



# Boosting access to Auburn Hospital Antenatal Services



through understanding and responding to patient experience

Auburn Hospital Antenatal Services (AHAS) is well on the road to deliver the best care to their diverse community of expectant mothers. Through the utilisation of its online, real-time My Experience Matters Survey - which uses the platform provided by Civica, the leading cloud software for measuring patient feedback - AHAS now has an ongoing project that will create a best practice antenatal patient experience.

**Auburn Hospital, part of the Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD), serves one of the fastest growing and most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) local government areas in New South Wales, with 60 per cent of their residents born overseas.**

WSLHD is committed to ensuring all the hospitals within its network meet or exceed required service level agreements set by the NSW Ministry of Health while also aligning with patient experience expectations. Under a framework that benchmarks all services, AHAS was flagged within its Emergency Risk Management System (ERMS). This risk was based on the low percentage of pregnant women accessing antenatal care at the recommended 12 to 14-week gestation period within their catchment area.

*"Understanding the patient experience ensures an antenatal service responsive to the changing needs of women of the local community is designed."*

**Julianne Harvey,**  
Innovation and Redesign Project Lead  
Western Sydney Local Health District

## Benefits and outcomes

- ▶ **Measure and benchmarks patient feedback across all services**
- ▶ **Customised reports generated real-time analysis that provided the necessary insights for strategic planning**
- ▶ **Free text questions allowed patient to raise issues**
- ▶ **Uncovered root cause of patients' issues**

## Significant reduction in time & costs



related to data collection and analysis

## Deeper insights

through automated text analysis



To start investigating why access to antenatal services had dropped so drastically, WSLHD's Innovation and Redesign project lead, Julianne Harvey & co-lead Auburn Hospital Clinical Midwifery Consultant, Helen Mou were given the role to uncover the systemic issues creating this low uptake.

"The alert that triggered our investigation in August last year showed that only four percent of pregnant women in our local area were attending their first antenatal appointment by the end of their first trimester in line with best practice," Ms Harvey said. "This was putting both mother and baby at risk. The situation was made worse by the fact that these same expectant mums had additional risk factors including higher rates of obesity and gestational diabetes that can only be mitigated by early intervention."

Following the Accelerating Implementation Methodology (AIM) – a NSW Health endorsed change model, Ms Harvey & Ms Mou started to scope the project, which was aptly named 'The Baby Steps Project'. The AIM principles suited the project, encompassing a strong focus on the human impact of change, executive sponsorship and proactively managing resistance.

"We had several objectives listed when we initially scoped the project, our main one being to improve access to the service by the 14 week gestational period to at least 50%," Ms Harvey said. "Secondly, we wanted to make sure we had the correct number of referrals being entered into the system and improve patient experience."

To collect the patient experience data needed to help find the root cause of the issues plaguing the antenatal service, Ms Harvey took advantage of the WSLHD's third party patient feedback platform called My Experience Matters. This is used by the district to measure patient feedback across all their services. This information is provided back to all unit managers in the form of a monthly report. These reports have been instrumental in initiating and monitoring the impact of many projects across the hospital network including the building of a multi-level carpark, the reports consistently rated parking as a priority issue for patients until the Car Park was completed when it no longer rated in the data.

"My Experience Matters' internally, is such a critical tool to have access to when collecting data around patient experience," Ms Harvey said. "It makes the whole process so much easier, saving us a lot of time and energy. There are standardised questions commonly used by WSLHD already in the Civica Experience platform which means we can instantly benchmark how we are performing against other hospitals in the district."

While developing the surveys for the project, Ms Harvey & Ms Mou understood the need to accommodate the high level of diversity within the district and work out the best way to ensure all women within the community had their voices heard.

"We knew to do this properly we needed to survey women from all ethnic backgrounds and to help us with this task we engaged our bilingual volunteers from the WSLHD Community & Consumer Partnerships Team and the hospital bilingual health workers," Ms Harvey said. "The consumer representatives and bilingual health workers helped women (who did not have English as their first language), translate the surveys while they waited for appointments in our waiting area from languages such as Arabic, Mandarin and Cantonese. In all, 48 surveys over a three-day period, were keyed into iPads using the Civica Experience software."

After the surveys were completed, My Experience Matters generated an automated detailed report within 24 hours, My Experience Matters reports are very easy to customise and produce. Parameters for the reports can be set within minutes, providing the sophisticated analysis needed to show the parts of the service that operate well and those that don't.

"My Experience Matters platform generated an automated detailed report within 24 hours."

**Julianne Harvey,**  
Innovation and Redesign Project Lead  
Western Sydney Local Health District

"The report from My Experience Matters provided an intelligent, coherent path forward," Ms Harvey said. "We knew instantly where we needed to put our efforts during the first phase. It is very user friendly. Benchmark comparison information for example is displayed like a traffic light system with green representing above benchmark, amber not far off the benchmark and red below the expected service level."

The My Experience Matters report provided many other valuable insights for the project team to consider. Emotional responses about the service such as whether a patient felt delighted, loved, anger, fear etc., were captured and given a percentage. Heat maps identified hot spots, while key words commonly used in the comments section of the survey gave additional insights including some pleasant surprises about the service.

"The results from the My Experience Matters report completely altered the initial scope," Ms Harvey said. "We had made certain assumptions about the service and the areas we thought needed overhauling. For example, we thought the women attending AHAS were unhappy with the quality of care provided, but the opposite was true. We were so thrilled when we discovered that once the women commenced care their level of satisfaction was extremely high. This gave our staff a much-needed morale boost."

The new scope for the Baby Steps Project focuses on end-to-end processes. These include a revamp of triage guidelines, referral information quality, attendance management, booking scheduling and how transfer of care and communication with patients and local GP's is conducted.

The AHAS started implementing the first phase of The Baby Steps Project in early 2020, and there were some quick wins for the expectant mums and the service.

"We discovered that there was no mechanism for alerting the antenatal clinic when mothers had given birth," Ms Harvey said. "This meant that pre-booked appointments with midwives and obstetricians were not being reallocated to other women needing an appointment. Within 11 weeks, we were able to reassign 109 appointments. This was done simply by asking the Birth Unit Ward Clerks to cross check a daily birth status report and cancel future antenatal appointments accordingly. This is a huge move in the right direction."

My Experience Matters along with other complementary diagnostic tools have exposed many gaps in the end-to-end experience for expectant mothers accessing the AHAS. The first phase of the project will deliver a much-anticipated positive impact for the service, increasing service efficiency where needed.

"Our aim is to provide timely access to a safe, high quality woman-centred outpatient antenatal service while improving the health, well-being and experience for our mothers and families living within the local community," Ms Harvey said. "We can all feel better knowing that we are on track to deliver all of these outcomes."



"In the first 3 months of our trial we had a big win. Through Identifying upcoming appointments for women who had already given birth, we were able to reschedule 109 appointments for other women needing an appointment."

**Julianne Harvey,**  
Innovation and Redesign Project Lead  
Western Sydney Local Health District