

People who inject drugs and police working in partnership to promote harm reduction and reduce drug related arrests

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Background

- MSIC commenced a consumer action group (CAG) in June 2015 to incorporate the consumers' voice into MSIC service delivery and planning.
- Consumer participation occurs when consumers are actively and 'meaningfully involved in decision-making about health policy and planning, care and treatment, and the wellbeing of themselves and their community' (ACT Government Health 2011 p 7).
- Studies highlight that consumer participant can contribute to improved drug treatment service delivery. However, studies also report that consumers' lifestyles constrain their ability to successfully contribute.



Methodology

- Participatory action research (PAR) involves cycles of planning, action, observing and reflection
- Participants are considered co-researchers, it is a democratic process and has the potential to empower marginalised groups.
- The CAG consists of eight consumers and five staff members and who meet every three weeks to discuss issues that were important to MSIC consumers.



Planning and Action

- Frustration about police searching consumers in close proximity of MSIC was discussed and this problem was thought too hard to tackle.
- MSIC management spoke with the Local Area Police Commander and were able to create a MSIC Police Liaison Officer, as an avenue of redress about police complaints.
- The CAG arranged a meeting with the police to discuss reducing searches close to MSIC.



Observing

- The CAG were organised, professional and where able to suppress heightened emotions and show the police they are not inherently bad people. The CAG suggested a MSIC ID card and educating police as ways of reducing searches.
- The Police Liaison Officer said he was happy to work in partnership and educate officers about about their powers of discretion when making decisions to search and arrest.
- There was an atmosphere of good will at the end of the meeting.

Tristan's Reflections

- The group has come a long way with their relationship with the police, but we still have a long way to go.
- On reflection I feel it is more productive to speak in a positive and polite manner to the police.
- Speaking in a positive manner will help the police see that I am intelligent, thoughtful, artistic and community minded person.