

Elevating the Human Experience

Summary guide to action for patient, family, carer and caregiver experiences





Our vision

The *Guide to action* describes what the New South Wales health system, working in partnership with patients, families, carers and caregivers, can do to make their experiences positive and personal. Technical skill will always be essential when caring for people, but how patients' experiences make them feel is just as important.

We want to have a sustainable health system that provides what matters most to patients and the community. We need a health system that is personalised, invests in wellness and makes good use of digital technology. We want to set new standards for excellence in human experiences – for every person, every time.

We want our health system to...

- Be designed in partnership with patients, families, carers, caregivers and the wider community to provide care that meets their needs, expectations and preferences
- View people who use healthcare as its 'makers and shapers' instead of 'users and choosers'
- Give high-quality care and experiences that matter to patients, families and carers
- Care for the whole person, considering their culture and education, social and economic status, and support networks
- Use feedback and other information to understand what is working well, what could be done differently and where we can do better.

So that our patients, families, carers and staff...

- Are shown compassion, respect and kindness
- Trust and have confidence in their teams
- Partner together to make decisions
- Are given the best-quality care and treatment that is personalised to them
- Are given clear information and good communication
- Can access coordinated care when they need it and easily move between different healthcare providers
- Are given healthcare in clean, safe, comfortable and culturally appropriate environments.

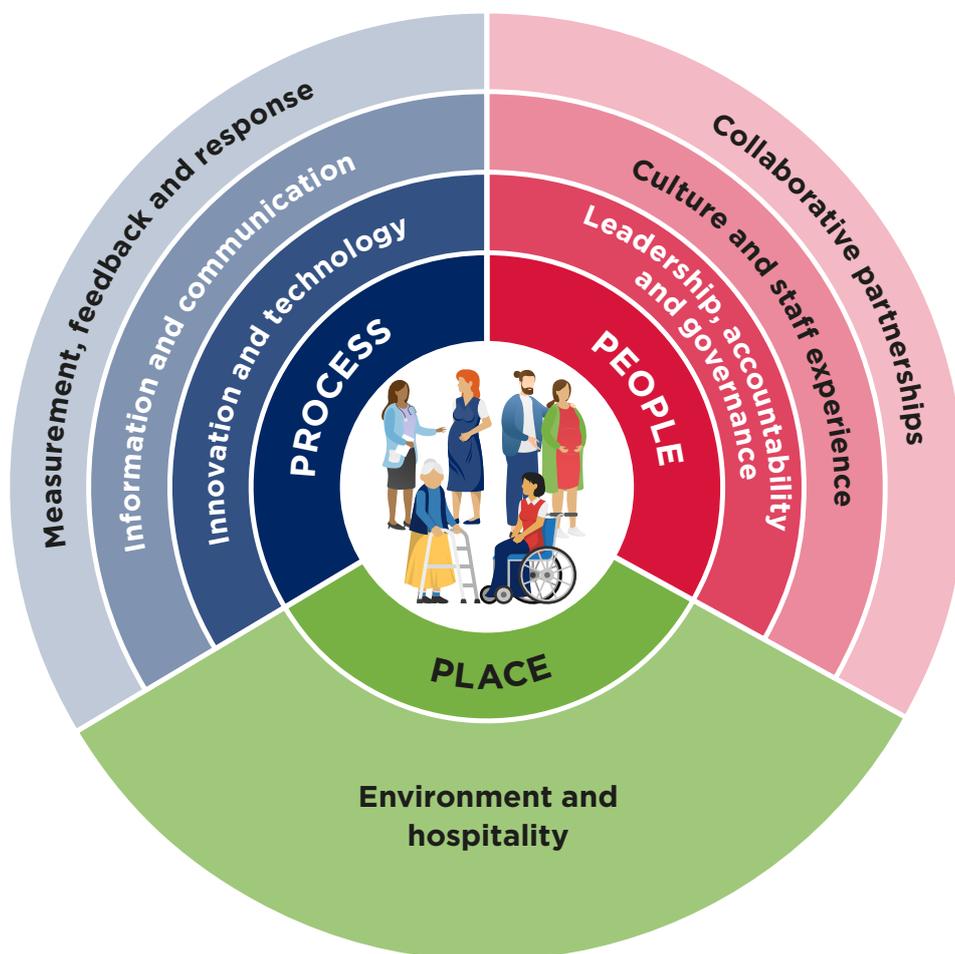
How will we transform people's experiences?

