

## Care Pathways Program Evaluation

### Background

Redkite is a national charity providing essential support to children and young people with cancer (0-24 years) and their families, from hospital to home. Cancer can impact on and disrupt all aspects of personal and family life both during and after treatment. At different periods throughout their cancer experience, some families and young people experience high distress levels or unmet information or psychosocial needs, but **may not actively seek support**.<sup>i</sup> These periods may be when families and young people move from intensive cancer treatment to maintenance therapy; return home from hospital; finish treatment or sadly, face bereavement. Any resulting gaps in psychosocial support can impact negatively on their wellbeing and quality of life.

### The Care Pathways Program

To fill these gaps, Redkite, in partnership with the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital (LCCH), Brisbane<sup>1</sup> developed a Care Pathway Program that would support endorsed referrals to and thereby uptake of<sup>ii</sup> Redkite's Community Based Support (CBS) Program.

An endorsed referral is one that is encouraged and supported by the referring professional, who can describe the potential benefits and normalise service use.

The Care Pathways Program was launched in LCCH (the pilot site) in October 2013. The Program consists of a formal referral process that was jointly developed by Redkite and LCCH and agreements about transition prompts; referral forms; the use of endorsement and about communication after referral.

Until the introduction of the Program and the provision of supporting referral forms, there was no formal referral process (care pathway) from Hospital Based Social Workers (HBSWs) to Redkite CBS to support proactive referrals.

HBSWs can now more readily refer families and young people to Redkite CBS to ensure that they have ongoing support in the community.

*"Link your families [with Redkite] because it will free you up and give you peace of mind."* Interviewee

Figure 1. Care Pathways Program intended outcomes

#### Immediate outcomes

- Systematic, endorsed referral to Redkite is part of regular practice for paediatric hospital oncology Social Workers.
- More families are aware of Redkite services and of the potential benefits for them

#### Intermediate outcomes

- Increased referrals to Redkite from hospital HBSWs and other referrers
- Increased uptake of Redkite services by families and young people who might benefit

#### Long term outcomes

- More children and young people who have been diagnosed with cancer, and their families, are supported seamlessly throughout their cancer experience

<sup>1</sup> Previously the Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane

## Evaluation purpose

### The purpose of the Care Pathways evaluation was to understand:

- if the Care Pathways Program worked to increase uptake of Redkite CBS services
- the factors that influence referrals to Redkite CBS from HBSWs using the Program
- how to respond to the factors influencing referral, how to refine the processes at the LCCH and to inform Program implementation at new sites.

## Evaluation method

We conducted the evaluation from March to July 2015, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data:

- **Qualitative data:** from nine semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from LCCH and Redkite (HBSWs who referred to the CBS program and program managers from LCCH and Redkite).
- **Quantitative data:** from existing program data (analysed to assess the impact of the Care Pathways Program on service uptake at LCCH and across all other paediatric hospitals).

## Limitations

Prior to the implementation of the Program, professional referrals to the CBS Services were not captured in Redkite's database. It was not therefore possible to compare referral rates before and after the implementation of the Program. Instead, service uptake (new users of the CBS service) before and after the implementation of Care Pathways was analysed.

## Evaluation findings

### Program outcomes

The evaluation of the first 18 months of the Program demonstrated a link to increased CBS uptake; identified the factors that influence referrals and the factors likely to impact on successful implementation across multiple new sites.

## Service Uptake

CBS service uptake is the ultimate intended outcome of the Program. The percentage of new individuals accessing Redkite CBS from LCCH increased by **67%** compared to an increase of **35%** at all other paediatric hospital sites.

