

# PLANNING PROCESSES IN SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY AREA HEALTH SERVICE

## 1. Introduction

In February 1997, the Division of Planning in SWSAHS released guidelines, *The Process of Planning in the SWSAHS*. These guidelines concentrated on business and services planning and included a proforma to assist in the preparation of plans at the Area Health Service and Sector levels.

Since that time, a number of changes have occurred which need to be reflected in the guidelines. This is consistent with ongoing changes in the organisation, delivery and funding of health services. A well integrated and robust planning process assists in meeting these challenges and provides the ability to respond appropriately and in a timely fashion to such changes.

NSW Health released the *Strategic Directions for Health 1998-2003 in 1998*. This document is the overarching planning framework for NSW Health and articulates the need for achievement of agreed goals through building commitment to a common purpose, **Better Health, Good Health Care**, and facilitating a clear and shared direction.

SWSAHS has also adopted this common purpose and has developed a *Strategic Directions Statement and Implementation Plan 1998-2003*. This identifies the seven key challenges that SWSAHS must meet over the next five years if our purpose is to be achieved.

These guidelines reflect this strategic framework, update *The Process of Planning in the SWSAHS* and reflect the roles and responsibilities identified in the *Guidelines for Planning in NSW Health 1998*. These guidelines have been developed to provide an overview of the process of planning and to identify the various types of plans and their links.

A health improvement/services planning kit has been developed which provides more detailed information regarding the requirements for health improvement/service planning in SWSAHS and how to develop such plans.

## 2. The Planning Process

Planning is a reasonably generic process. Steps in the planning process that lead to production of a plan include:

- Identification of the issue/s;
- Gathering of relevant data;
- Analysing the data;
- Development of options to address the issues identified;
- Evaluation of options against agreed criteria;
- Selecting a preferred option;

- Developing and documenting implementation strategies, including prioritisation of strategies, timeframes, accountabilities, resources and performance indicators.

Following development of any plan, the following steps occur:

1. Implementing the strategies;
2. Monitoring and reviewing performance and reporting on outcomes.

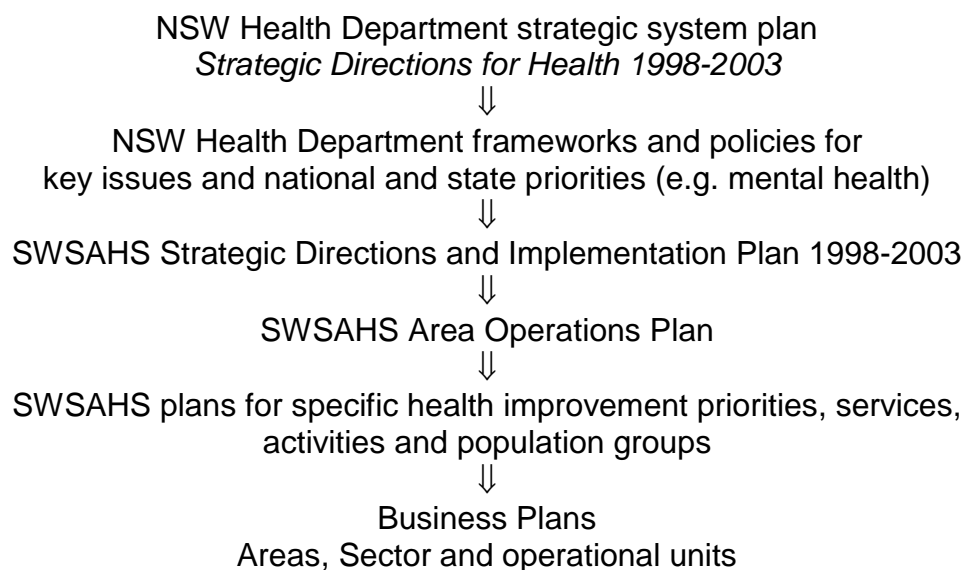
Consultation and stakeholder involvement are integral to all parts of the planning process. Plans developed in isolation risk failure through wasting resources on inappropriate actions and losing support at the operational level. Key stakeholders will change according to the type of planning and may include:

- The community as a whole;
- Service users;
- Community organisations and health interest groups;
- Staff;
- Primary health care providers such as general practitioners, dentists, nurses and pharmacists;
- Visiting Medical Officers and other specialists;
- Private sector providers and contractors;
- Other government and non government organisations;
- Health professional organisations and unions;
- Research institutes and educational institutions.

