

More than an app: Co-designing digital alcohol interventions for equity and impact

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Background. Digital tools have transformed access to alcohol and other drug (AOD) support, but most are not designed with or for the communities they aim to serve. Hello Sunday Morning (HSM), Australia's largest digital alcohol behaviour change service, has pioneered a co-design-driven model across all stages of program development and delivery, with people with lived and living experience (LLE) embedded in governance, design and evaluation.

Description of model care. All HSM services, including the Daybreak app, Drink Tracker, Hello Change, and Care Navigator, are co-designed with input from HSM's Consumer Advisors. These lived experience advisors provide strategic and operational guidance and co-develop features, policy and research frameworks. HSM also embeds lived experience in its Research Reference Group, ensuring diverse perspectives shape what is studied, how findings are interpreted and how change is implemented.

Effectiveness. This co-design model has improved accessibility, relevance and engagement, particularly for women, regional Australians and those with dual AOD and mental health concerns. Daybreak shows measurable reductions in alcohol consumption and psychological distress, while qualitative feedback highlights the importance of cultural safety, anonymity and user-informed content. The co-design approach has also improved system responsiveness and helped identify service gaps, such as tailored feeds and gendered safe spaces.

Conclusion and next steps. Embedding lived experience in digital service ecosystems is not tokenism, it is core to equity, engagement and impact. HSM's model demonstrates how digital AOD interventions can move beyond one-size-fits-all designs to offer personalised, community informed support.

Implications for Practice. Co-design must be resourced and structured if digital health is to fulfil its promise. Service funders and commissioners should mandate LLE integration from design through to evaluation and organisations must build the governance structures needed to support meaningful participation.

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