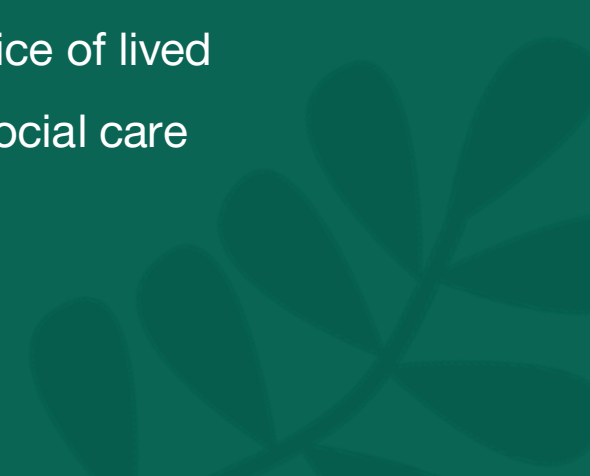




Newsletter | *June 2025*

The VILLAGE

Welcome to the VILLAGE's first newsletter for 2025. We are the VILLAGE – *Valued Individuals Living and Learning About Growing Equity*. A network of parents and carers from across Australia, partnering with Monash University to ensure the voice of lived experience is front and centre in equity-focused health, education and social care research.



Meet your VILLAGE network



Bee

Bee is passionate about creating culturally safe spaces and supporting mob to feel heard and connected in health services. She brings her experiences as a mum, nurse, and researcher to help amplify community voices.



Casey

Casey is a passionate advocate for inclusion, neurodiversity, and perinatal mental health. Through her volunteer role with The Nurtured Village Hampers and her own lived experience as a mum, she's dedicated to supporting parents and carers and creating stronger, more connected communities.



Shokria

Shokria is passionate about creating safe spaces where women from diverse backgrounds can learn, grow, and reclaim their voice. With over eight years of community experience, she brings deep care and commitment to everything she does.



Nick

As a parent, Nick is excited to connect with others in the network and bring those insights back to support his local community.

Visit our [webpage](#) to learn more about the VILLAGE, explore our resources, and see how we're working in partnership with Monash University's SEMPRE research team.

Meet your VILLAGE network



Prue

Prue is passionate about supporting families in rural and remote communities, bringing both professional insight and lived experience as a mum navigating the challenges of regional life.



Jen

Jen is passionate about improving support for parents in the perinatal period, drawing on her own lived experience and years of running peer support programs to help break down barriers for families.



Tim

Tim brings a wealth of lived experience as a father and a deep commitment to improving health outcomes for families. After a career in biomedical research, he now works in health education, driven by a passion for collaboration and community impact.



Together, we're ensuring the voices of parents, carers, and children help shape research from the very beginning, toward more equitable health, education, and social care services for Australian families. [Visit our webpage](#) to learn more.

Policy & Practice Pack – Voices that Matter

This pack was created to support professionals to meaningfully engage with lived experience experts, recognising them as individuals with unique insights, not just data points or case studies. It offers practical guidance and thoughtful recommendations to help keep the human at the centre of policy and practice, and to foster genuine, respectful partnerships with communities.

Policy and Practice Pack – Series 2, Pack 2

VOICES THAT MATTER

ADVANCING POLICY AND PRACTICE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTISE

Understanding you need to engage people with lived experience in your work is one thing, knowing *why* and *how* is another. Engaging Lived Experience Experts (LEEs) isn't just the right thing to do, it leads to initiatives that are more effective, purposeful, and less likely to cause harm. Yet for many, it is an afterthought rather than something considered and planned for early.

This pack captures insights and tips, shaped by LEEs and the researchers' working alongside them. It offers real-world insights and practical guidance to support policy makers and practitioners in their efforts.

WHAT?

What do current approaches to engaging lived experience experts look like?

Engagement that is poorly planned and funded can be simply ineffective, or even harmful.

INEFFECTIVE	BURDENSOME	HARMFUL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear expectations leaving LEEs questioning the value of their inputs. Short-term engagement, or engagement only in parts of the process. Insufficient resources (e.g. funding, trained staff, organisational support) to ensure engagement is equitable and appropriately paced. Inclusion of only 'acceptable' lived experience. 	<p>LEEs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> being expected to represent multiple voices and perspectives. not always being fully respected for the expertise they bring. having to jump hoops for remuneration (e.g. gift cards instead of bank payments). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Othering, condescending or offensive language. Unchecked power imbalances and cultural insensitivity. Inadequate remuneration for time, expenses and quality of expertise. Retraumatization and/or vicarious trauma from poorly managed story sharing. Exclusion of those with 'messy' lived experience.



Clare Griffiths, A. McGill, J. Kelly, S. Whitehouse, C. Haines, S. Marlowe, P. Mearns, R. Guralnik, N. Gawn, E. Puth, M. & Brennan, M. on behalf of the 2019/20 VILAGE Network (2020). Voices that matter: advancing policy and practice with lived experience expertise. Policy and Practice Pack – Series 2, Pack 2. Health and Social Care Unit, Monash University.



Your Experience Counts

What are the barriers to fairer healthcare, education and social care in Australia? Join an online discussion group and share your views

Monash University researchers want to hear from parents/ carers living in Australia, with children aged between 0 and 18 years old.

As part of our research (Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee Project ID45985), we want to understand what are the barriers to fair health, social support and education services in Australia and how can this be improved. The research requires the completion of two brief surveys and participation in a discussion group on WhatsApp.

If you would like to know how you could participate or have any questions, please contact Michelle Gooley (michelle.gooley@monash.edu) or click on [this link](#) to provide your contact details.



Network Perspectives

*“Everyone is respectful,
accommodating and inclusive...
The team genuinely does their
best to accommodate the many
aspects of each member's lives”*

- VILLAGE Network Member

*“What I've liked/enjoyed about
being part of the VILLAGE is
meeting other parents from
across Australia who are
passionate about engaging with
their local communities to
support one another.” - Nick*



VILLAGE Voices: Community Tips

"Connection before correction" -
Taking a moment to connect with your child emotionally before trying to correct behaviour often leads to better outcomes. When children feel seen, heard, and safe, they're more open to guidance and learning. A calm *"I can see you're really upset... would you like to tell me more?"* goes a lot further than a quick reprimand. It builds trust, strengthens your relationship, and teaches emotional regulation over time. - **Casey**





VILLAGE Voices: Member Reflection

“As an Afghan woman raising children in Australia, I face many challenges. Coming from a different culture, with our own traditions, faith, and way of life, it's not always easy to find balance in this new country. Over time, I've watched my children slowly adapt to this society, and even within myself, I see changes in how I think and live.

But through it all, I hold onto my identity, my faith, my values, and my hijab. Wearing the hijab isn't a burden for me; it's a part of who I am. It represents my beliefs, my dignity, and my connection to something deeper. It doesn't harm anyone, and it doesn't judge anyone. It simply reminds me of my roots, my purpose, and my pride.

I've come to understand that, for many people, I might be the first or only Afghan woman they meet. That means how I live, how I raise my children, how I speak and carry myself all of it matters. In a way, I represent more than just myself. I carry my community with me, and I want to show the strength, beauty, and values we hold.

Living in a society where my lifestyle may feel different at times, I continue to walk with strength, raising my children with love and resilience, teaching them to be proud of who they are, just as I am proud of who I am.”

- **Shokria**