



**Improving fidelity and capability in
addiction services:**

**Development of a behaviour
change toolkit for
Middlesbrough Council**

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

This work was commissioned by **Middlesbrough Council**.

The toolkit was developed by **Applied Behaviour Change** in collaboration with **Middlesbrough Council**.

Collaborators from **Applied Behaviour Change** were involved in the design and development of the toolkit.

Why This Toolkit? Why Now?

- Clients (residents) face complex, interacting barriers and they need support that works for them.
- Staff needed clear, practical, consistent tools that work in real appointments.
- Responds to workforce transformation goals and supports quality improvement
 - The current systems vary across teams. this toolkit brings everything together in one clear, consistent approach.
- It helps ensure every resident gets support that is evidence-based, not just dependent on who they happen to see.



Fidelity Challenges



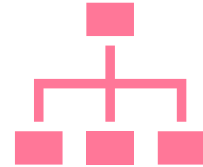
Practitioner barriers:

skill variation, time pressure, overwhelm, uncertainty about which resource to use.



Client barriers:

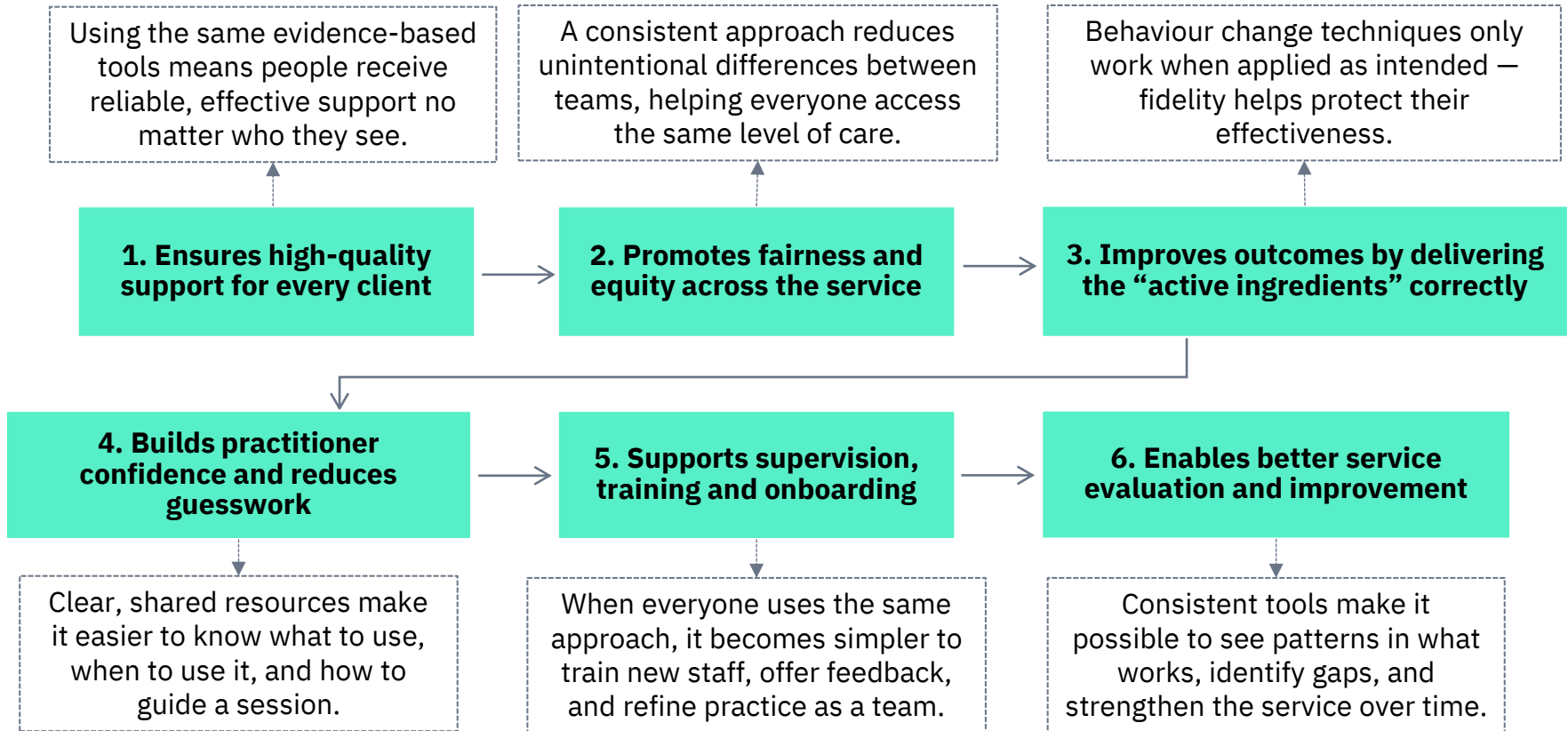
low literacy, trauma history, mistrust, cognitive overload, fear of groups.



