

**300 staff  
trained nationally**

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**18-month project**

## Communication access: Scope and 1800RESPECT

***In 2019, 1800RESPECT became the first national service to be accredited with the Communication Access Symbol.***

Scope worked with 1800RESPECT to develop a four-part disability engagement virtual training package that was co-designed by people with lived experience of disability.

The aim was to equip frontline counsellors with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support people with disability experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

1800RESPECT is the national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service, delivered by Telstra Health on behalf of the Australian Government since 1 July 2022.

The accreditation process, part of the Disability Pathways Project, was led by the former 1800RESPECT service provider Medibank Health Solutions.

### The challenge

Women with disability experience a wider range of violence at the hands of a greater number of people using violence. Statistically, women with disability are at a greater risk of experiencing violence in a diversity of places, for longer periods of time. Women with disability also encounter unique barriers to reporting, escaping or resolving abuse, or seeking support.

1800RESPECT's First Response Counsellors and Specialist Counsellors respond to more than 286,000 phone and online contacts per year across Australia. This training project aimed to improve counsellors' responses to women with disability who are seeking advice and support following an incident of domestic, family or sexual violence.



## The approach

Scope and 1800RESPECT worked with people with lived experience of disability to design a tailored eLearning package that directly responded to knowledge and skills gaps of first response and specialist counsellors identified in an independent research review by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), and that would build the capacity of frontline staff to achieve Communication Access accreditation.

An expert advisory panel was formed specifically for the project, which included a range of stakeholders and individuals who could provide subject matter expertise from relevant perspectives, including women with lived experience of disability and violence and those who had supported people with disability who have experienced violence, including support workers, speech pathologists and disability advocates.

### The group addressed the project in five phases:

#### Research

The project was funded following Recommendation 9 of the Women with Disability Australia (WWDA) review report, *1800RESPECT: Improving Service Responses for Women with Disability Experiencing Violence*. Recommendation 9 highlighted a need for tailored education and resources to support 1800RESPECT counsellors to respond to and support women with disability. Recommendation 9 specified that training should include the topics of human rights principles and obligations; understanding 'disability'; understanding violence against women with disability; guidelines for communicating with women with disability; and guidelines for supporting and respecting women with disability who have experienced or are at risk of violence to access the services they need.

#### Design

Scope and 1800RESPECT co-designed a tailored eLearning module suite in consultation with the expert advisory group as part of a highly collaborative process.

These training modules include:

- An accessible response
- Providing a Communication Accessible Response
- Disability awareness
- Understanding types of violence that woman with disability experience

#### Implementation

300 First Response Counsellors and Specialist Counsellors from 1800RESPECT completed the four modules in the eLearning suite.

#### Assessment against accreditation standards

Assessment of competency was conducted through in-module knowledge tests, as well as mystery customer telephone calls made to the 1800RESPECT service by Scope Communication Access Assessors with lived experience of communication disability.

#### Sustainability plan

1800RESPECT committed to a sustainability plan to keep front line staff skills current. Scope and 1800RESPECT developed a fifth eLearning module for this purpose and developed a plan for periodic check-ins with Scope's team.

## Outcomes

- Increased counsellor knowledge and skill regarding effective communication with, and intervention for, women with disability, inclusive of women who have communication disability
- Increased counsellor knowledge of appropriate referral pathways for women with disability.

## Learning

- Disability engagement and communication access training is key to increasing staff knowledge and confidence to successfully interact and support people who have communication difficulties.
- Tailoring communication training to the relevant business or context is most effective in making sure staff are able to understand challenges unique to their context and adapt their communication approach accordingly
- Making refresher learning available is key to maintaining communication access standards.

## Key drivers of impact

1800RESPECT's continued commitment to ensuring the learning and development of its counsellors has been critical to its success in maintaining communication access standards and increasing user satisfaction.

1800RESPECT ensured that disability engagement and communication access eLearning was embedded as part of the induction process for new staff.

*"Our counsellors enjoyed the training and can now incorporate the Disability awareness training into their practice. We have seen an increase on people with disability using the service, because our counsellors have the capabilities to respond using the techniques in the training."*

– 1800RESPECT National Partner Manager.

## **Contact Scope today**

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