

PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS (PWID) AND POLICE WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE HARM REDUCTION AND REDUCE DRUG RELATED ARRESTS

Mark Goodhew^{1,2}, Raquel Porter¹, Robert Mason¹, Jane Stein-Parbury², Angela Dawson²

¹Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre, NSW, ²University of Technology, Sydney, NSW

Introduction: Consumer participation refers to consumers being actively and meaningfully involved in decision-making about health policy, planning, service delivery and treatment. This presentation reports selected findings from a project that aims to increase consumers' insights and involvement in service delivery at the Sydney Medically Supervised Centre (MSIC). The project involves a group of eight consumers and five staff who meet every three weeks to discuss how MSIC service delivery can better engage consumers to address their needs.

Methods: Participatory action research (PAR) was employed to help meet the projects' aims, as this methodology uses reflective cycles to systematically investigate issues that directly impact marginalised groups and allows the participants to be equally involved in the research process. This presentation will focus on one PAR cycle concerning negative interactions between police and consumers outside the MSIC premises and how this can prevent consumers attending MSIC.

Results: The group recommended that a dedicated police liaison officer position be created that was subsequently honoured by the Police. The group have met with the liaison officer to discuss how they can work together, in particular how to raise awareness of the importance of harm reduction, the humane treatment of PWID and the use of discretion when making decisions about arrest. The group realises that patience is required, as it will take time for relationships with the police to change.

Discussions: This study highlighted that it is possible for PWID and the police to work in partnership to promote harm reduction and to potentially reduce drug related arrests.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: No disclosure of interests to declare.