

A frontline perspective of paperwork in group homes for people with intellectual disability: Preliminary findings

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Why paperwork? Why a *frontline* perspective?

- Paperwork forms a large part of daily group home service provision

“...the filing cabinets of many service providers are stuffed with assessments, person-centred plans, incident reports and monitoring records...” (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2012, p. 94)

- Paperwork a key technology, tool in group home service, transforms knowledge into action (Levinson, 2010)
- Paper-based (e.g., medication forms) and electronic formats (e.g., Goldcare, CRIS) (Grundy & Grundy, 2013)
- Possible increases in amounts of paperwork over time—122 (1988) to 220 (2009) (Quilliam, Bigby & Douglas, in press)
- Paperwork can be problematic:
 - additional administrative tasks adding to supervisor stress (Clement & Bigby, 2010)
 - behaviour support referral plans creating negative resident constructions (Nunkoosing & Haydon-Laurelut, 2011)
 - out of date, incomplete and unoriginal person centred plans (Victorian Office of the Public Advocate, 2011)

Project aim

- Need to understand how paperwork is used, problems with its use
- Support workers—an important stakeholder perspective (Hastings, 2010)
 - users, completers, sharers of group home paperwork
- Need to better understand the frontline perspective

Project aim: to explore group home staffs' perspective of paperwork

- Better understanding of staff perspective >> provision of suitable workplace technologies >> more satisfied staff using suitable technologies >> more accurate records >> better informed decision-making

Methodology, methods

Methodology

- Constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014)
- Data collection and analysis completed iteratively
- Researcher and participants construct data
- Coding, constant comparison methods, content analysis

Design

- Two Victorian disability service organisations
- 4 – 5 group homes
- Initial Group Home 1 data collection completed, beginning Group Home 2 initial data collection

Data source (for presentation discussion)

Participants

- Support workers
- Supervisors

Interviews

- Four interviews (one per participant)
- Semi structured
- Conducted at the Group home 1 site, service offices
- 50mins—1.5 hours
- Participants checked data to ensure accurate meaning

Observations

- Five sessions
- Collected different times (evening, afternoon, morning, midday, weekday, weekend)
- 2—3.5hours

Research setting—Group Home 1

Group home 1

- Provides 24-hour support (sleepover)
- Four residents (two residents with mild ID, one resident with moderate ID, one with severe ID)
- Nine staff—One permanent supervisor, six permanent support workers, two regular casuals
- Retro fitted house, homely feel
- Staff perceive GH 1 as a good place to work:
 - Acknowledge strong leadership
 - Feel respected and valued by others
 - Appreciate and contribute to the collaborative team approach

“...one thing that feels so right about this house is there is mutual respect all the way through it. ... it reflects out to how you interact and how relaxed you are in a house... If you [staff] feel valued, the clients are valued, where can you go wrong? You can't go wrong can you, if everyone is valued; not just this one sided rubbish. It's a good house.” (Kirbee, support worker)

Pieces of paperwork —what comes to mind?

- Content analysis (NVivo) provides insight into prominent paperwork in staffs' minds
- Four interviews analysed for paperwork references (observation data excluded)
- Participants described 55 different pieces of paperwork
- Individually referencing roughly 10% of possible group home paperwork (22 of 220, Quilliam, Bigby & Douglas, in press)

participant	pieces of paperwork described
Shannon	22
Ellen	17
Kirbee	17
Donna	35

Pieces of paperwork in staffs' minds

Paperwork piece of paperwork	Frequency mentioned
Daily file notes	62
Communication book	23
Food diaries	15
Electronic information system	13
Medication sheets (for Webster pack medication)	12
Key worker reports	10
Resident folders	9
Personal profiles	6
Rosters	6
Bowel charts	5
Little green book	5
Medical books	5
Resident support plan	5
Staff meeting minutes	5
Archive box	4
Behaviour support plans	4
End of month documentation	4
Sign in book (Daily diary)	4
Timesheets	4
Emails	3

