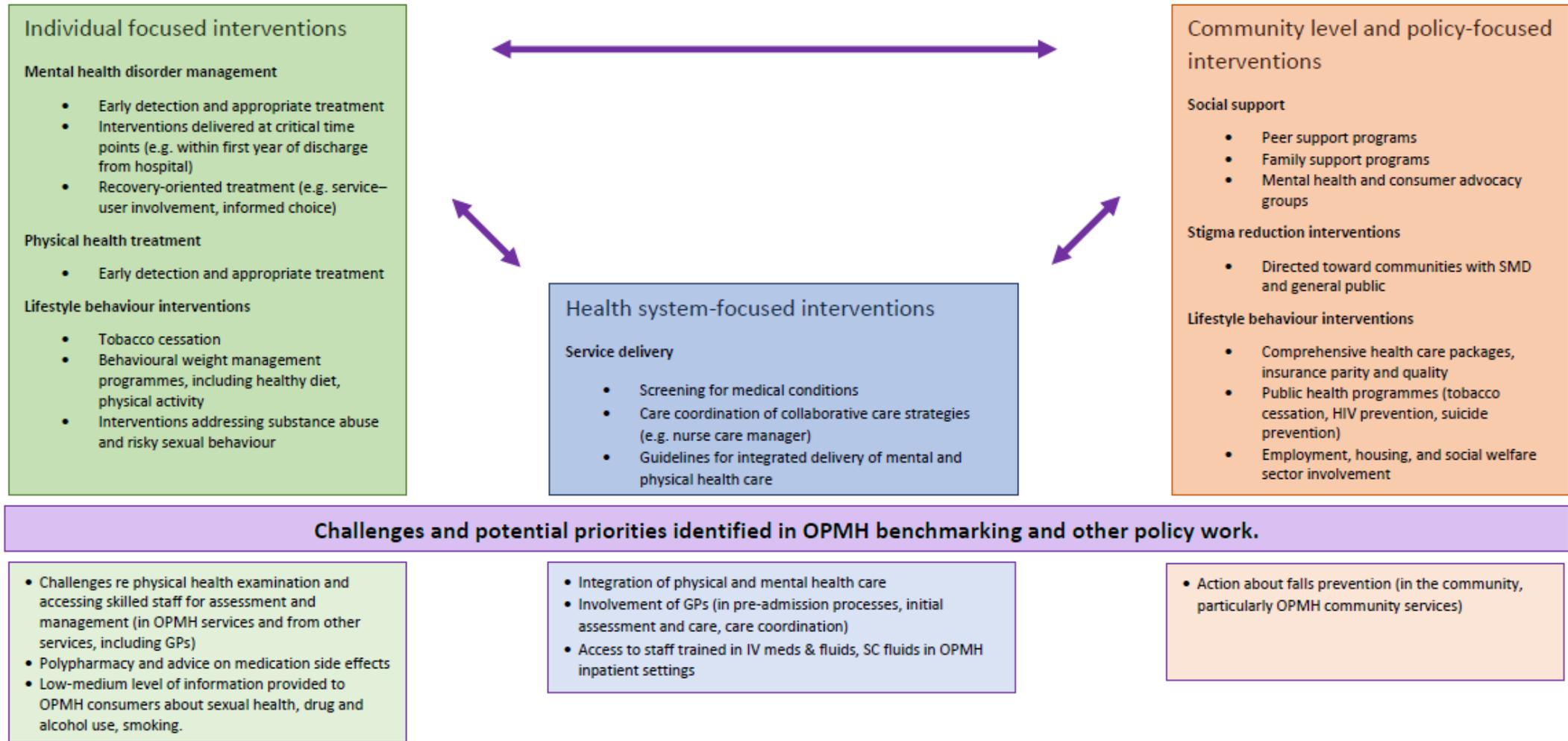


CMO partners

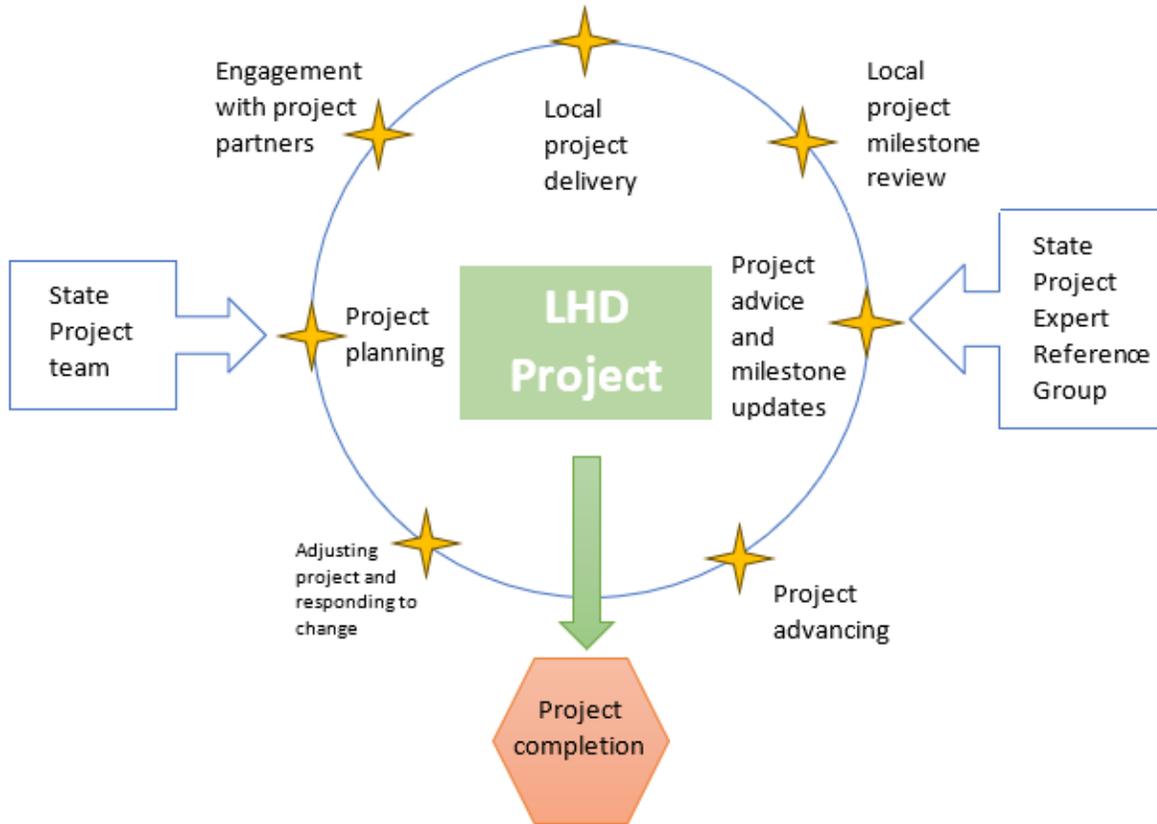


'Start where you can' – prioritizing project ideas

Adapted from Liu et al. 2017 the WHO implementation framework



Process



Project implementation followed an eight-step cycle that ran multiple cycles for most projects before transitioning to completion.

A number of challenges disrupted the project's original 18 months timeframe, key among them being the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruptions to OPMH workforce and service capacity.

Being adaptable and flexible in light of these challenges was a key element to sustaining engagement with the LHD champions and supporting them to successfully complete projects.

Funding and resources



- Overall statewide project progressed without state funding
- Two projects sought small one-off grants externally for seed funding.
- People's passion for what we were aiming to achieve was the best resource for driving change.



NSW Health

Older People's Mental Health Physical Health Practice Improvement

Project Report

November 2024



Successful in supporting a range of practice improvement initiatives within 11 LHD OPMH services in metropolitan and rural NSW and one CMO service.

Many of these projects have been embedded into ongoing practice in OPMH services, and some have been taken up within other services.

Most projects are expected to be published in peer-reviewed publications, along with the findings from the statewide project.

The lessons and outcomes from all local projects and the overall statewide project have been shared in the project report published on the NSW Health website.

This is a significant contribution to addressing the 'implementation gap' in improving the physical health of people living with mental illness.

Project	Project leads/ partners	Research partner & publication status	Focus area	WHO (Liu etc) implementation domain
NEAMI physical health prompt - a multi-site trial	NEAMI National	Charles Sturt University Publication in progress	Empowering consumers around physical health improvement	Health system focussed intervention
	St Vincent's Health Network			
	Mid North Coast LHD			
	Southern NSW LHD			
	Murrumbidgee LHD			