People are the most important factor in providing excellent experiences, when they are supported by the best **processes** and a clean, safe and accessible **place** to care for each other. These three factors are made up of seven focus areas where we can make changes to reliably give people excellent experiences.

While focusing on any one of these areas might make things a little better, we want to create lasting change through careful

planning of new ways to care for people. We aim to change the culture within the health system by partnering respectfully with patients and their families.

The full *Guide to action* presents some ideas for how to make human experiences better at the system, local and individual levels, as well as highlighting examples of best practice. The following pages describe the seven areas for change.



‘ Human experience is defined as the sum of all interactions, shaped by our culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.’

Adapted from the Beryl Institute



People

We know that people are the key to exceptional patient and caregiver experiences.



Focus area 1: Leadership, accountability and governance

How can we encourage human-centred leadership and governance that supports caregivers in their commitment to excellence in patient, family, carers and staff experience?

Having good leadership and governance can help us to give excellent human-centred care. Good leaders can make every person in the health system feel safe and able to stand up for the importance of patient experience and to share responsibility for making it better. People at every level need to understand how they are responsible for patient experience. Management decisions, such as where resources should go, also need to make patient experience a priority.

Encourage kind and compassionate leadership

Sharing leadership responsibility among a team of people who are committed and flexible can help in building a compassionate healthcare organisation. Making sure our workforce is respected, supported and encouraged to reach their full potential is essential for giving those we serve an exceptional experience.

Partner with patient leaders in all levels of governance

The voices of patients need to be heard every day in the way we work so we don't lose sight of what's important to them. We need to be partners with healthcare users so we can give them the best possible results. This includes recruiting and supporting 'patient leaders'.

Assess how mature our patient experience efforts are

Understanding an organisation's starting point can help with planning ways to make the patient experience better. NSW Health aims to help health services assess how advanced they are in patient experience and compare themselves with best practice. This information can be used to find areas where improvement should be a priority. It's important that members of the workforce at every level are clear about expectations and accountabilities for making patient experience better.

Encourage participation in a 'community of practice'

NSW Health aims to establish a 'community of practice', which will bring together passionate people committed to transforming the experiences of all people who interact with the NSW Health system. This will encourage people to share knowledge within and between health services and help staff stay up to date on best practice in patient experience.

' Having good leadership and governance can help us to give excellent human-centred care.'

Focus area 2: Culture and staff experience

How can we create a positive culture for patients, families, carers and staff, so that their experience is one of compassion, kindness and respect?

We know that a strong, positive workplace culture leads to better results and experiences for patients and carers. The way staff relate to and work with each other can strongly affect the way that patients and carers feel about the care that they are given. It's also important to remember that all staff, not just clinicians, influence the patient experience.

Include patient experience projects in our everyday work

Most people who work in healthcare do it because they care deeply about people. Making the health system a kinder place means putting patient experiences at the heart of our day-to-day work. This might mean making small changes to improve the way some things are done, or it might mean making big changes that transform the whole health service.