Ongoing evaluation and review enables revision and refinement of any plan and its implementation strategies.

### **3. Levels of Planning**

Planning takes place at all levels in the health system and varies accordingly in its scope, focus and approach. The following summarises the levels of planning:



The Department of Health develops a Performance Agreement between the SWSAHS Board and the Director-General. This process commenced in 1996/97. Performance Agreements are an accountability tool and should ideally flow from the planning processes of both the Department and SWSAHS. The Agreement is a mechanism to monitor and evaluate performance and only captures key items from which overall performance can be considered.

This process has been extensively reviewed since its commencement and it is anticipated that the Performance Agreement will assist to implement the SWSAHS Strategic Directions Statement which is then reflected in Area and Sector Business Plans, i.e. there should be no difference between the Performance Agreement and a Business Plan.

#### **4. The Purpose of Planning in SWSAHS**

SWSAHS has adopted **Better Health, Good Health Care** as the purpose of the Area. Planning is therefore directed at enabling SWSAHS to achieve better health for its people as a whole and maximising the benefit for the whole population by achieving the best use of resources available to the Area.

As a core function of SWSAHS is to determine which services can provide the most benefit within available resources, prioritisation and a focus on outcomes are essential elements of the planning process.

SWSAHS has adopted four prioritisation criteria to assist in decision making. These are:

1. Equity
2. Efficiency
3. Effectiveness
4. Acceptability

These criteria assist at all levels in the planning process, including determining the relative priority of the issue/s, identification of the preferred option and the priority of proposed implementation strategies.

#### **5. The Planning Hierarchy**

There is a significant amount of planning undertaken at all levels in the health system. The following section summarises major planning activities in the system.

##### **5.1 NSW Health *Strategic Directions for Health***

The NSW Health *Strategic Directions for Health* is the highest level, overarching planning statement of NSW Health. The *Strategic Directions for Health* outlines the purpose, goals, capabilities and strategies that will provide NSW Health with a clear direction for an initial five year period.

The primary focus of *Strategic Directions for Health* is to ensure a common perspective and understanding of these issues through the system and to sustain a high level of commitment to the achievement of **Better Health, Good Health Care**. This document provides the framework within which all other plans in the health system should be developed, reviewed and refined.

The four goals set out in *Strategic Directions for Health* are:

- Healthier People
- Fairer Access
- Quality Health Care
- Better Value

These goals should be achieved by building on the following capabilities:

- Sharing a clear direction
- Skilled, valued workforce;
- Engaging the community;
- Working partnerships;
- Informed decision making; and
- Embracing innovation.

This document sets out the vision for where NSW Health wants to be by 2003 for each of the four goals and six capabilities and strategies on how to get there.

## **Responsibility**

Achieving the *Strategic Directions for Health* is the responsibility of the Director-General and the health system's Senior Executive.

## **5.2 SWSAHS Strategic Directions Statement and Implementation Plan 1998-2003**

The *Strategic Directions Statement* represents SWSAHS's view of the future direction for the Area. As such, it considers *the Strategic Directions for Health 1998-2003* and the key challenges identified by SWSAHS reflect the need to develop the capabilities identified as being required to achieve **Better Health, Good Health Care**.

The Plan also considers the progress SWS has made in regard to the issues particular to the Area's population and the stage of maturity the organisation has reached over the last ten years. The document sets the direction across the whole of the organisation and outlines the desired outcome for 2003.