The LIVE WELL Intervention: Promoting health behaviour change in older people living in South Western Sydney	South Western Sydney LHD	Findings published	Empowering consumers around physical health improvement	Community level and policy focused intervention
Piloting the Flourish physical health prompt 'PhysiCards©' within an older person's community mental health population	Flourish Australia	Charles Sturt University Publication in progress	Empowering consumers around physical health improvement	Individual focused intervention
	Nepean Blue Mountains LHD			
Manage My Health: a coaching approach to assist older mental health consumers to better manage their own physical health	Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD		Empowering consumers around physical health improvement (with screening element)	Individual focused intervention
OPtiMHize improving health outcomes of older people with a lived experience of mental illness	South Eastern Sydney LHD		Physical health screening and assessment (with consumer empowerment element)	Health system focussed intervention
Increasing the rate of metabolic screening and monitoring in the older mental health consumer	Northern Sydney LHD		Physical health screening and assessment	Health system focussed intervention
Adapting Fit For Your Life to the regional context	Western NSW LHD	Charles Sturt University Findings published	Physical activity/exercise	Individual focused intervention
The impact of exercise on holistic health for older adults with mental illness: a pilot study.	Western Sydney LHD	Charles Sturt University Publication in progress	Physical activity/exercise	Community level and policy focused intervention

What we learnt: project approach

- Demonstrates a successful low-resource model for statewide practice improvement in a complex health system.
- Creating the right environment and processes to support practice improvement, including a distributed leadership structure and strong relationships and partnerships
- The "start where you can" approach
- Involving people with lived experience
- Valuable template for future statewide initiatives aimed at improving the physical health of people with mental illness, addressing the "implementation gap" and driving change and innovation in a complex adaptive system.