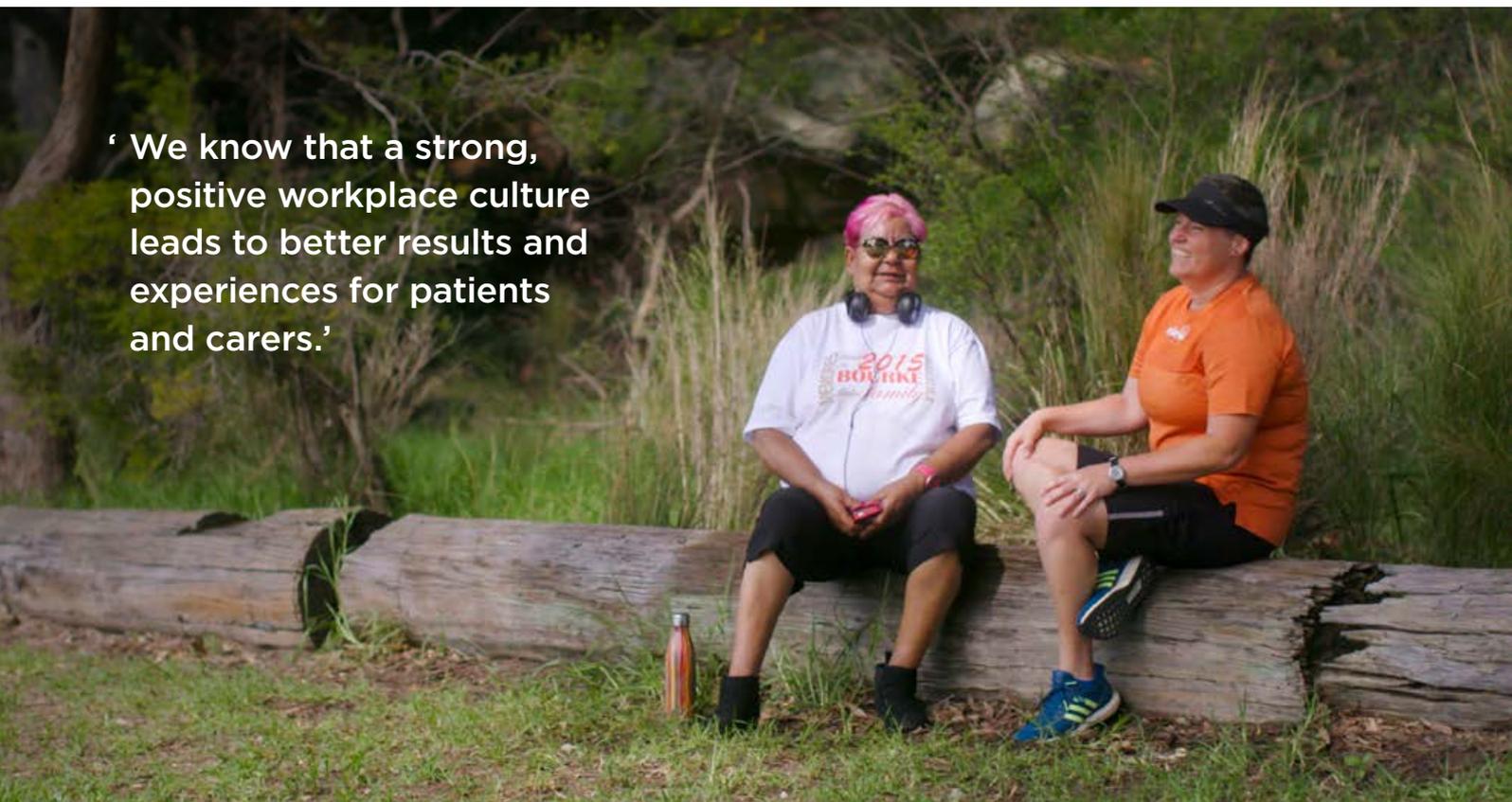
Focus on staff safety, health and wellbeing

Staff who are physically and mentally well and resilient can give better human-centred care. It's worthwhile encouraging a stronger focus on wellbeing in the workplace, through staff health and wellbeing programs, or even through simple actions, such as managers recognising and thanking staff for their efforts.

Grow and cultivate a service culture

As culture changes over time in a health service, the human experience should stay at the heart of it. This culture of service will then affect how the staff think and behave. For example, teaching staff how to ask 'open' questions and actively listen to patients means they will be able to deliver good human-centred care. The health service should also encourage respect for others and appreciation of diversity. This includes respect for gender, sexuality, language, ancestry and life experiences.

' We know that a strong, positive workplace culture leads to better results and experiences for patients and carers.'



Focus area 3: Collaborative partnerships

How can we start thinking about healthcare consumers as its ‘makers and shapers’, instead of ‘users and choosers’?

Patients are the only constant in every healthcare journey. Their insights and expertise can help us think differently about how we can make care better, make services more innovative and give people experiences that matter. The health system can't provide excellent patient and carer experience without partnering with patients, carers, health professionals and other staff as part of its usual business. Other links across the community – with housing authorities, religious institutions, law enforcement agencies, schools and social services – can also lead to changes in population health.

