



VICTORIA POLICE

Leadership and good practice

Presentation to the International Conference on Law Enforcement & Public Health

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Defining the problem



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Health issues can bring people into **contact with police, repeatedly**

Police interventions are limited to:

- Referring with consent
- Arranging a health assessment as part of police procedures
eg. for a person detained in a police cell
- Using a legislative power to refer without consent
eg. under the Mental Health Act 1986

Access to health services limited, fragmented, time-consuming, frustrating

Shared knowledge of service systems, common clients, responses poor

Responses often episodic, incident-focused, uncoordinated, unplanned

Designing the solutions



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Health support is critical for improving policing outcomes

Evidence of good practice is essential as the risks of change are high

→ Frontline personnel seeking better ways of responding collaboratively

→ **SupportLink** to electronically refer consenting clients directly to services

Trial underway state-wide in partnership with an NGO & community services

→ **PACER** to respond to mental health crises in the community

Trialled in 3 locations over the last 3 years in partnership with local health services

→ **PACT** to assess clients with complex needs, refer & support engagement

Trial underway in 1 location in partnership with a local health service & community services

Implementing and sustaining the change



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Frontline provided the initiative, staff, word of mouth

Local management provided support, resources, oversight

Corporate management provided coordination, direction, planning

Police liaised with Health at every level

Resources had to be found from multiple sources

Changes were made throughout the trials in response to circumstances

Evaluation had to be commissioned and committed to as the basis for decision-making about the future

Leadership lessons



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- ▶ Leadership is important at all levels – too often change is top-down
- ▶ Two way communication is essential – perspectives of the problem and the solutions differs at each level
- ▶ Leadership has to focus on possible future requirements at the outset – even for local initiatives
- ▶ The benefits of change need to be evident and relevant to all participants
- ▶ Senior leadership is critical for providing public support for the frontline and local managers to take a risk on change