SWSAHS has identified the following major issues or key challenges as most likely to have the most impact on SWSAHS over the next five years. These are:

## **Key Challenges:**

1. Working with our community and staff to develop a shared sense of responsibility and direction;
2. Working in partnership with other agencies to improve health;
3. Ensuring that people in SWS access health services according to need;
4. Making the best use of and fairly allocating existing and incoming resources;
5. Developing effective and efficient health services, which focus on improved health outcomes;
6. Attracting, developing and retaining the best staff; and
7. Becoming a learning/teaching organisation.

These key challenges need to be reflected in all planning undertaken in SWSAHS and strategies identified in any planning process should be linked to the achievement of these challenges.

SWSAHS's *Strategic Directions Statement* mirrors the *Strategic Directions for Health* in setting out a vision of reach challenge and a set of strategies to get there. The strategies are listed in the section titled "Implementation Plan" in the *Strategic Directions Statement*.

## **Responsibility**

Area Health Service Senior executive and Sector General Managers.

### **5.3 Area Operations Plan**

The Area Operations Plan outlines the whole of Area approach to the most effective and efficient mix, level and distribution of services required for SWSAHS's population health needs and to improve their health status. The purpose of the Plan is to assist in achieving equity, efficiency, effectiveness and acceptability for SWSAHS.

The Area Operations Plan has been developed in the context of local population health issues and agreed priority areas requiring action.

## **Responsibility**

Area Health Service Senior Executive and Sector General Managers.

### **5.4 Specific Health Improvement/Service Plans**

Specific health improvement/service plans should be developed within the context of the *SWSAHS Strategic Directions for Health 1998-2003*. The purpose of these plans is to provide a clear direction for the provision of health services that meet the needs of a specific population for a stated planning period and achieves measurable health improvements and outcomes.

These plans may focus on:

- A particular **population** group, such as Aboriginal people or children;
- A particular **health issue**, such as mental health or coronary heart disease;
- A particular **type of service**, such as surgery, allied health or catering.

The planning for services is generally for a 3 to 5 year period. The plan should consider factors that affect the demand for and supply of health services in the selected time period. This would include: demographic factors; morbidity and mortality trends; the affect on priority stakeholders; current and expected patterns of service utilisation; financial, human and physical resources availability.

These plans outline the preferred service response and provide a description of the appropriate level, mix, volume and distribution of services to provide integrated, accessible, comprehensive, cost-effective and efficient services.

While plans may be developed at a number of levels in SWSAHS, plans should take an Area-wide approach. For example, this could involve opportunities for networking across Sectors in the Area Health Service.

As all service planning should ultimately be directed at achieving health improvement, these two processes should not be seen as discreet exercises. Rather, the development of a clear focus on health outcome should be seen as an extension of services planning and assist in the consideration of proposed options and development and selection of strategies which are cost-effective and have been shown to have health benefit.

#### **5.4.1 Impact Statements in Plans for Population Sub Groups**

A key element of these plans is the inclusion of an impact statement to ensure that the implications for particular stakeholders of SWS are considered when undertaking planning in the Area Health Service. These include:

- People of NESB/ESB background (including the effect on the Area Interpreter Service);
- People with disabilities;
- Aboriginal people;
- Older people;
- Young people;
- Women and
- Children.

These groups have also been identified as Mandatory Target Groups in Local Government Social Plans.

Plans should include specific information in relation to these groups and identify the impact on these groups in regard to the particular service area being

considered both in regard to the seven key challenges but also the criteria of equity, efficiency, effectiveness and acceptability.

#### **5.4.2 Other Corporate Impacts of Plans**

The resource implications of strategies proposed in any plan need to be identified as these are the critical elements in successful implementation. Resources may include human, financial, asset and information management and technology (IM&T). For example, a plan may require workforce changes, which means that Human Resource strategies need to be developed. Similarly, there may need to be specific information requirements to implement and monitor strategies that require IM&T strategies or asset developments to support changes in service delivery.

