PARTY: Tips for youth friendliness from the GP field #4

Today’s tip comes from a PARTY trial pilot practice. Brooke St Medical Centre at Woodend is a practice committed to continuous improvement.

The staff of Brooke St understand that achieving change comes from their shared purpose and vision to care better for young people. In response to their understanding of the barriers to accessing medical services, as young people transition from childhood to adult life, they have made an explicit policy about bulkbilling services for young people where access to money/resources, and conflicts with parents can present difficulties.

This policy may reflect what you do in your practice. What is helpful for sustainability of this policy is that it comes from the vision, is supported by management, is written down, the staff have discussed and agreed that it is appropriate, it is simple to implement, and it removes ambiguity.

Brooke St. Medical Centre
Policy for billing services for young people

*Purpose of the Policy*
Ultimately this policy exists to ensure that young people have access to general practice service without:
- the impediments of financial constraints or
- billing systems that impede confidentiality by alerting others (family members who are billed) to the fact that medical services have been used by the young person.

The policy aims to ensure consistency in billing for service to young people (aged 14-18) who choose to attend the practice without their parents'/guardians’ knowledge.

If young people cannot have confidence in the manner in which they will be billed, it is expected that they will be less likely to use General Practice services.

*The Policy*
Brooke St. Medical Centre services will be bulk billed for young people (14-18 years) who attend BSMC for services without the knowledge of their parents/guardians.

In instances where young people attend with their parents'/guardians’ knowledge, then parents/guardians can take responsibility for payment of services, and normal billing procedures will apply.

In instances where GPs are unable to ascertain whether the young person consents to have their billing done privately through their parent/guardian, the default billing type should be bulk billing.

This example of policy in youth friendliness is worthy of reflection: What youth friendly policies would be appropriate for your clinic? From what vision do they arise? Do all your staff know what the policies are and do they all apply them? Might your care delivery and business operations be improved by having documented youth friendly policies that have been discussed and agreed on by staff?

As always we’d love to help you improve the ways you care for young people. Please let us know if we can help. We’re here, willing and ready to work alongside you.

Andrew McCoy. Please call me on (03)9035.8014.

PARTY acknowledges that as well as supporting our research, Brooke St Medical Centre is committed to quality improvement through their participation in the *Australian Primary Care Collaboratives Program*. 