Service-level barriers:

turnover, capacity issues, conflicting priorities.


Why Consistency and Fidelity Matter



The Behaviour Change Toolkit


E-learning modules “Introduction to Behaviour Change”

A 4-module e-learning course provides a practical introduction to designing and delivering effective behaviour change interventions.




Updated COM-B self assessment form

Simplified, client-friendly language, more specific statements that continue to link to the COM-B model.



Updated and new resources

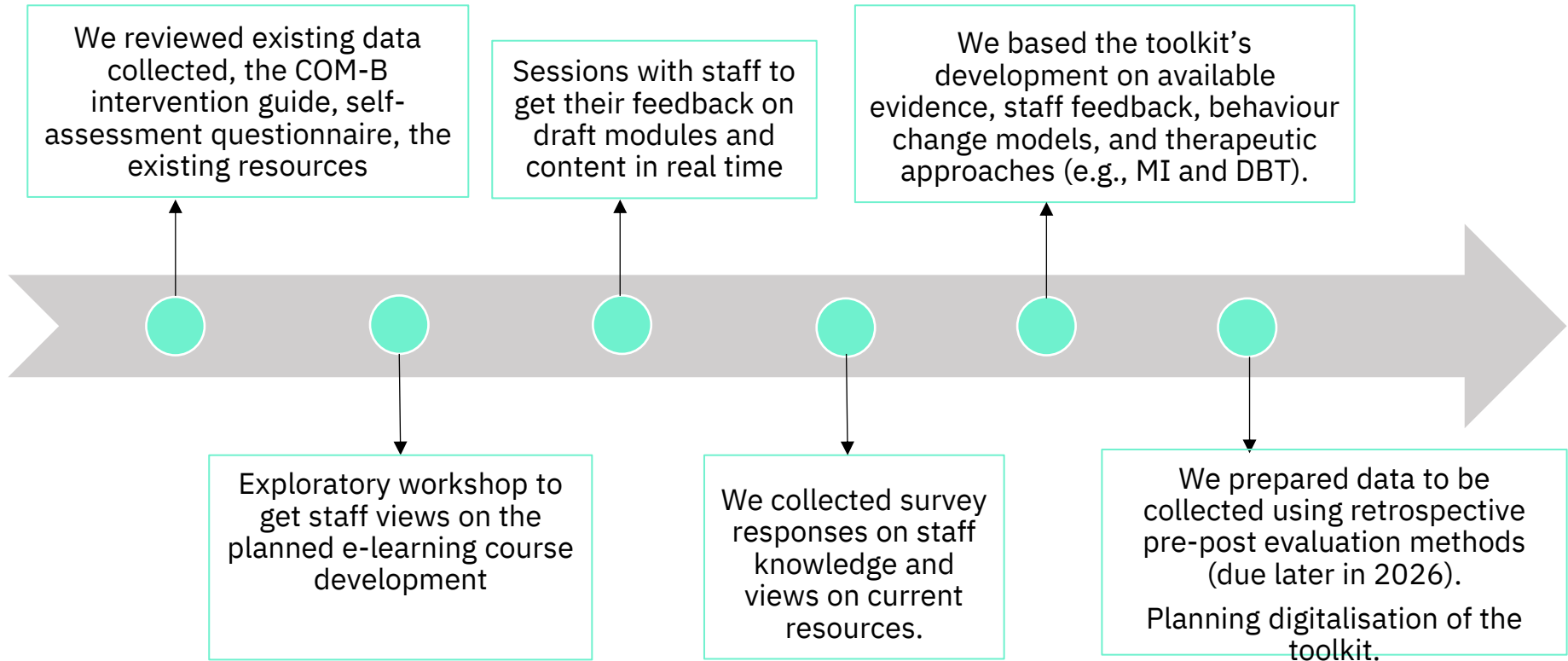
Each item on the COM-B self-assessment form now links directly to a specific resource, helping staff quickly identify the most relevant tool to support each client’s needs.



Treatment planning tool

Helps staff match barriers and structure sessions quickly and confidently.

