

Smokefree Insights from Basil Fernandes

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Studies have shown that, along with a range of other poor health factors, people with mental illness smoke more than other groups. We all know the damage that smoking can do to people's health, and as a health service provider, Pathways believes that doing nothing about this would be irresponsible.

One of the first steps Pathways took was to make a clear and purposeful decision to be Smokefree and to then communicate that intent widely and often as possible. Convincing staff that this was a critical direction we were taking helped us to get the organisation ready for smoking change. We found celebrations and rewards for stopping smoking have been very useful in promoting smoking cessation and used many peoples stories of quitting as inspiration for others to start.

Pathways expects all health professionals to become smoking cessation practitioners and has a Smokefree e-learning module as compulsory training for all staff.

We have seen many people using services pair together or with staff to provide support to each other and stop smoking together. We have often formalised this approach and 'buddied' people up between services within the organisation.

It's been recognised that people stop or reduce the amount they smoke by developing short and long term goals and working towards those. Common goals include health improvement, lower medication levels (such as clozapine) and saving money.

Reducing clozapine levels is a big factor in the decision to stop smoking for some people. During this time their key workers keep in close contact with the clinical teams about the progress being made in order to monitor the medication levels.

Pathways celebrates World Smokefree Day every year and last year held a theme month on Smokefree and wellness where the organisation focused on strengthening our Smokefree strategy. Quiz and spot prizes were included with the key focus on sharing ideas and stories about smoking cessation.

We provide NRT and smoking cessation support and celebrate with people, rewarding them when they've been smokefree for significant period of time. Exercise and yoga sessions, counselling and motivational interviewing are useful to help smokers who wish to reduce the amount they smoke or stop smoking.

All our work environments are Smokefree