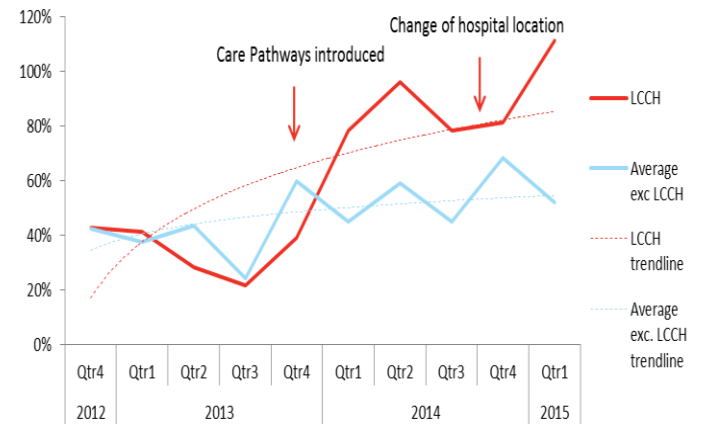


Figure 2. CBS Service uptake as a percentage of new diagnoses. (Uptake numbers may be more than 100% of diagnosis numbers in any quarter due to bulk referrals and/or time lags between diagnoses and referrals and between referrals and uptake.)

## Factors Influencing Referral

Figure 3 illustrates the numerous factors which impacted on referral from LCCH to Redkite CBS.



Figure 3. Factors influencing endorsed referral numbers to Redkite Community Based Support.

## Conclusion

This evaluation found the Care Pathways Program increased the number of families accessing CBS at the pilot site. A number of factors influenced referrals, including strong relationships, support by LCCH managers, use of champions, overcoming practical barriers and HBSW's support for the Program.

*"It's about ensuring ongoing community support. I'm really happy with what this service has to offer these families".*

Interviewee

The Care Pathways Program has provided a pathway to enable HBSWs to refer families and young people to Redkite CBS with the use of endorsed referrals. The use of endorsed referrals is likely to be the main cause of the increase in service uptake (Rankin et al., 2015).

*"Redkite hires qualified, experienced Social Workers and its programs benefit young people and families."*

Interviewee

The experience and understanding gained at the pilot site by the LCCH and Redkite partners will make a significant contribution to Redkite's effective rollout of the Program across other hospitals and organisations.

## Recommendations

In response to these findings, the following top level recommendations have been made:

1. Support implementation at each site with clear communication about program purpose and processes.
2. Build supportive relationships and partnerships and encourage champions in new sites.
3. Support ongoing effective implementation with agreed communication and feedback processes.
4. Maximise comprehensive program effectiveness by working with each site in its unique context.
5. Build and maintain sustainable systems and practices.

6. Demonstrate the value of the Program to HBSWs across each site to ensure that families are supported at critical transition times.
7. Continue support for the Care Pathways Program and measure ongoing outcomes.

## Next steps

The proposed consolidation of the Program at the pilot site and any implementation at new sites will be conducted in partnership with HBSWs and other stakeholders. This extension of the Care Pathways Program will ensure that increasing numbers of families and young people can, if they wish, more readily access Redkite community based support.

*"We enjoyed the opportunity to design a project together, implement it, and have a look more at how our services could work together."*

Interviewee

## More information

For more information about this review, please contact the Redkite Research and Evaluation team by calling **1800 733 548** or emailing [re@redkite.org.au](mailto:re@redkite.org.au)



Redkite is a national charity providing essential support to children and young people with cancer (0-24 years) and their families and support networks.

**1800 REDKITE** (1800 733 548)  
[www.redkite.org.au](http://www.redkite.org.au)

**Note:** When referring to children and young people in this document, this implies that they are diagnosed with cancer or have experienced a cancer diagnosis and are aged between 0-24 years.

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<sup>i</sup> Treadgold, C, (2014). *Key needs of children, young people and families throughout the cancer journey*. Literature Review prepared by Treadgold for Redkite, and Wakefield, CE; McLoone, J; Butow, P; Lenthen, K and Cohn RJ (2013) *European Journal of CancerCare* 22, 530–539. Support after the completion of cancer treatment: perspectives of Australian adolescents and their families.

<sup>ii</sup> Rankin, NM; Butow, PN; Thein, T; Robinson, T; Shaw, JM; Price, MA; Clover, K; Shaw, T; Grimison, P (2015) *Biomed Central Health Services Research*. Everybody wants it done but nobody wants to do it: an exploration of the barriers and enablers of critical components towards creating a clinical pathway for anxiety and depression in cancer.