Getting the truth about our drug and alcohol and mental health services from people who access both, informs improved collaboration between services.

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Background: A strong collaboration has been developed between Mental Health (MH) and Drug and Alcohol (D&A) Services in South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. Clients/consumers have been involved throughout the process, in committees, focus groups and Design Thinking labs that have informed service delivery and strengthened collaborative care.

An annual joint forum brings together staff from both services to reflect on achievements and further develop the collaboration. However, incorporating consumer and carer perspectives into the forum has been limited by their reluctance to speak before large audiences, highlighting the need for alternative approaches.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:
Consumers and carers were offered the option of providing feedback through pre-recorded video interviews or written reflections regarding their experiences with MH and D&A services. This approach enabled participants to share their experiences openly in a format that felt safe and comfortable.

Some of the participants who contributed through video recordings, also chose to attend the forum in-person to answer questions and provide further reflections.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: Carers and people with lived/living experience responded to the opportunity to provide feedback via video. The process enabled authentic accounts of experiences with MH and D&A services to be shared in a way that was accessible, respectful, and psychologically safe.

Conclusion and Next Steps:
The initiative enabled clinicians, managers, and executive staff to hear directly from consumers and carers about their experiences of care, providing valuable opportunities for reflection, service review, and practice improvement.

Selected extracts from the video will be shown during the presentation.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities:
Alternative and culturally safe approaches to incorporating consumer and carer voices can strengthen service design and delivery, particularly for First Nations peoples and other priority populations.

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