How we developed it



Common Reported Client Barriers to Engagement

Shame, mistrust, fear of judgement - can make it harder for residents to open up or accept support.

Overload and low concentration can limit how much information people can process at once.

Difficulty understanding complex resources may feel overwhelming or difficult to follow.


Feeling “talked at” rather than involved reduces motivation and trust.

Previous experiences with rigid or rushed sessions can shape expectations and make engagement more difficult.

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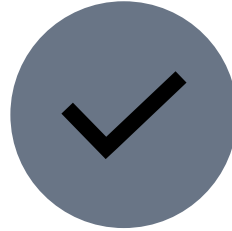
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Purpose of the e-learning component



Creates a shared language across the workforce (~10 teams).



Ensures baseline competence in behaviour change models and techniques.

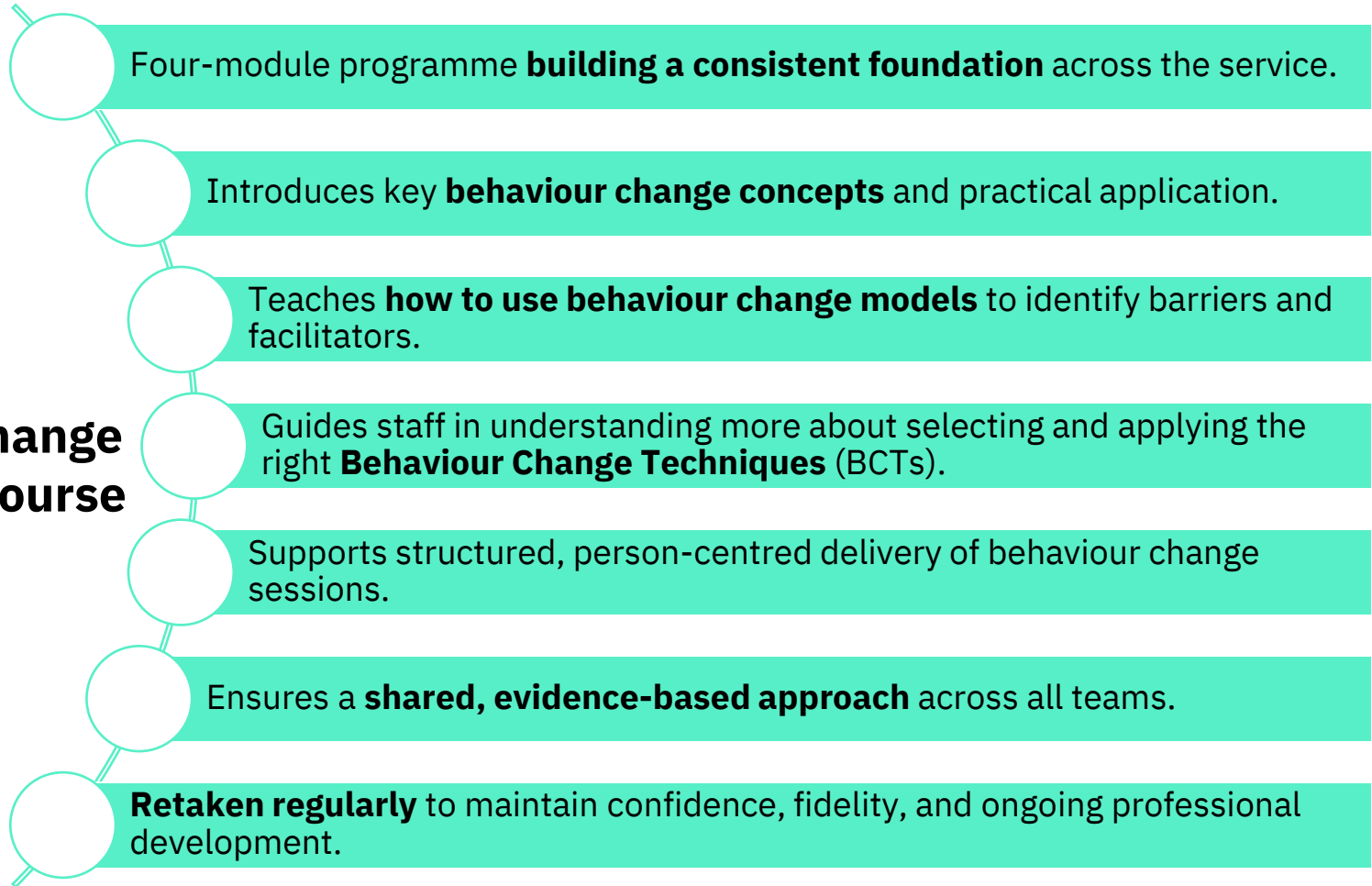


Offers flexibility (self-paced, accessible, digital).



