



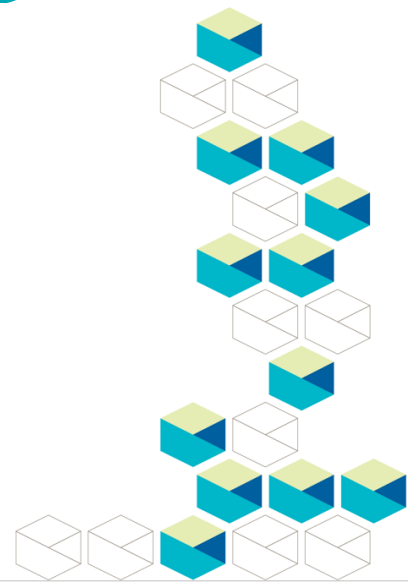
## How to train 1000 frontline hospital staff in **Hidden Disability.**

**Stephanie Coates**

**BSc(OT) MMedSci**

Head of Department, Occupational Therapy

*No financial disclosures.*



# Presentation Outline

- My role and workplace
- What is the Hidden Disability Sunflower
- Why train hospital staff in hidden disability?
- How we did it
- Outcome and impact
- Where to from here?
- Questions



Australia has 6 states and 2 territories.

Public hospitals are managed by the State Government.

Western Australia (WA) is the largest state by land mass in Australia.

WA has five public Health Service Providers providing hospital services.

South Metropolitan Health Service is one of them.



## Fremantle Hospital



## Fiona Stanley Hospital



## State Rehabilitation Service



## Cockburn Health



## Medi-hotel



## My role and workplace



Occupational Therapy Department  
Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospital Group 2025





**1 in 5 people  
in Australia  
have a disability<sup>1</sup>**

**Not every disability  
is visible -  
some are hidden**

Making the invisible visible

**HIDDEN**  
**disabilities** 





## What is the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower?



- International symbol for hidden disabilities
- Indicates the wearer may need extra time, support or patience.
- Used worldwide across many sectors



# Importance of hidden disability awareness in health



- People with intellectual disability are **x2 more likely to experience avoidable death**.
- **Autistic people were x3 more likely to need admission** than non-autistic people and were **x3 more likely to die in the hospital** than non-autistic people.

Court concludes that complainant had been subject to indirect discrimination in access to hospital

# How our journey began



- My daughter **struggles with loud or repeated noises, bright lights and being touched.**
- She struggled significantly with staff .....despite (staff) being made aware she was autistic.
- Having seen the impact & how distressing it was for her, **below are suggestions on how to improve the experience of those with autism:**
  - The Hidden Disability symbol is the sunflower.
  - A green lanyard with sunflowers on it can be recognised by all staff and lets them know they need to have a little more patience for the person.
  - Here is the [Link](#).



# 2022: How we started



- 2022
- Complaint received
- Gather Executive support
- Plan, liaise & prioritise

0 trained



## What we did first

- Gathered information
- Tabled the complaint
- Established target priority staffing groups
- Sought support

## We knew we needed to:

- Seek approval
- Keep training simple, brief and accessible
- Reward staff
- Train 500 people to be deemed "Hidden Disability Sunflower friendly"
- Set a target date to launch



FOR INFORMATION OR DECISION

Ref # FSH-23-021

Prepared by: S. Coates Date: 4/4/23  
Stephanie Coates  
Chair of the FSFHG Disability Access and Inclusion Committee

In Consultation with: Alison Jones, Director Medical Education  
Penny Keogh, Director Nursing Education  
Susan Alexander, Director Allied Health Education

Endorsed: [Signature] Date: 4/4/23  
Executive Sponsor, FSFHG DAIP Committee

Endorsed: N. D. Date: 6/4/23  
Executive Sponsor, FSFHG Partnering with Consumers Committee