Build a framework for consumer and community partnerships

Consumer and community partnerships are two-way relationships between patients, carers and the health system, where everyone involved has the opportunity to lead and to give their ideas on things that affect their wellbeing and interests. These partnerships are a shift away from thinking of healthcare consumers as the ‘users and choosers’ of health services and policy to being the ‘makers and shapers’ of them.

Support patient leaders to be actively included at all levels

It's not enough to just include a healthcare consumer on a committee – people who represent all areas of the community need to be fully involved in healthcare, including governance, quality and safety, accreditation, recruitment and education. Education, coaching and ongoing support can give consumers and carers the skills and confidence they need to relate to



clinicians and contribute their ideas in a way that matters. Training can also help the health workforce know how to work with health consumers and to understand the good that can come from working with them.

Understand volunteer needs and embrace their contribution

Volunteers have many roles in healthcare organisations, including helping with activities. Partnering with volunteers can make the patient experience better. It can also build a closer relationship between health services and the communities they serve. Volunteers should be actively supported through recruitment and reward systems.



Process

We know that providing excellent patient experiences needs to be thought through and designed for. It can't be expected to happen on its own - it needs cultural change and commitment, with a plan for how we communicate, measure success, innovate and improve services.



Focus area 4: Innovation and technology

How can we challenge the way we have always done things by doing them differently, with the help of digital technology, in a way that is caring, inclusive and delightful?

It helps to think about innovation in patient experience as meeting the needs of patients, families and carers by offering new ways to make their lives or jobs easier, better, happier, more satisfying or more productive. Innovation isn't a once-off thing to do, and it's important to have a workplace that encourages ongoing innovation. Thinking about how technology could be used to make the patient experience better is an important part of this.

Design new models of care

It's good for patients when their care is managed outside the hospital as much as possible. Innovation can allow care to be given to patients in other places that make their experience better, including at home, using virtual care and telehealth.

Use digital technology to make access to information and services easier

Healthcare is deeply personal and needs a human touch, so we have to get the right balance between high-tech self-service and high-touch human service. Patients and carers want a health system that puts people first – technology should be used to make tasks safer and more efficient, so more time can be spent caring for patients. Patients and carers also want the whole community, not just people who are at good at using new technology, to

have better access to mobile digital health services. Technology that can help patients and carers includes online booking, automatic reminders, electronic systems to help people find their way around hospitals, live updates on waiting times, booking and paying for parking, telehealth appointments, and remote monitoring of patients after they are discharged.

Provide digital literacy programs to patients and staff

Digital technology will only make patient experiences better if patients and staff are able to use it and enjoy doing so. Digital literacy programs can help patients and staff understand and use digital technology, particularly as new technologies are launched. Using technology can also get in the way of patients and clinicians making a personal connection. Making sure that the technology is meant to help them give better person-centred care can encourage them to get used to new ways of doing things.

Encourage a culture of constant innovation and improvement

Good new ideas come from cultures that are focused on consumers, and are collaborative and supported. We need to create a culture where everyone takes shared responsibility for new ways of thinking and actions. This could include thinking of ways to crowdsource new ideas from across the organisation. Our ways of working are critical.

Focus area 5: Information and communication

How can we communicate more clearly with our patients, carers and caregivers so they are informed and empowered with their experience?

Communication simply means giving information in a way that can be understood. Technology offers many new ways of doing this, but patients and carers must be able to understand it. When making decisions, being given clear information lets patients feel independent, more involved in their own care and better able to speak up about what they want. Good communication can help patients and their families know that they are important partners in planning and making decisions about their care. Giving staff easy access to information about a patient's previous medical care also makes it easier for staff to partner with patients and their carers.

Focus patient communication on the 'moments that matter'

Breakdowns in communication are the most common cause of errors in healthcare and a big factor in patient satisfaction and complaints about care. Giving the right information, to the right people, at the right time improves the quality of healthcare and allows patients to be involved in their own care. Communication should always match the needs, preferences and abilities of the patient and their carer. Having this knowledge will help patients and their carers make informed decisions, find their way through the health system, and manage and share in their care – the essence of human-centred care.

Improve health literacy for patients, carers and caregivers

Health information and systems have become very complex and hard to understand. Health literacy – or how well people can make sense of all this information – affects whether patients are able to make decisions and manage their own health and healthcare. Patients' health literacy can also affect the way caregivers relate to and care for them. Improving health literacy means that healthcare consumers can be full partners in developing better health systems.

