

Bay of Plenty's improvement plan will have tangible results for people's health December 2016

GP Luke Bradford from Western Bay of Plenty PHO was one of those leading the development of the Bay of Plenty district's System Level Measures improvement plan. He says he was originally sceptical about the approach, but has been won around by its outcomes focus.

"We have been counting numbers for too long, whereas the System Level Measures approach will have tangible results for people's health. Those results are much more difficult to get to – but this actually feels like medicine."

He says it's not enough to, for example, just measure cardiovascular risk – it's about decreasing the number of heart attacks and strokes in your population.

"It makes much more sense, because when you give that ownership back to practices and GPs, they are going to be doing something they believe in. To improve something, you must have the data in the first place so it makes you look at how you are going to improve the data, rather than just staring at the numbers."

The Bay of Plenty Alliance Leadership Team includes clinical and managerial representatives from the Bay of Plenty's three PHOs – Eastern Bay Primary Health Alliance, Nga Mataapuna Oranga PHO and Western Bay of Plenty PHO; and DHB representatives from acute medical, paediatric, surgery, planning and funding and corporate services.

Luke says to develop the System Level Measures improvement plan, alliance members broke into groups, looked at the data and then worked on really 'nailing down' what the plan could look like and what would make the biggest difference.

"Each group presented on what they thought should be in the plan. Western Bay PHO took the lead on amalgamating everything together. Once the plan was drafted, it went to Bay of Plenty DHB planning and funding to add the numbers. For example, with the COPD prevention programme we wanted to introduce, they looked at by how much we wanted to decrease COPD admissions from current baseline.

"After this, the plan went to the Alliance Leadership Group for sign off – made up of the heads of the three PHOs, clinicians and the DHB chief executive, among other senior managers.

"The sign off was fairly straightforward because we'd taken quite a bit of care to get to that point, making sure everybody was on board and it felt collaborative. It was vital local health services bought into the plan, because they are the ones implementing it."

Reducing hospital admissions related to COPD was one of the areas of focus for the plan. The district's age standardised rate of acute hospital bed days per 1000 population was 426, and the alliance set a milestone of a 2.5 percent reduction.

"Addressing COPD admissions is key to this, and we looked at multifaceted approaches," says Luke.

"We considered the data and thought the main thing we could do was decrease the smoking, and do it meaningfully – put in real programmes. Flu vaccinations also come into it – not just for over 65s, but for the other cohorts with co-morbidities.

“And then how do you get people with chronic respiratory conditions to better understand their disease and control it themselves so they have less hospital contact? We are looking to enhance resources to general practice to better manage patients with these conditions in the community and introduce a nurse-led education programme to reduce hospital presentations.”

Luke says the biggest challenge in developing the district’s improvement plan was how everything linked together.

“For example, how we linked in with the Measures Library and put that together with the statistics and the numbers. It’s quite easy for someone like me to say ‘we should do this’, but then someone has to go away and find the evidence and how it is going to work.”

He says only having two months to develop the first plan was also challenging.

“But overall, I’ve enjoyed it and I’ve gone out and presented to general practice groups about what System Level Measures are – what we are trying to achieve.

“It’s year one, and you have to walk before you can run. Some of the really exciting stuff will come in the future – when people get into the idea that there are new core ways of providing care in the community to stop the whole burden of hospital care.”

He says there is growing enthusiasm for the System Level Measures approach. “It works well because it is clinically-led, but in partnership with management to support its development.

“My hope is that this is a shift to something that will have genuine, positive impacts on the health of the population. It really does offer an opportunity.”

The Ministry of Health says the Bay of Plenty district’s improvement plan is one of several ‘exemplar’ plans. The plan can be found [here](#).