

Health Roundtable

Innovation Showcase

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Disability Liaison Services in the Emergency Department – Supporting Patients with Hidden Disability

Alfred Health

AlfredHealth

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Key Problem



Patients who are autistic, have communication disability, and intellectual disability

Experience Inequities in their health care

Experience a greater number of adverse events

Can have poor patient experiences in the emergency department

Aim of this Innovation

Rapid Response

- Aim for an immediate response: within 2 hours of referral

Secondary Consult

- Aim to deliver services where there is a currently a gap
Work with existing supports such as nursing, medical and allied health staff



Current Situation

- Co-design process was used to determine the challenges experienced by patients with disability (PWD)
- Patients told us that they have experienced stress and trauma in the emergency department when their disability needs were not met
- Evaluation surveys and interviews with people with disability and healthcare workers

48% of HCWs have no access to/don't know about existing disability resources in the hospital

31% of AH staff had some training that helped them work with PWD

47% felt confident working with or providing healthcare to an autistic person, a person with an intellectual disability or communication disability.

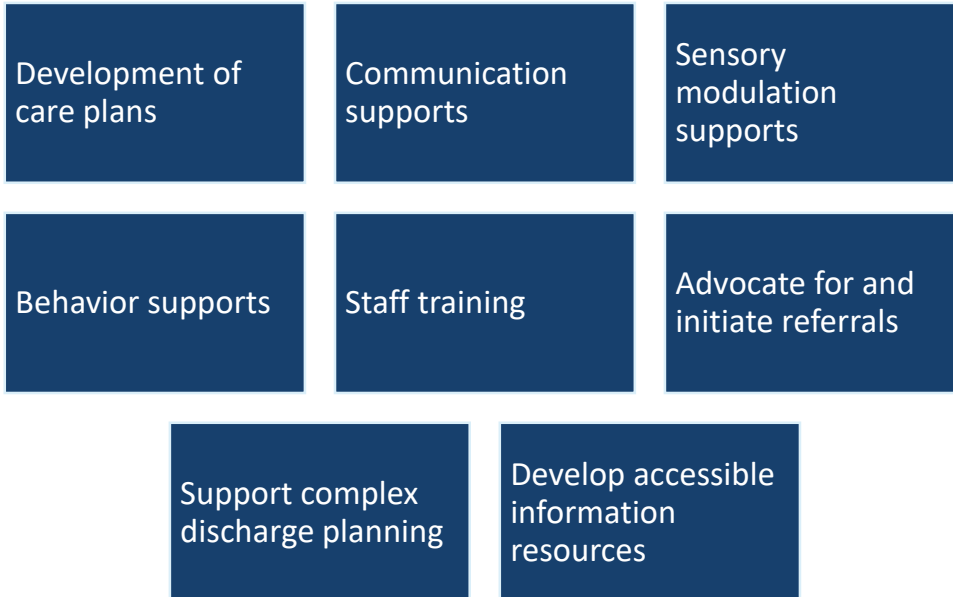




Key Changes Implemented

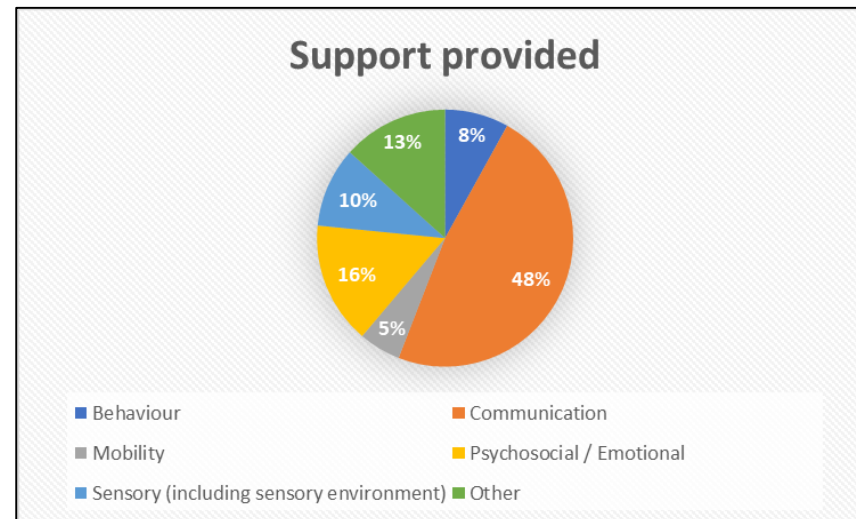
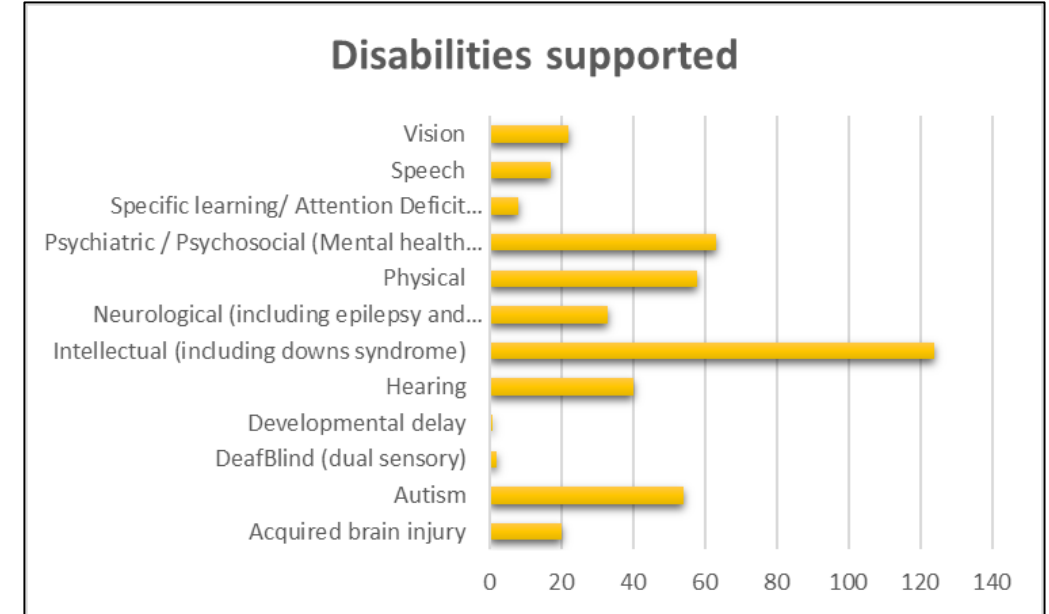
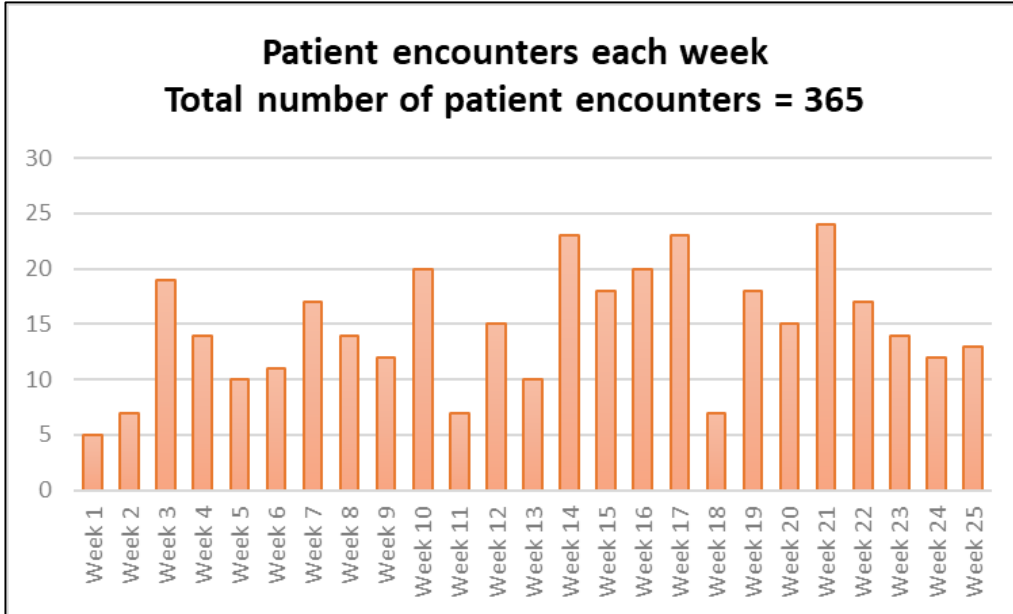
Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) service 7 days per week, on site during business hours and after hours on call.

DLO to provide services such as -





Outcomes so far





Outcomes so far



"I was experiencing heart palpitations. I am deaf. Upon telling the staff I couldn't hear I was thrilled to be warmly greeted by the DLO your disability liaison person. I want to let you know what a wonderful kind and understanding girl she was. She went out of her way to inform all the people I came in contact with that I was hearing impaired. Every day is obviously difficult with my disability, and I expected the worst when I decided to go to hospital. How wrong I was. She is an Angel"

Participant with lived experience of Deafness