Make patient communication easy to understand and be involved with

The way we like to communicate changes over time, and there will always be new ways of doing things better or faster. Better communication starts with working out what the important moments are that matter to patients, carers and caregivers. The next step is working with these people to find ways we could do better in those moments. This might be by using clearer and simpler language, involving them in decision-making at the right times, or telling them the names and roles of their care team. Information should also be easily available to patients, families and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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Focus area 6: Measurement, feedback and response

How can we collect and use data about patient and caregiver experiences so we can keep making healthcare better each day?

We want to be able to use feedback and data to see how well we're offering human-centred experiences in the health system. In this way, we can understand what's working well, what could be done differently and where we may be able to do things better. To offer a good patient experience, we need the right measures, for the right moments and the right purpose, while making sure we have reliable results that can be compared over time and between services. We need to be able to understand and act on what we measure. We particularly need to work out what the key moments are that matter to patients and carers and the questions that we should ask in those moments, along with how to gather this feedback at the time.

Be consistent in how we collect feedback on patient experiences

When we monitor and measure progress, collect feedback and then feed this information back to the patient, a cycle of continuous improvement develops. This can lead to greater satisfaction and trust for both patients and carers. But for this to happen, there must be a 'culture of measurement' at all levels of the organisation. This means that everyone needs to understand why patient experience is being measured, what they are expected to do with the feedback, and how this feedback will be used.

Have consistent and quality data on patient experience

The quality of information we have about patient experience depends on the quality of the data collected and the ways in

which it's stored, linked, analysed, used and reported. To help us make better use of patient and caregiver experience data, we need to build strong systems for data analysis, along with guidance, tools and support systems.

Improve complaint handling

Unsolicited complaints can give valuable information because they reflect the problems with care that make patients and carers concerned enough to do something about it. These problems can include safety incidents and poor experiences that are not always identified by internal systems of healthcare monitoring. Complaints can also offer information on areas of practice that are hard to monitor, such as care access, continuity or omissions. Using a consistent approach to complaint handling – from how we receive complaints through to how we act and report on them – is important for a better patient and caregiver experience. It can also give the community trust and confidence in the health system.

Encourage staff to use human-centred performance targets

One way to create a more human-centred organisation is to encourage the right thinking and behaviour among staff. Setting performance targets for patient experiences creates an environment where staff can prioritise care of patients and carers and rewards them when they do it well. Patient experience is already included as a performance measurement in service level agreements between local health districts and NSW Health. Health services can use information from these statewide performance measurement to set their own targets for patient priorities in their area.



Place

We know that the place in which our people and processes exist plays an important part in setting the tone for both patients and caregivers.



Focus area 7: Environment and hospitality

How can we create places for our patients and staff that make them feel welcome, safe and comfortable, so they are at ease during their experience and interactions with us?

Placemaking in healthcare is the art and science of creating welcoming, functional spaces. For a physical environment to give patients and caregivers a better experience, it must be comfortable, safe, clean and culturally appropriate, with amenities such as food and Wi-Fi that can support emotional and physical wellbeing. Dark or untidy spaces can make patients worry about the state of the healthcare facility and how it might affect their recovery. Staff are also less satisfied when working in old or badly repaired facilities, which can in turn affect patient experiences.

Offer a physical environment that is warm, clean, welcoming and good for wellbeing

Hospitals and health systems are a positive environment for patients when they offer a space in which people feel safe, comfortable and confident in the care they are given. Simple, appealing design elements – such as pops of colour, attractive feature walls and areas with natural sunlight – can lead to patients, visitors and staff feeling more comfortable with the environment they're in. As well as how it looks, a space must also be designed for a purpose and meet the needs of patients and carers. Design elements such as clear signs to help people find their way around a hospital can greatly improve the patient experience.

Offer good amenities and food

As well as being clean and safe, hospitals and health services should be comfortable environments that limit disruption to people's day-to-day lives. Offering

amenities like good food and cleaning services, Wi-Fi and charging stations can create spaces that act as an extension of life beyond the hospital. Food satisfaction in hospitals depends on more than how healthy or nutritious it is – people's opinions of meals also include the taste and temperature of food, the range of alternatives available, whether the food is reliably served on time, the attitude of the catering staff, the support given for opening packages or eating, and whether personal, religious and dietary needs can be met. Ultimately, every patient compares the hospital food service with the food served in their own home.

