Exploring paperwork in Australian group homes and disability services

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Paperwork in group homes

- Group homes are stacked with paperwork!

“...the filling cabinets of many service providers are stuffed with assessments, person-centred plans, incident reports and monitoring records...”

(Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2012, p. 94)

- Paperwork is a key group home technology ... transforms knowledge into action (Levinson, 2010)

- Paper-based and electronic formats (Grundy & Grundy, 2012) e.g., Goldcare, CRIS
Why bother?

- Group homes - a common form of accommodation service for people with intellectual disabilities - are influenced by a range of policy contexts.

- Failure to achieve consistent quality outcomes for group home residents (Fyffe & Bigby, 2011)
  - resident engagement (Clement & Bigby, 2010)
  - meaningful community inclusion (Parmenter & Arnold, 2008)

- Need to better understand conditions for appropriate staff action (Walsh et al., 2010), service processes impacting on culture (Felce, Lowe & Jones, 2002; Hastings, Remington & Hatton, 1995)

- Paperwork an example of a group home process requiring further exploration (Fyffe, McCubbery & Reid, 2008; Nunkoosing & Haydon-Laurelul, 2011)

- Little is known about how paperwork is used in group homes
To do list

Unpack:

• the conceptualisation of paperwork
• the extent and types of paperwork
• emerging problems with its use

Through review of:

• Early group home literature
• Literature identifying paperwork
• Group home service manuals
Paperwork conceptualisations

How do we understand paperwork? Overall purpose?

Remember, pieces of paperwork don’t always fit neatly into boxes... it’s all about sense-making.

1. Paperwork to guide practice
   - helps staff every day to make sense of the tasks
   - sense of immediacy

“This is not so much a way of gathering information about what routinely happens as about stimulating discussion” (Mansell et al., 1987, p. 241)

E.g. - Plan of the day (Clement & Bigby, 2011)
Paperwork conceptualisations

2. Paperwork for quality assurance and evidence

- meeting long-term aims
- that can be seen in future practice, planning and policy development

“for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of staff performance over time”  
(Felce, 1989, p. 21)

E.g. – Daily report writing:
- household chores offered to residents & success rate
- activities in the community
- social contact with friends and family
- teaching undertaken & success rate (Felce, 1989)

“Records demonstrate how the Department of Human Services is accountable for decisions .... and how it complies with legal, financial and business requirements... Records generated in residential services are the collection of information necessary for Disability Services to provide evidence of the support which has been provided to residents”  
(Victorian Department of Human Services [DHS], 2012, s6.1)
Paperwork conceptualisations

3. Paperwork for managing risk

- Managing risks for both staff and residents
- Increase in paperwork relating to risk management (15 - 55 pieces of paperwork [PoP])
- Largely related to OH&S paperwork
- Assessment tools for risk assessment (Sykes, 2005)

E.g. - Occupational violence risk assessment and management tool (OVRAMT)

“OVRAMT...identifies triggers and causes of occupational violence [and] solutions to eliminate or control risks” (DHS, 2009, 3.4-2)
Interesting findings from review of 1988 and 2009 Victorian service manuals:

- Increase in the number of pieces of paperwork (PoP)
  - 122 PoP in 1988 - 220 PoP in 2009 = **98 more**!

- Paperwork reflects changes in service context

- Many ways to make sense of the paperwork
  - Dorothy Smith’s notion of ‘inter-textual hierarchy’
Making sense of paperwork - regulatory and subordinate paperwork

Regulatory paperwork

- Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004
- Residential Services Practice Manual 2009
- Occupational violence risk assessment and management tool (OVRAMT)

Subordinate paperwork

- Disease, injury, near miss, accident report (DINMA)
- WorkSafe incident notification form
- OVRAMT post incident tool
- Incident report

Drawn from Dorothy Smith’s (2006) ‘intertextual hierarchy’ and applied to DHS (2009)
Making sense of paperwork - example of subordinate typology

Exploring service context through paperwork

Increase in ‘assessment/planning’ sub-type – 14 to 47 PoP

Reflects recent emphasis on person-centred thinking (Robertson et al., 2007)

From whole-of-life planning to specific paperwork for life areas

12 to 50 PoP increase in ‘health’ sub-sub-type, e.g., ‘swallowing and meal assistance plan’

Reflects evidence poor health status of people with ID (Lennox et al., 2007)

Proportion of PoP in resident ‘assessment/planning’ sub-type, drawn from CHV (1988) & DHS (2009)
Emerging problems with group home paperwork

Exploring paperwork reveals:

• an increase in number of PoP required in Victorian group homes
• the nature (types and extent) of paperwork
• the connection between paperwork and service events

However … paperwork is problematic as a service technology:

• access, currency, mode of communication (Quilliam, 2009)
• detracts staff from practice (Nankervis, Hamilton & Neville, 2002; McCubbery & Fyffe, 2006) & transforms the nature of work (Clement & Bigby, 2010)
• misconstrues resident identities (Nunkoosing & Haydon-Laurelut, 2011; Wilcox, Finlay & Edmonds, 2006)
• implementation and quality issues (Office of the Public Advocate, 2011; Robertson et al., 2007)
• use in abuse concealment (Ombudsman Victoria, 2011; Flynn & Citarella, 2013)
Why explore paperwork?

• Literature indicates a reliance on paperwork & changing emphasis
  • Increase in the number of pieces of paperwork
  • Shift towards risk management ... still useful for guiding practice?

• Only talked about by a few authors as a technology that impacts on practice

• Authors note that it is problematic in nature

• We don’t know much about how group home staff construct and use paperwork in their daily work
References


References


Thank you

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