"Hi all, I just wanted to say how FANTASTIC the DLO service was this morning! The DLO this morning went above and beyond to support the patient. EPS were pretty busy this morning, and **without the DLO, I anticipate there would have been multiple code greys called for the patient.** The DLO quickly put together some strategies that we could use with the patient and ensured everyone who was involved in his care (Nurses/EPS/NDIS) were aware of the plan. Patient's behaviour settled significantly due to this service/intervention and he went happily off for his apt!"

Healthcare Worker





Lessons Learnt

- DLO's are playing a significant role in identifying barriers to accessible healthcare, employing reasonable adjustments and promoting respectful and timely communication
- DLO's are improving patient experience
- There is demand! 365 patient encounters between October and March 2023
- DLO role has been embraced and welcomed in the emergency department – medical model and social model can co-exist!

“It's been a privilege to be involved in many discussions/referrals and to see the amazing work the DLO's do to identify barriers, provide essential information, care planning, accessibility and create meaningful connections to improve our patient experiences within ED” *Healthcare worker*



Innovation Summary Slide



Title: Disability Liaison Services in the Emergency department – Supporting Patients with Hidden Disability

Health Service: Alfred Health

Problem	Poor patient experiences in emergency departments of people with hidden disabilities such as intellectual disability, autism and other communication disabilities.
Solution	<p>Rapid response disability liaison service within the emergency department. Servicing people with disability 7 days per week.</p> <p>DLO's support patient's by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing care plans • Employing communication supports • Employing sensory and behaviour support strategies • Training staff • Supporting complex discharge planning • Development of accessible resources • Improving health literacy
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved patient experience for people with disability who access the emergency department • Increase in the capability of all staff to support patients with disability • Sustained and growing demand for the service



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