Design physical spaces that consider cultural appropriateness

It's important to consider the role of culture in making spaces that are accessible and appropriate for our patients, carers and staff. Acknowledging and including cultural considerations when designing a space can greatly improve the access, outlook and outcomes of our services. Aboriginal culture should be acknowledged and respected in all NSW facilities, with culturally appropriate spaces made available.

'Hospitals and health systems are a positive environment for patients when they offer a space in which people feel safe, comfortable and confident in the care they are given.'

Delivering on our commitment

The *Guide to action* sets out what it means to deliver human-centred healthcare and our commitment to making patient, family, carer and caregiver experiences better.

Patients, families and carers can support the *Guide to action* by:

- becoming a consumer advisor
- partnering with their local hospital to improve care and experiences
- joining an *Elevating the Human Experience* working group
- joining an *Elevating the Human Experience* community of practice
- subscribing to the *Elevating the Human Experience* newsletter
- giving feedback on the quality of their care and experiences.

Health services, agencies, ‘pillar’ organisations and other organisations can support the *Guide to action* by:

- promoting it across their health service
- assessing their level of maturity using the tools provided
- joining the Beryl Institute
- joining an *Elevating the Human Experience* community of practice
- joining an *Elevating the Human Experience* working group
- finding some key projects to focus on over the next 12-18 months
- participating in patient experience events, such as Patient Experience Week.

The Ministry of Health will support the *Guide to action* by:

- taking the lead in setting policy and guidelines
- developing a ‘maturity assessment tool’
- funding statewide projects
- promoting consumer partnerships and best practice
- working with health services to guide local improvement projects
- building systems to benchmark health service performance
- creating and supporting communities of practice.

In some ways, the COVID-19 crisis has helped accelerate human-centredness in healthcare. Because of this, we can be reassured that we know what human experience will look like after COVID-19: the ongoing importance of treating individuals as human beings, with dignity and respect; seeing family and carers as vital to the health and wellbeing of patients; and the need for trusted information and shared involvement in decisions.

In essence, it will be a partnership built on mutual respect and trust.

Get Connected

More information about *Elevating the Human Experience* and how you can be involved can be found on our website: www.health.nsw.gov.au/humanexperience

If you have any questions about human experience in NSW, please email us on MOH-PatientExperience@health.nsw.gov.au

‘ I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’ Maya Angelou



Our Guide to action on a page

Human experience is defined as the sum of all interactions, shaped by our culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.

Adapted from the Beryl Institute



OUR VISION

A sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness, and is digitally enabled.



PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This *Guide to action* outlines what the NSW health system can do together, in partnership with patients, families, carers and caregivers, to consistently create positive, personalised experiences.



OUR ASPIRATIONS ARE FOR OUR HEALTH SYSTEM...

To be designed collaboratively, in **partnership** with patients, carers, caregivers and the wider community to deliver care that meets needs, expectations and preferences of patients, families and carers.

Evolve to view **consumers as 'makers and shapers'** of services and policy, as well as the 'users and choosers'.

Embrace **value-based healthcare** which includes providing high quality care, experiences, and outcomes that matter to patients, families and carers.

Care for the **whole person**, considering their culture and educational background, social and economic circumstances, and support networks.

Use **timely feedback and data** to measure progress and continue to understand what is working well, and what could be done differently or where there are opportunities to do it better.



WHICH WE WILL CHANGE BY INVESTING IN...

- 01 Leadership, accountability and governance**
- 02 Culture and staff experience**
- 03 Collaborative partnerships**

- 04 Innovation and technology**
- 05 Information and communication**
- 06 Measurement, feedback and response**
- 07 Environment and hospitality**



SO THAT OUR PATIENTS, FAMILIES, CARERS AND STAFF...

Are shown compassion, respect and kindness

Have trust and confidence in their care providers and the quality of their care

Are involved in shared decisions and receive care and treatment that is personalised

Receive clear information and effective communication

Have timely access to coordinated care and smooth transitions

Receive healthcare in clean, safe, comfortable, culturally-appropriate environments