

Monday, 14 February 2022

## **T2H investigation completed; recommendations made**

The Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) has today released a public summary about an investigation into Transition to Home (T2H).

T2H is a step-down service for people with a disability operated by the South Australian Department of Human Services (DHS).

The investigation stems from a complaint received by the HCSCC that raised serious concerns about the treatment and care of a consumer at T2H.

HCSCC Associate Professor Grant Davies said the investigation found serious failings in the care of the consumer.

“I am disappointed that the care of a consumer living with a disability is again under scrutiny,” Associate Professor Davies said.

“The public summary clearly outlines failings in hygiene, wound care and weight monitoring and how they led to a situation that should have been avoided.

“I have made 13 recommendations in the report aimed at ensuring consumers are being adequately cared for, that all of their needs are being met, that their care plan is being followed and to take immediate remedial action if they are not.

“I am pleased these recommendations are being taken seriously by DHS and either have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. This should avoid the type of situation happening in the future.”

Associate Professor Davies added he hoped the public summary will be read by other service providers offering similar services as the ones identified in the report.

“This gives them a chance to see the issues which have been identified and provides an opportunity for their own practices to be reviewed,” he said.

“I have to again stress the importance of clear and open communication between everyone involved in a consumer’s care.

“Poor communication led to a poor outcome in this case and this is something that must improve across the entire health and community services sector.

“Finally, I wish to acknowledge the willingness of all the service providers involved in this report to work proactively with my Office.”

DHS is required to provide a progress report on implementation of these recommendations at six and twelve months from publication of the report.

## **Background**

T2H is a stand-alone, short-term, step-down service for people with a disability operated by the South Australian Department of Human Services (DHS). T2H operates two sites. One of these sites was at Hampstead Centre. This site has recently relocated to Semaphore.

T2H is a partnership between DHS and the Department for Health and Wellbeing. T2H supports people with disabilities to discharge from hospital into transitional accommodation until long-term housing is sourced.

In May 2021, as a result of a triple zero call, the South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS) attended to a consumer at T2H's Hampstead Centre site. The consumer had been accommodated at T2H since early May 2021, having transitioned from a Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network facility.

SAAS then made a complaint to the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) about the care and treatment of the consumer.

On 28 June 2021, the HCSCC determined to investigate the complaint pursuant to section 43(1)(b) of the *Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 (SA)*.

The HCSCC has referred the issues about National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) service providers to the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission.

## **Recommendations**

The HCSCC has made the following recommendations:

1. I recommend T2H apologise to the consumer and his family for the inadequate care he received while at T2H.
2. I recommend that hygiene care is assessed on admission for all consumers of T2H in accordance with their needs.
3. I recommend that regular assessment of hygiene needs occurs during consumers' stay at T2H and the care provided to consumers is adjusted accordingly.
4. I recommend that should hygiene care needs exceed those offered at T2H, transfer to a more appropriate setting be arranged as a matter of priority.

5. I recommend T2H review its eligibility criteria to include consideration of the level of a person's disabilities and assistance required to ensure T2H is adequately resourced to meet a person's needs.
6. I recommend T2H review its entry procedure to ensure that when receiving a person, all of the needs of the person are identified and documented, and a documented care plan put in place setting out how the needs will be met and by whom.
7. I recommend T2H ensure a person's supports are in place before agreeing to receiving the client to T2H.
8. I recommend the T2H care plan include a section in the plan titled 'Ongoing Clinical Care' which is used to detail any ongoing clinical care requirements to be undertaken at T2H after a consumer's hospital discharge and document how these will be met and by whom.
9. I recommend T2H assign the function of 'Health Monitor' with the function of conducting regular and documented health and welfare checks of each person admitted to T2H to ensure they are being adequately cared for, that all of their needs are being met, that their nursing care plan is being followed and to take immediate remedial action if they are not.
10. I recommend the T2H Health Monitor function be assigned to someone with clinical nursing training.
11. I recommend the person assigned the T2H Health Monitor function be able to, in consultation with the T2H area manager, appoint another person to carry out the function of Health Monitor in the event of their absence from the workplace.
12. I recommend the person assigned the T2H Health Monitor function conduct documented health and welfare checks within 24 hours of a person first being admitted to T2H, on day three of their admission and then on a weekly basis.
13. I recommend the person assigned the T2H Health Monitor function be authorised to take any action they see fit to immediately remedy any deficiency they see in the care of a person admitted to T2H.

In making these recommendations, the HCSCC acknowledges DHS has implemented a delegated system of checks which address the recommendations we have made.