Paperwork piece of paperwork	Frequency mentioned
Medication sheets (topical)	3
Resident consent (release) form	3
Resident education paperwork	3
Resident plan	3
Vehicle book	3
Webster pack	2
Day service paperwork	2
End of month monthly report	2
Expenditure page	2
Medication folders	2
Mims sheets	2
Money books	2
Old organisation documentation	2
Outings form	2
Quarterly data collection	2
Residential financial statements	2
Resident occupancy record	2
Resident receipts	2
Annual health assessment	1

Paperwork piece of paperwork	Frequency mentioned
Daily money counting paperwork	1
End of month documents checklist	1
End of month holiday planning paperwork	1
End of month meeting minutes summary	1
End of month financial management docs	1
Food tags	1
Advocacy paperwork	1
House financial statements	1
House maintenance assessment form	1
Incident reports	1
Medical notes	1
Safety data sheets	1
Policy documents	1
Resident placement diaries	1
Resident weekly activities schedule	1
Staff file notes	1

Early reflections

Staff value paperwork

Guiding the practice of providing support, working together

“I think it [paperwork] is valuable. You could not run a place like this [a group home] without paperwork; you couldn’t. It would be like, well you would be going back into the stone age wouldn’t you? ...without paperwork you would have too much ambiguity, too much confusion, too much hearsay; you would have...people doing the wrong thing. Paperwork keeps tabs on everyone and everything also, so I don’t see paperwork as a bad thing; never would say that.” (Kirbee, support worker)

Sharing information

“...we really need it [the paperwork], with that information you can do so many things and they [staff] will know so many things, so it’s okay. ...I have never felt ‘oh this is not related to [the tasks]’; I have never felt like [this]. ...yeah it’s what we [staff] have to do. ...we have to [share] the information.” (Shannon, support worker).