Reduces dependency on one-off training sessions.

About the Behaviour Change E-Learning Course



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COM-B Self Assessment Form

- ✓ Ensures practitioners don't rely on instinct or preference to choose sessions (reduces bias)
- ✓ Helps clients feel seen and understood
- ✓ Creates a consistent foundation for session planning

COM-B Self Evaluation Questionnaire

Goal: (e.g. reduce drug/alcohol use, increase/reduce methadone or buprenorphine dose etc.): _____

What do you think you need to **achieve the above goal**?

(Circle any items that apply to you; you can circle as many or as few as you think are relevant. Some items may seem unusual, but they might be important for some people.)

In each case, please explain why you think it might be important for you.

☒ I would have to...

Capability	
To achieve my goal, I need to:	It's important
1. Learn more about the benefits of reducing alcohol/substance use.	
2. Learn how to deal with my physical health condition (including chronic pain or disability without alcohol or substances).	
3. Improve my energy, strength, and coordination to handle daily activities and exercise without substances.	
4. Handle stress better, manage anxiety without alcohol or substances, build mental strength to resist cravings, and stay focused without feeling tired.	

Opportunity	
To achieve my goal, I need to:	It's important for me because:
5. Make time for the change, to attend sessions and do the work.	
6. Have the necessary materials to achieve my goal or financial support (e.g. I need a journal to track my progress and triggers).	
7. Have the support to be more accessible (e.g. closer to my home or over the phone).	
8. Get more support and encouragement from others around me and from people who have the same goal.	

Motivation	
To achieve my goal, I need to:	It's important for me because:
9. Believe in my ability to overcome addiction, feel ready to start my recovery and trust that I can change.	
10. Be convinced that quitting will lead to a healthier and happier life, a better job and better relationships.	
11. Find ways to deal with negative emotions and past experiences without using alcohol or substances.	
12. Have a detailed action plan with clear steps.	
13. Something else? (please specify)	

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Behaviour Change Resources (Worksheets)

What it is

A comprehensive set of new and/or updated behaviour change worksheets

Purpose

Support clients in tackling the specific barriers identified through the COM-B self-assessment

Foundation

COM-B model, mechanism of actions, behaviour change techniques, MI and DBT

MI – Motivational Interviewing; DBT – Dialectical Behavioural Therapy

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Treatment Planning Tool

To help staff use these resources consistently, a **Treatment Planning Tool** has been developed.

This includes:

- A brief description of each worksheet and the barrier it addresses, linked to the BCTs, and draft for system recording.
- A **decision matrix** that guides staff to the right worksheet based on the client's COM-B results (for certain barriers there were more than one worksheet developed).

A structured workflow:

Assessment → Identified barrier(s) → Selecting the right worksheet → Supporting goal-setting

