West Gippsland Healthcare Group case study

Developing health literacy

The Chronic Care Model element highlighted in this case study is **self-management support**.

Effective self-management support can help individuals and their families cope with the physical, social and psychological challenges of living with, and managing, a chronic condition. Access to information is an essential component of this.

**Background**

After attending a health literacy forum provided by the Gippsland Primary Care Partnerships in 2012, West Gippsland Healthcare Group realised they needed to increase health literacy awareness in their organisation to improve effective communication and to support consumers to make more informed decisions about their health care.

**What they did**

West Gippsland Healthcare Group developed an action plan for raising health literacy awareness in their organisation, which included:

- health literacy awareness training for senior management and executives
- development of an education package for existing and new staff
- roll out and promotion of the health literacy training package to all staff
- embedding health literacy principles into the organisation's protocol for written health information.

Following the success of these activities, in 2014 the West Gippsland Healthcare Group executive approved participation in the Gippsland Primary Care Partnership project to become a health literate organisation.

This has resulted in the organisation:

- undertaking a comprehensive organisational self-assessment to develop an organisational approach to improving health literacy
- forming a health literacy working group to review the organisational self-assessment results, identify improvements needed and drive health literacy improvements in the organisation
- embedding health literacy training into the organisation's processes to ensure that all staff receive training in this area. A training package is available online for all staff and is promoted through email and managers. Introduction to the training packages is part of the orientation program for new staff, which is followed up with a reminder letter from executive asking staff to complete the training.

**Outcomes**

All in-house written materials are now developed using health literacy guidelines and tools. Existing documents are being reviewed and revised to ensure they meet the health literacy guidelines. Online documents such as fact sheets that meet health literacy standards are also being actively encouraged.

Currently 251 staff members have completed the health literacy training package. Most people (68 per cent) indicated that they would change the way they worked with consumers following this training, and another 25 per cent thought it would possibly have this effect.
People who undertook training indicated it had increased their knowledge of health literacy greatly (32 per cent) or moderately (39 per cent).

The health literacy working group continues to review the action plan and address areas requiring attention in order to meet benchmarks identified through the organisational self-assessment.

Currently West Gippsland Healthcare Group is developing a health literacy policy.