Government of Western Australia  
South Metropolitan Health Service



## Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that

**STEPHANIE COATES**

HE14220

successfully completed

**[SMHS] Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Training**

on 23-Aug-2023

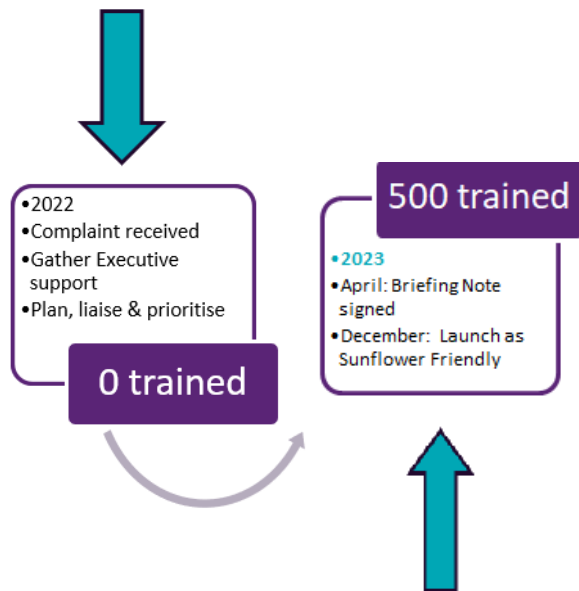
CPD Hours: 0.25

**Excellent health care, every time**

Care • Integrity • Respect • Excellence • Teamwork



# 2023: The first 500 staff trained



# How did we get 500 frontline hospital staff trained in Hidden Disability between April and December 2023?



## FSFHG STAFF

Have you done your Hidden Disability Sunflower Training?



Use this QR code to access the [SMHS] Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Training



Or use this link:

[https://www.learning.health.wa.gov.au/12/page/0description\\_pj8/area/04455/course/5018434/description?parameter=task](https://www.learning.health.wa.gov.au/12/page/0description_pj8/area/04455/course/5018434/description?parameter=task)