What made it work?

Policy makers



Used policy platform, existing collaborative mechanisms, and policy role to establish project support and overall project plan. Supported others to make it happen.

Health managers



Drove local support for projects and provided leadership to frontline staff in developing, adapting and implementing projects.

Older consumers



Provided lived experience input to project development and actively engaged with a range of projects. Empowering consumers around their own physical health was a focus of some projects.

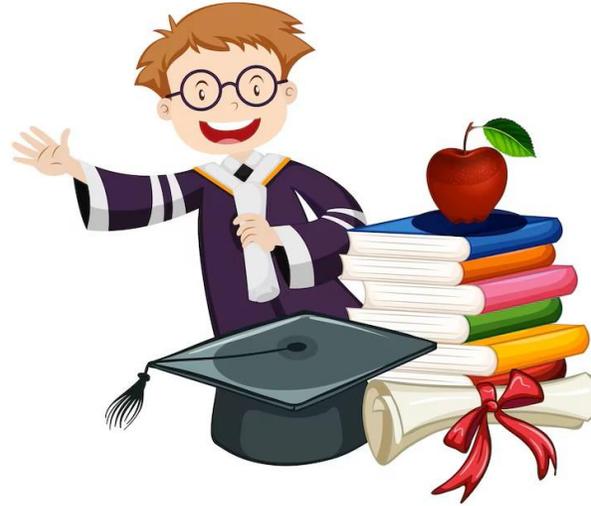
What made it work?

Frontline clinicians & peer workers



Co-designed local projects and were the key people implementing projects/interventions

Academic partners



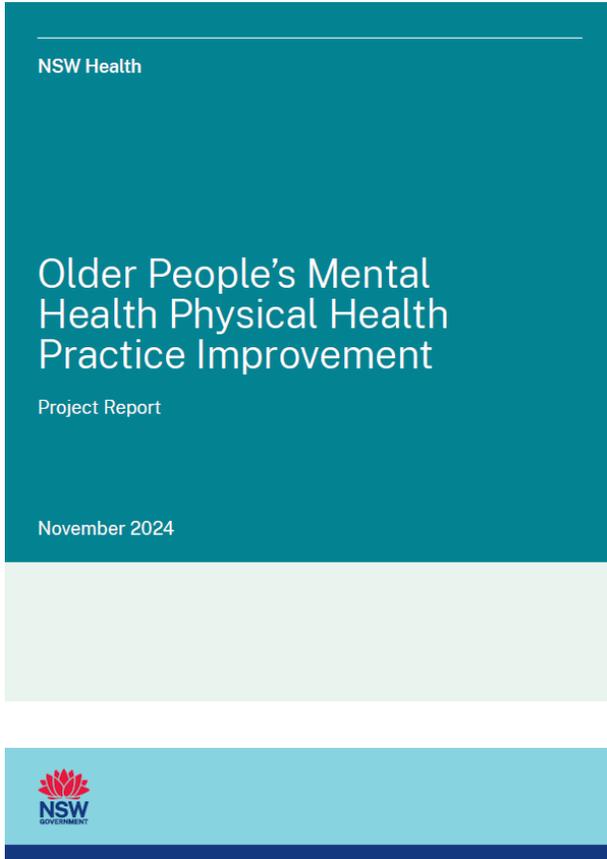
Brought expertise in research design, evaluation and progressing publication (including ethics approval processes)

CMO partners



Brought existing/adapted physical health tools from their organisations (eg health prompts) and collaborative approach

What you will find in the project report

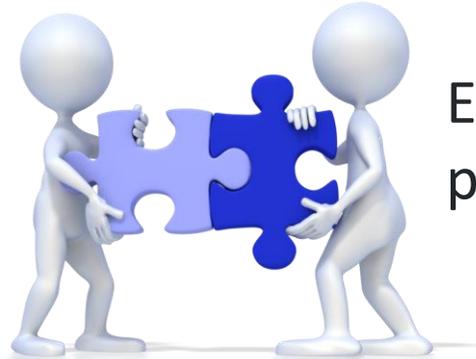


Methodology of the project

Individual project outcomes



Examples of collaborative practice improvement



Recommendations from the project

