

Improving Sexual Safety in Mental Health Inpatient Units

Victorian mental health inpatient units are partnering with the Mental Health Improvement Program (MHIP) to drive improvements to sexual safety.

The first initiative of its type, participating services are trialling a range of targeted change initiatives to improve sexual safety in inpatient units. The 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended this important work be supported by the MHIP, as part of Safer Care Victoria.

Improving sexual safety includes reducing sexual assault, sexual harassment, or other sexual incidents within mental health inpatient units.

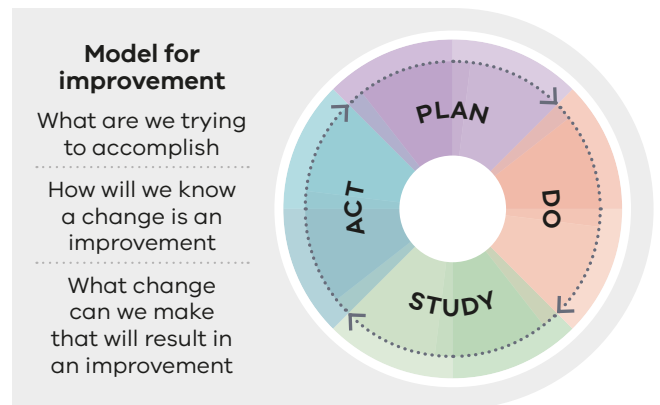
Together with the support of the MHIP, and crucial input from Lived and Living Experience workforce members, participating services are designing and testing changes in real-time to help improve the quality and experience of care and create a safer experience for all Victorians in mental health inpatient units.

What does the initiative aim to do?

This initiative aims to see if participating services succeed in:

- reducing the rate of sexual safety incidents by 20 per cent (per 1,000 bed days) and
- increasing self-reported experience of sexual safety by 20 per cent for consumers, carers, families, supporters, and the workforce.

The MHIP team helps services to design and test improvement within their existing resources and infrastructure of each unique service to support sustainable change.



What changes are being tested?

Teams within services are testing improvements like enhancing safety on wards with clearer and more visible communication on ways to report sexual safety concerns. Examples include teams testing the creation of physical spaces within their units to display information about sexual safety for consumers, carers, and the workforce, as well as additional risk assessments.

Initial reporting and insights from participating services look promising with many changes being welcomed by consumers, their families and the workforce. Capturing ongoing data to evaluate which changes are leading to improved sexual safety in participating services will help further shape the program as it is introduced across the state.



Sensitive content warning

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Trialling improvements in real-time

Trialling of *Sexual Safety Plans* in participating services has anecdotally already made a difference to the experience of consumers and the workforce. An individualised plan for each consumer within 48 hours of admission to an inpatient unit is created. It identifies any issues or vulnerabilities and creates a collaborative plan to support the consumer's safety during their inpatient stay.

Amber O'Brien, MHIP Manager, says participating services designed this improvement and have seen it from idea to implementation.

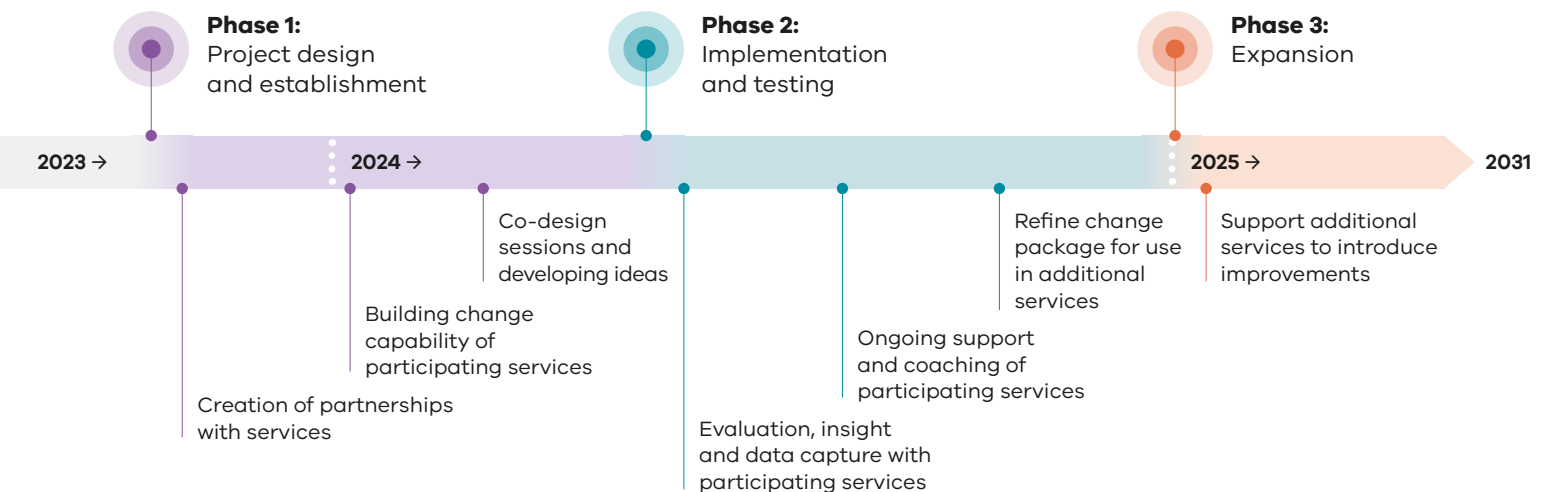
“Despite best efforts, sometimes safety conversations can fall through the gaps. By introducing safety plans within 48 hours of admission and reviewing them at every step of the consumer's care journey, services are helping consumers feel safer and more supported.”

Building on this concept, the MHIP will support services as they trial another sexual safety review at the point in time that a consumer is discharged from an inpatient unit. This plan will stay with the consumer as they enter the next phase of their care through outpatient or community support.

Helping more sites test and introduce key changes

Ahead of partnering with more Victorian inpatient mental health and wellbeing services, the MHIP will continue to build the evidence of what makes a difference toward improving sexual safety in mental health inpatient units.

Continued collection, review and analysis of data throughout the implementation and testing phase of the initiative is ongoing. The findings and insight will inform how new mental health and wellbeing services can best be supported to introduce improvements to their respective inpatient units from 2025.



Questions?

Get in touch at:
mentalhealthimprovement@safercare.vic.gov.au

Visit:
www.safercare.vic.gov.au/MHIP

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<mentalhealthimprovement@safercare.vic.gov.au>

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