# Launched as Sunflower Friendly Organisation



International Day of People with Disability 2023

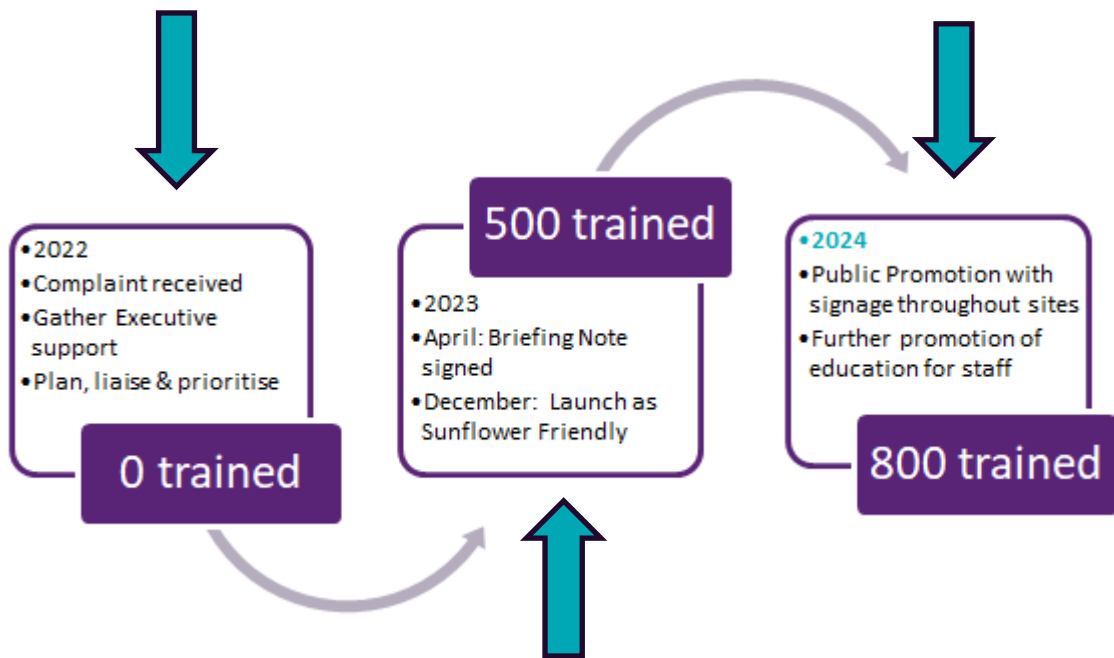


**Over 500**

Staff & volunteers trained



# 2024: Maintaining Momentum



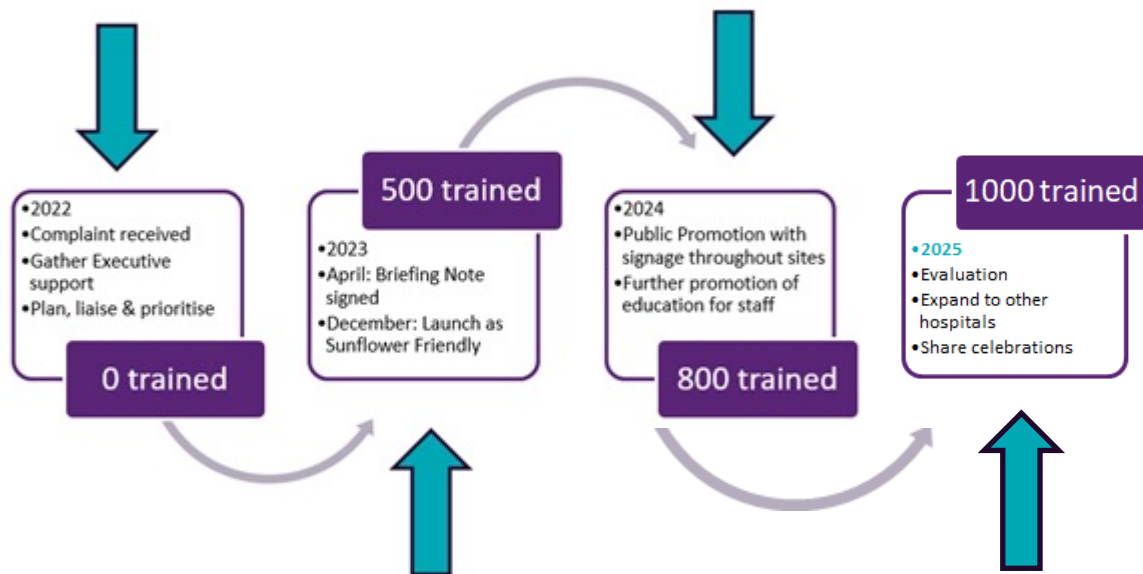
# Gathering momentum



# Gathering momentum



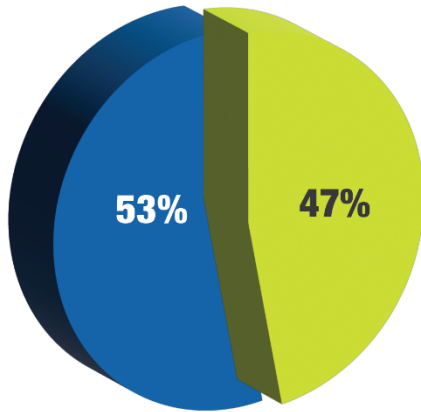
# 2025: 1000 staff trained



# Impact and Outcomes

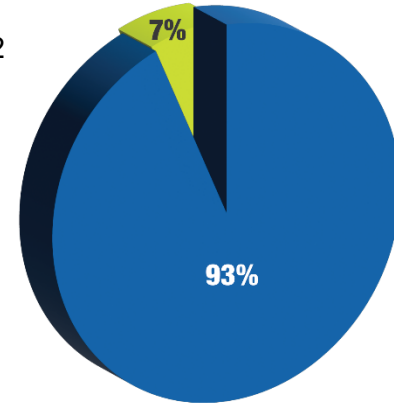
Were you aware of the Hidden Disability Sunflower?

■ Yes - 24  
■ No - 21



Do you know what to say and do if you see a person wearing a Hidden Disability Sunflower, to help them access the hospital?

