

Inaugural meeting of the Bowral Mental Health Intellectual Disability Professionals Network

On November 15 2016, colleagues from a number of government and non-government agencies came together to explore the value of forming a network of professionals working to promote the mental health and well being of individuals with an intellectual disability. The group was co-convened by Claudia Tapia, Behaviour Support Specialist (Psychologist), Behaviour Support Team, Quality & Reform, ADHC, and Katelynd Turner, Senior Practitioner, Person Centred Behaviour Support, Client Programs Northcott. Support for the initiative was also provided by Angela Miller, Project Officer, Mental Health Professionals Network Ltd.

A number of organisations and agencies were represented at the meeting including The Disability Trust, Life Without Barriers, St Vincent de Paul, Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc, Child Youth and Family Services, NSW Health, Department of Education, and Family and Community Services. The range of professional backgrounds included psychology, special education, social work, speech pathology, mental health nursing, and social sciences. There was also significant operational and management experience in the room.

The first presentation of the day was delivered by Lesley Watson and Donna White, Statewide Behaviour Intervention Service (SBIS), ADHC, and Jodie Caruana, School Link Co-ordinator, Children's Hospital at Westmead. The presentation outlined the work of the Developmental Psychiatry Partnership, including the outcomes of recent collaboration and shared plans for the coming year. The afternoon was spent discussing the Terms of Reference for the Network and the schedule of meetings for 2017.

It was exciting to sit in a room of professionals so keen to work together, share ideas and promote the growth of knowledge and skills particular to working with individuals with intellectual disability and mental health issues. Developing a sustainability strategy to ensure the Network remains viable into the future will remain a priority in 2017. Groups of professionals such as the Bowral MHID Professionals Network will be critical sources of learning and support as we transition to the NDIS.