#### **5.4.3 Impacts on Other Agencies and Providers**

Another important aspect of the development of these plans is the identification and building on of linkages to other planning occurring in south western Sydney. This may include the following:

- Plans by other Human Service Agencies such as Community Services, Ageing and Disability, Housing, Education and Training and Juvenile Justice;
- Local Government Social Plans;
- Community Agencies' Plans;
- Division of General Practice Business Plans;
- Non Government Organisations.

This is an important aspect because consultations may already have been undertaken which can inform health planning, while successful implementation of many strategies will involve other state and local Government agencies and non government organisations, community groups and other providers.

A Planning Kit has been developed and is available from the Division of Planning to assist in undertaking health improvement/service planning.

### **Responsibility**

SWSAHS Advisory Committees, such as Cancer, Stroke, Injury and Family and Child Health and SWSAHS units such as Population Health and the Division of Planning, Sectors, hospital, community and operational units.

## **5.5 Business Plans**

Business plans describe the operational intentions of identified administrative groupings for each financial year. In general, they present information on goals, detailed strategies, targets, accountabilities and performance measures. Business plans are prepared at various levels in the system and integrate unit and organisational activities and priorities with strategic and service plans.

Business plans are prepared annually and are closely linked with financial and human resources planning. They also form the basis of the performance agreement for the senior management of SWSAHS and the Sector Health Services.

### **Responsibility**

Preparation of business plans is the responsibility of each level of management in the system and should be finalised close to the beginning of each financial year.

## **5.6 Human Resources Strategic Plan**

The Human Resources strategic plan determines the skills and training requirement for the provision of health services. It is concerned with developing strategies within the Area Health Services and with external agencies such as universities and professional organisations. The plan provides human resource strategies to support Area and Sector goals.

### **Responsibility**

SWSAHS and Sector Health Services.

## **5.7 Asset Strategic Plan (ASP)**

Asset management is concerned with the provision and maintenance of the assets and infrastructure that supports SWSAHS's overall business. As part of Government policy regarding Total Asset Management, agencies are required by NSW Treasury to develop an ASP.

SWSAHS's ASP is based on health improvement/service delivery plans. An ASP is aimed at optimising the use of SWSAHS's physical assets in meeting the current and projected health needs of its catchment population.

The strategies presented in an ASP should address three issues:

### **(i) Capital Investment**

This identifies the capital projects required to fill any gap between available assets and those required to meet changed services needs, as described and substantiated in the SWSAHS clinical service plan(s).

Progress of capital works planning as detailed in *DS-1: Process of Facility Planning*, including Procurement Feasibility Plans and Project Definition Plans, occurs when the project has received the appropriate approvals.

### **(ii) Asset Maintenance**

This plan identifies the routine preventative maintenance, repairs and replacement necessary to ensure that the assets upon which service delivery depends are available, safe, reliable and efficient.

### **(iii) Asset Disposal**

Disposal of surplus assets has a number of potential benefits including providing funds for capital investment and the maintenance of other assets and reducing total maintenance costs.

### **Responsibility**

SWSAHS through the Division of Physical Resources and Division of Planning with support from the Department of Health.

## **5.8 Financial Plans**

Financial planning is inherent in most management activities undertaken within the health system. It is primarily concerned with identifying the sources and application of funds, with the aim of achieving value for money, that is, maximising outputs and/or outcomes for a given range of inputs. In addressing these issues, financial planning should take into account issues of relative need, equity, efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness.

The financial allocation to SWSAHS is informed by the Resource Distribution Formula (RDF). Budget development in SWSAHS is a process that is informed by the Department of Health funding allocation to the Area and involves two way discussions between the Sectors and Units and the Area to determine the budget allocation.

Linking of plans to the State, NSW Health and SWSAHS Budget planning cycle is very important.

### **Responsibility**

Financial planning occurs at Department, Area Health Service, Sector, hospital, community and operational units.

## **5.9 Information Management and Technology Plan**

Information service planning determines the future development of both information technology and information systems required for effective health system operation. The SWSAHS plan provides strategies to support Area and Sector key challenges.

### **Responsibility:**

SWSAHS Information Services Department and Sector Health Services.