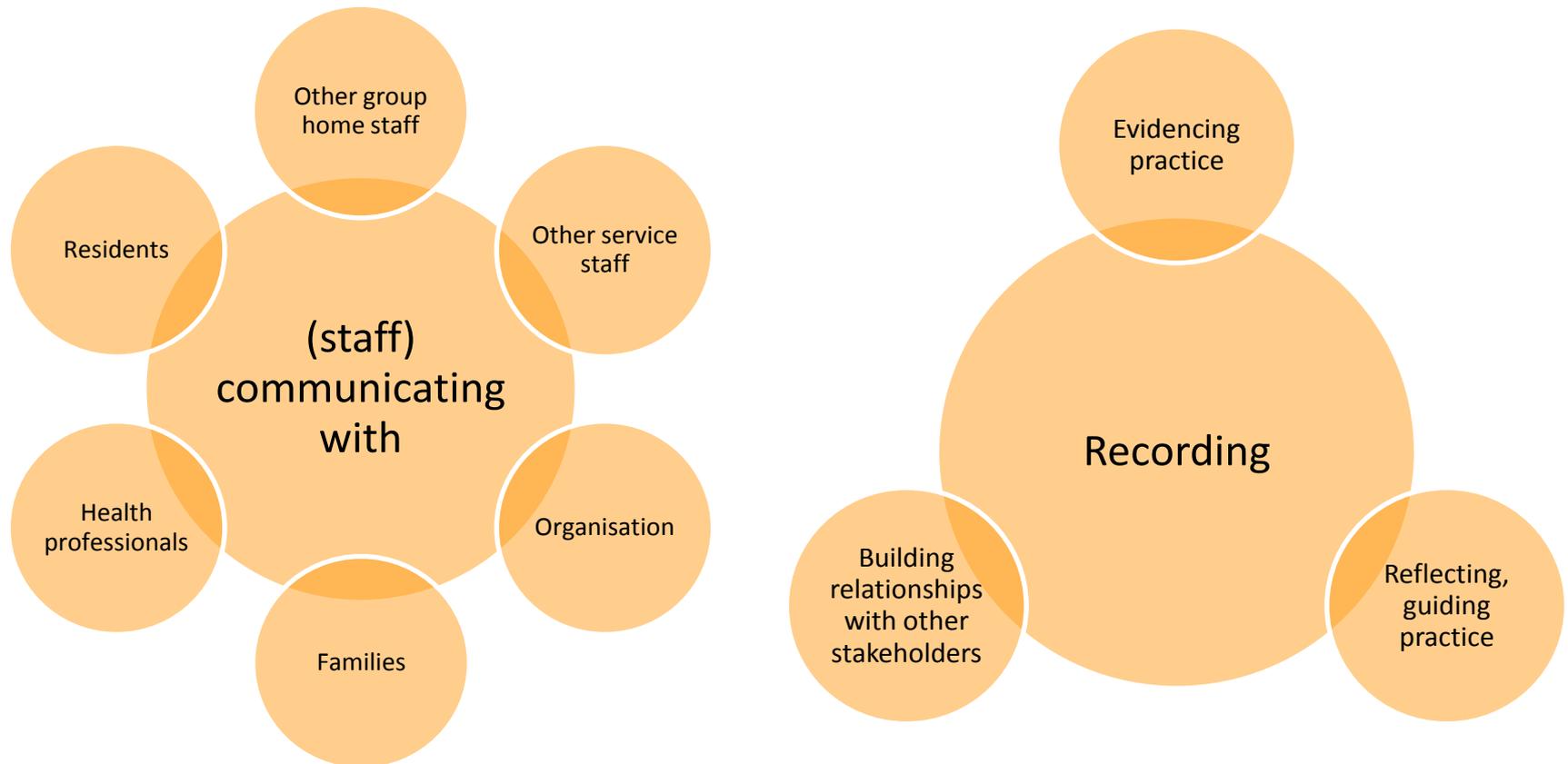
Evidencing practice

“Well it [paperwork] is necessary. Because, for example, if something ever happened to one of these guys [residents], we’ve [staff] got to have that paper trail” (Ellen, support worker).

Early reflections

Overarching paperwork purposes

“Paperwork is...I would put under the headings of recording and communication. And without communication in a paperwork format you then don’t have a record [to] look back and see how people [residents]...where they’ve been and where they’ve come from.” (Kirbee, support worker).



Early reflections

Seeking purpose(s) and meaning in paperwork

- Staff identify multiple purposes for different pieces of paperwork
- Staff identify paperwork as meeting needs of multiple stakeholders

Food diaries — example of multiple and clear purposes >> staff commitment

—Evidencing practice, supporting advocacy work

“The food diary is for... because she was losing way too much weight. The food diary was to present to her GP to show him that the amount of food and liquid she was receiving didn’t compute with us [staff], with the weight loss. ... The food diary is like presenting evidence to a GP... And the evidence is good because we [staff] can say ‘okay well you’re assuming wrong here’. ...They [GPs] assume something about a client that is wrong, so the paperwork helps to present a clearer picture to these people [GPs], and maybe they can be a little bit more attentive towards them [residents]..”
(Kirbee, support worker).

—Guiding collaborative practice, problem solving

“We can have a look at how certain foods are meant to happen twice a day. If those foods aren’t happening then her [resident’s] bowels don’t work, so ‘why isn’t it happening?’ And it’s not like you’re going to be pointing the finger at staff saying, you know ‘slap on the hand’ or anything. It’s [paperwork] actually just to point out ‘okay where are we falling down a little bit here?’... “ (Kirbee, support worker).

Early reflections

Seeking purpose(s) and meaning in paperwork

Food diaries — example of multiple and clear purposes >> staff commitment

—Building relationships, rapport

“...the mother wanted it [food diary] for that client so we can actually... It’s a trust thing I suppose. It [the paperwork] builds trust because if we [staff] do the right thing and we write it [information] down we’re encouraging [the resident]. The [resident’s] parents will see that we’re [staff] on their side a little bit and they [parents] can trust us [staff] with their people [family members].” (Kirbee, support worker).

