Collaborating for carers at a grass-roots level

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Historically, activities in the South East Coastal Region of WA that were aimed at carers or people with disabilities were driven by individual agencies and the success of these efforts was often ‘hit and miss’. Also, because there are only a limited number of staff in regional areas, the workload associated with planning and implementing events was usually left to only one or two people. About two years ago, the Carer and Disability Services Working Group was formed in Esperance with several of these agencies coming together to reduce and share this workload. The group has been able to reach a broader range of the community when conducting activities due to their shared networks and contacts. A major challenge for the group, however, was being able to find the funds to cover the costs of running events. Towards the end of 2011, the development of another partnership with Carers WA enabled the group to secure some funding under the ‘Linking Together’ Program for the purpose of running a pilot program that would include a series of events being held in Esperance that would aim to engage with and bring carers together. The group ran four events during the first half of 2012, which were effective in both identifying new carers and also engaging with existing carers. This presentation provides an overview of how the group was established, details of the events and activities that were implemented and how this initiative has supported duplication of similar projects in other regions.