■ Yes - 42  
■ No - 3



# From 2022 complaint to 2025 compliment

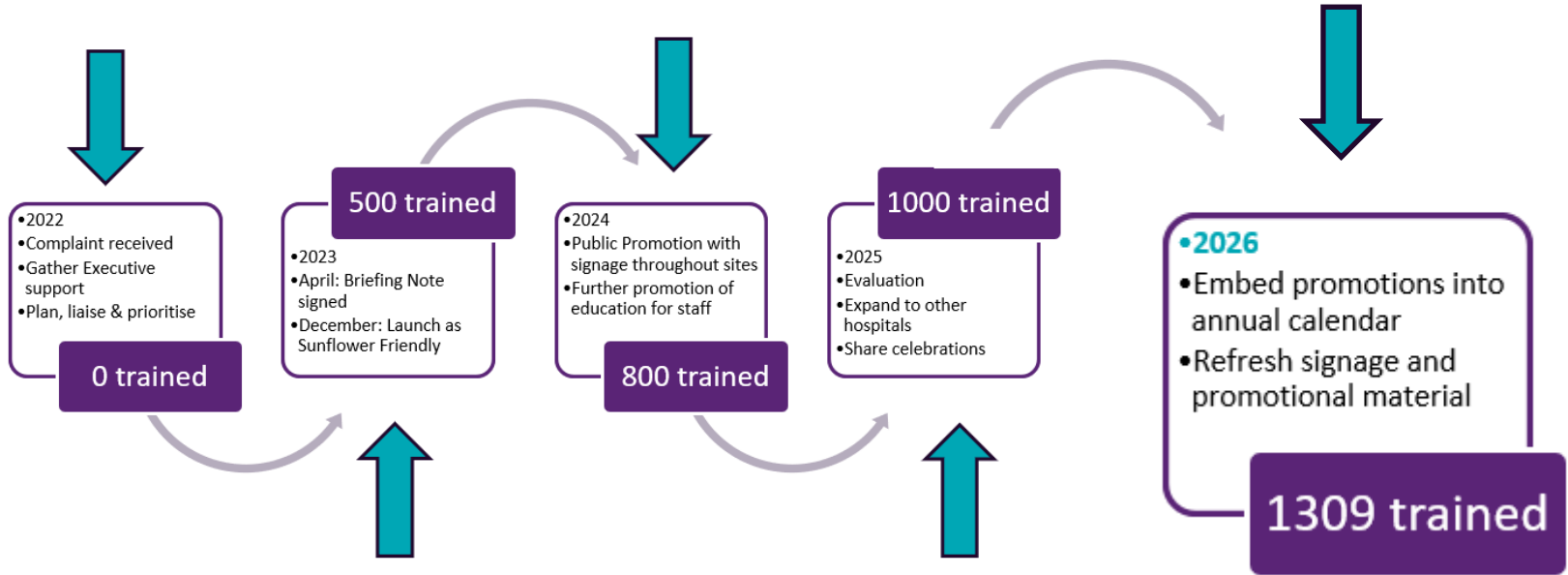
*I just wanted to let you both know that last night I briefly passed through FSH ED (suspected broken foot – I'll live 😊) again for the first time in the three years since we suggested the implementation of the Sunflower lanyard and other things.*

*Given how my last visit went, **I was nervous walking in**, and I only did so because both of the two nearest Urgent Cares to me were both closed. However, I have to say my experience last night couldn't have been better. It was so, so different from last time. **To see the sunflowers everywhere**, the big 'waiting time' screen on the wall, and all the other changes was **amazing**. I was treated with respect, and even actually allowed to speak for myself this time, despite my partner being there with me. **I walked out just over an hour later absolutely overwhelmed by the difference.***

*Thank you both for everything you've done over the last few years in improving the space. To actually have my concerns taken seriously three years ago was one thing, but to see it really making a difference **now is a whole other level of incredible.***



# 2026: Where we are today



# Where To From Here?

- Shared the Briefing Note with other hospitals
- Six other hospital groups in Western Australia are in the process of becoming Hidden Disability Sunflower friendly
- Advocated across the system to influence the State Disability Strategy



A Western Australia  
for Everyone

State Disability Strategy  
2020–2030  
Third Action Plan



Outcome 02		People with disability have opportunities for meaningful and inclusive employment and economic independence.				
Lead	Actions	Timing	Strategic Priorities			People with complex needs
			Inclusive education and training settings	Jobs and economic participation	Leadership	
Department of Finance	<b>2.6 WA Disability Enterprise Workplan</b> Develop the 2024-25 WA Disability Enterprise (WADE) Workplan to determine activities Finance will undertake to support government procurement with WADEs, including leveraging opportunities provided by the direct engagement of WADEs exception under the WA Procurement Rules and the Social Procurement Framework.	Short		•		
Mental Health Commission	<b>2.7 Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program</b> Become a Sunflower-friendly organisation via the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program, increasing Mental Health Commission's commitment to becoming a disability confident recruiter.	Short	•	•		•
Public Sector Commission	<b>2.8 Employment participation in the WA Public Sector</b> Provide support to public sector agencies to increase the representation of people with disability towards the aspirational target of 5%.	Short		•		
Tourism WA	<b>2.9 Tourism Workforce Development Program</b> Ensure people of all ages and abilities are considered working in the WA tourism industry. Initiatives delivered through the Program will meet disability and access needs to ensure promotion of equal participation of people with disability.	Short		•		



## Take home messages

- Gather champions as it is a team effort
- Get Executive approval
- Make it easy
- Reward the people who do the training
- Benefits both patients and staff



# References

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# Questions?

[Stephanie.coates@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:Stephanie.coates@health.wa.gov.au)





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