

Powerful conversations for lasting change

Improving sexual safety

The Mental Health Improvement Program (MHIP), part of Safer Care Victoria, supported Goulburn Valley Health (GVH) Mental Health Service through some important early conversations as they embarked on reform.

When GVH Mental Health Service initially partnered with the MHIP, one of the first ways they were supported was to have meaningful conversations about sexual safety in their unit.

'Before we started to look at any improvements we could make, we had to have some honest and open conversations as a team,' says Leah Merrigan, Clinical Nurse Consultant at GVH.

'We have a broad cross-section of people in our workforce, and we all agreed sexual safety could be a challenging topic to discuss. Once we began talking about it and having meaningful conversations, we found more of our team wanted to discuss it.'

'There was a willingness to share – our teams felt more comfortable discussing experiences and we began to have some great conversations about how if we found the topic challenging, then so did our consumers.'

Leah said these early conversations were the catalyst for change and the team knew once they had started discussions, the next step was to make changes and trial improvements with support from the MHIP.

'As a team, we found a commitment to wanting to make improvements to sexual safety, both for our workforce and consumers.'

'One of the first improvements we developed and tested came out of our conversations as a team. We developed a shared understanding of what sexual safety means for our service, and we created information posters for both workforce and consumer areas.'



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Mental Health Improvement Program

'The posters provided information on sexual safety and how to report any concerns. They were placed in high traffic areas by design, and this sparked conversation and questions from consumers. This made it important that our team all could confidently explain sexual safety and what the posters were designed to do.'

Leah says at the same time, the team developed a survey using an easy to access QR code to seek feedback on sexual safety in the unit.

'The QR code was shared on our workforce nametags, and we encouraged consumers, their families and carers to respond to three questions that helped us check in on feelings of sexual safety within the unit at any given point.

'Our goal was for each shift was for two consumers to complete it, as well as two of our workforce. We also supported carers to complete it as often as we could. By having the QR codes on nametags, we kept the survey prominent, helping us continue to keep conversations about sexual safety front of mind.

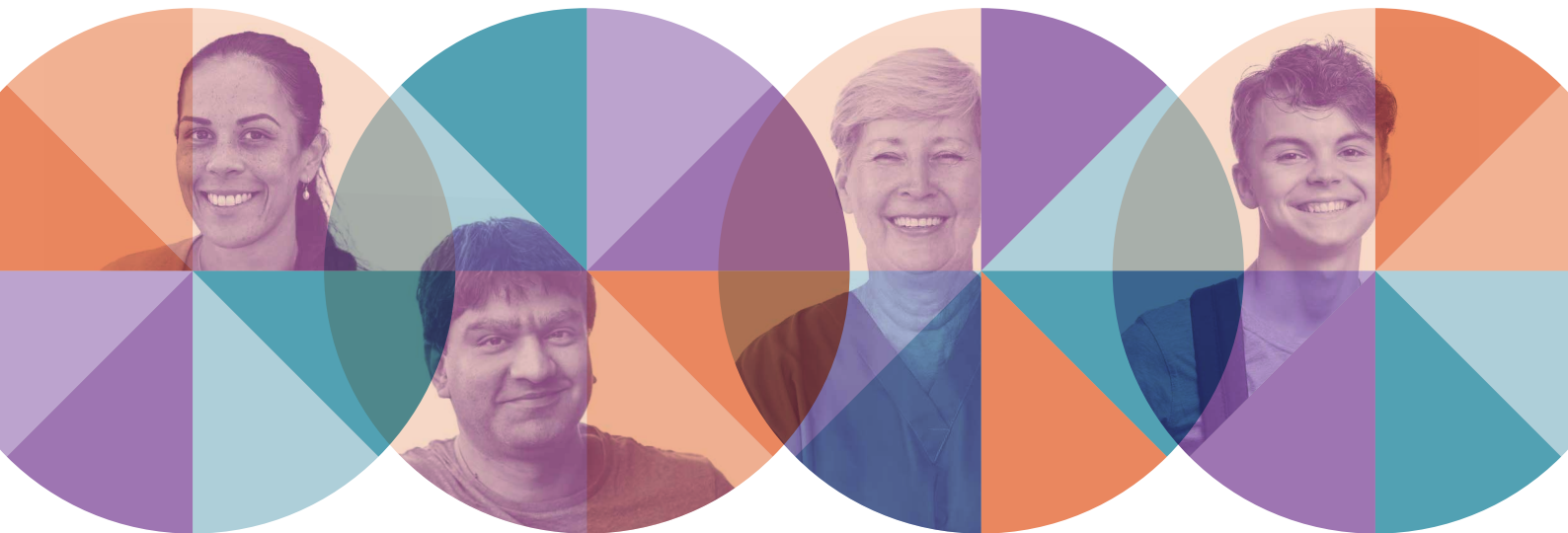
'Both these initiatives have helped us have more meaningful conversations with each other and with our consumers.'

Leah said some of our team had their first exposure to using improvement science to test and adapt changes as they partnered with the MHIP.

'The biggest advantage for us was that this process helped us keep improvements achievable – the timeline to design and test was fairly quick, and it meant that we were able to begin trialing our ideas with momentum.

Leah said the MHIP place importance on making sure Lived and Living Experience workforce are involved in planning and testing changes, which aligned well for GVH.

'We have Lived and Lived Experience workforce members as part of our unit and they played a key role in us shaping our conversations and part of our team working on improving sexual safety.'



Questions?

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.
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