—Clear paperwork purposes encourages staff commitment

“...Yeah it will be too much [paperwork] but we have to do it for them [the residents]. ...So it’s extra work for us [staff], but ... you see the point of it [the food diary]. ” (Shannon, support worker).

Early reflections

Questioning and refusing unclear organisational purposes or processes

Daily Diary (sign in book) — example of unclear purposes >> questioning>> staff refusal

—Acknowledging vague organisational purpose

“Kirbee then begins to complete the daily diary. ...She mutters that she has to ‘sign in’ the diary when on shift, and also notes that she doesn’t see the point of this task. I ask what it is for and she explains that it’s ‘used to double-check something on [the electronic information system] at the end of the month’. She signs the daily diary and walks out of the staff room.” (Observation 2, Kirbee [support worker] & Donna [supervisor]).

—Identifying minimal, insignificant purposes

“So I really question ‘why there is so much?’ ...And the only benefit [of the sign-in book information] I can see is with me. Like if someone [support staff] has put on their timesheet—and I wasn’t around—said they’ve worked. Unless they’ve signed on, well that’s proof yeah, they were here or weren’t here [at GH1]. ... so that’s the only benefit, but the rest ...” (Donna, supervisor).

—Refusing paperwork completion

“And I don’t [write the vehicle mileage on the sign in book]. Well why? Staff tell me off for not doing it, ‘[Donna] you haven’t done that [written vehicle information in the sign in book]’, [and I respond] ‘well it’s [the information is] in the vehicle book’. Unless [Organisational managers] can explain to me why I have to rewrite this out again, I’m sorry.” (Donna, supervisor).

Implications for practice

Services managers

- Consider asking staff about *helpful paperwork* for completing typical support worker tasks
- Ask about non suitable paperwork
 - Ask staff *how* these paperwork types are helpful or unsuitable
- Consider changing paperwork practices (or other tool practices) to meet staffs' needs, improve effectiveness or efficiency

Staff

- Reflect on pieces of paperwork that are useful (or unsuitable) in your daily work, and consider *why* this is
- Share your thoughts with your supervisor or service manager

Next steps...

- Are these findings consistent with other group homes? Or just in houses characterised by strong leadership, staff sense of value, and collaborative team approach?

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Thank you

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Early reflections

Issues with paperwork

Duplication of paperwork

“I don’t get why ...you write medical notes in the daily report, and then write it by hand in the medical thing—exercise book. That to me is a bit weird cause you’ve already written in their daily shift report, and I think that could hold everything [information] really...” (Kirbee, support worker).

Changing practice through electronic technology

“Now all the daily file notes are on the computer ... we [staff] have to go all the way back [through the daily file notes] to do their key worker report... all the way back through the blooming computer [files] now to see what they [residents] have been doing in that six-week period. Whereas before we could just look at it, flick through.” (Ellen, support worker).

Competing priorities

“And if something happens, you’ve just got to leave it [paperwork] and just go back to it later when you have time to finish it [the paperwork], because sometimes things happen ...you can’t be sitting in there [the office] doing paperwork, especially if one of these guys needs you. They [residents] are the priority obviously, yeah. The paperwork has to be done, but it has to wait.” (Ellen, support worker).

Exhausting supervisor administrative efforts

“I felt... like the paperwork was just coming out of my ear, just making sure everything we had [paperwork] was up to date or renewed So I spent most of my admin hours just doing that so I was being swamped. So I actually had a meltdown because head office [organisational managers] were wanting me to do this mini audit on all the resident files ...’ So I spoke to the manager, almost in tears, ‘when am I supposed to do this? I’m not a charity...’” (Donna, supervisor).