No	COM-B Self-assessment items	BCTs	Resource titles	Description of the worksheet	System recording
1	Learn more about the benefits of reducing alcohol/substance use.	4.1. Instruction on how to perform behaviour 4.2. Information about antecedents 5.1. Information about health consequences 5.2. Information about social and environmental consequences	1.1. Understanding the impact of alcohol and drugs: what you need to remember - Factsheet	Helps individuals reflect on how substance use affects different areas of life, including their own health, relationships, finances, and long-term well-being. It presents information in a non-judgmental and supportive way to encourage self-awareness and personal reflection. The worksheet also highlights small, manageable changes that can lead to positive outcomes, such as feeling better, saving money, and improving relationships. It acknowledges personal challenges, offering reassurance that support is available and that change does not have to be immediate or absolute.	Session exploring how alcohol and drug use affects different areas of life. Used resources to help the individual reflect on how their substance use may be impacting their health, emotions, relationships, and future goals. Used MI to encourage an open and non-judgmental conversation. Supported reflection using OARS to help the individual explore their own thoughts and feelings. Discussed short- and long-term effects of alcohol and drug use in a way that allowed the individual to consider what is working for them and what might not be. Encouraged them to think about small changes that could help them feel better, improve relationships, and manage finances more easily. Recognised any personal challenges (e.g., social environment, financial situation) and provided relevant support options. Reassured the individual that even small steps can make a difference and that support is available if they need it.
2	Learn how to deal with my physical health condition (including chronic pain or disability without alcohol or substances).	4.1. Instruction on how to perform behaviour 8.1. Behavioural practice/rehearsal 8.7. Graded task	2.1. Dealing with physical health challenges - Worksheet	Focusing on problem-solving helping to find new ways to cope instead of just listing strengths. (Strengths are covered under "Why you CAN do this" - Worksheet) This worksheet includes simple, practical, low-cost strategy alternatives that fit into everyday life. Focuses on habits, not big changes and uses small adjustments to routine instead of requiring immediate results. As with most of the worksheets encourages small, realistic steps, while helps to build confidence with one small change at a time.	Session focused on managing physical health challenges without alcohol or substances. Used resources to help the individual reflect on how pain, tiredness, or other health issues affect their substance use. Used MI to keep the conversation open and non-judgmental. Supported reflection with OARS to help the individual explore their experiences. Talked about their biggest physical challenges and how they usually cope. Explored alternative ways to manage pain, stress, and tiredness without alcohol or drugs, such as using heat packs, taking breaks, or finding new ways to relax.
3	Improve my energy, strength, and coordination to handle daily activities and exercise without substances.	4.1. Instruction on how to perform behaviour 8.1. Behavioural practice/rehearsal 8.7. Graded task	3.1. Improving my energy, strength, and coordination - Worksheet	Helps individuals understand how substance use affects their energy levels, physical strength, and coordination, and reinforces that small behavioral changes can lead to big improvements in recovery. Offers realistic strategies to improve energy. Reduces emotional vulnerability.	Session focused on improving energy, strength, and coordination without substances. Used resources to explore how substance use affects energy levels and physical well-being. Used MI to encourage an open, non-judgmental discussion. Supported reflection with OARS to help the individual identify how substances impact their body and daily activities. Explored alternative ways to boost energy and strength without alcohol or drugs, including staying hydrated, eating regularly, moving more, and taking breaks. Introduced the 5 Ways to Wellbeing framework, discussing small steps the individual could try to improve overall well-being. Helped the individual identify one small change they could make this week to improve their energy, habitually and one alternative action to try when feeling tired instead of using substances.
4	Handle stress better, manage anxiety without alcohol or substances, build mental strength to resist cravings, and	1.2. Problem solving 2.3. Self-monitoring of behaviour 4.2. Information about antecedents 8.1. Behavioural practice/rehearsal	4.1. Managing urges with TIPP - Worksheet	Helps individuals learn quick, physical techniques (Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation) to calm cravings and strong emotions. These skills allow people to regain control in overwhelming moments and	Session focused on managing urges using TIPP skills exploring how physical and emotional urges affect the body and how to respond in a healthier way. Used MI to support a non-judgmental discussion. Helped them recognise past experiences of feeling overwhelmed or having cravings, identifying how their body responds and what they typically do in those moments. Explored TIPP skills (Temperature, Intense Exercise,

How the Toolkit Is Delivered

- Staff completes the e-learning modules and familiarises themselves with the new resources.
- Before they start using the resources they have a supervision session with the training lead (Sarah-Jane Mcquade) – ‘Pen License’

Flexible one-to-one sessions



Sessions are tailored to individual barriers and guided by the Treatment Planning Tool to ensure the right support at the right pace.

Structured 12-session group programme



A clear sequence that builds skills gradually and supports sustained behaviour change (+ the online group option: flexibility and greater anonymity).

The combination of group, online and one-to-one delivery ensures the toolkit works across different needs, settings and levels of readiness.

Early Outcomes

Feedback received:

- The toolkit improved consistency, clarity and confidence across teams
- The materials were easier to follow, clearer and more relevant to daily practice
- A great improvement in knowing which worksheet to use at each stage

“The materials make difficult topics easier to explore. Clients keep using them between sessions and at home.”

“Clients treat the books like personal journals. The visuals, doodle pages and affirmations really connect with them.”

“These resources create real ‘lightbulb’ moments. People finally understand themselves and their behaviour.”

“The structure makes delivery so much easier, I always know exactly what I’m doing.”

Take Home Message

- Fidelity challenges in addiction services are often **implementation challenges**, not just knowledge gaps.
- A practical, evidence-based, co-developed toolkit can help translate behaviour change theory into **consistent everyday practice**.
- **Implementation support** (e.g., e-learning and structured tools) is key to uptake and sustainability.

Ultimately, the aim was not just to create a toolkit for staff, but **to support a more consistent and compassionate practice that helps services respond better to the barriers clients face when engaging with support.**



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Thank you!
Any questions?

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