

Improving Childhood Asthma Management Collaborative

Summary report

This summary highlights the achievements of the Improving Childhood Asthma Management (ICAM) collaborative and the positive impact it has had on children with asthma and their families.

BACKGROUND

Asthma is the most common chronic condition in Australian children and a leading cause of emergency department presentations. Better day-to-day management can prevent many hospital visits¹.

In Melbourne's north and west, more than 15,000 children are affected. Socioeconomic disadvantage contributes to poorer outcomes and higher rates of repeat hospitalisation².

Behind these numbers are families managing unpredictable flare-ups, missed school days, and repeated hospital visits that disrupt daily life.

AIM

The Improving Childhood Asthma Management (ICAM) project aimed to help children (aged 1–17) with asthma in Melbourne's north and west stay well and stay home by building confidence and empowering families to manage their child's asthma and escalate care when appropriate.

WHAT DID WE DO?

ICAM brought together seven Victorian health services to test changes that make asthma care clearer, more consistent and better connected for families. Importantly, the work was shaped by lived experience, ensuring changes reflected what families need when caring for a child with asthma.

ICAM used the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's Model for Improvement, through a

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

MARCH 2024 – DECEMBER 2025

For families of children with asthma, a hospital visit can be stressful and uncertain. This collaborative focused on making sure families have the confidence, knowledge and skills to manage at home and know when and where to seek support.

Seven Victorian health services improved asthma care for families by:

- **Clearer asthma education**, with more families receiving practical, hands-on "teach-back" education support
- **Faster communication with GPs**, for timely follow up
- **More referrals to Community Asthma Programs**, giving families stronger support at home
- **Better prescribing of preventer medicines**, ensuring children leave hospital with the right medication.

demonstrative collaborative approach to learn what changes improve asthma care for children³.

Support included learning sessions, workshops and coaching, peer support, and advice from clinicians, lived experience advisers and improvement specialists.



THE 'MAGIC' CHANGE PACKAGE

The MAGIC change package is made up of 5 elements that inform practical, evidence-informed actions to improve childhood asthma care, developed with lived experience and clinical input to support children to get the right care at the right time, as seen in the image on the left.

Together, these elements support a consistent experience for families: from the moment they present to hospital through to managing asthma at home.

CHANGE IDEAS

Teams tested over 68 improvement ideas using the MAGIC change package. Examples of the most impactful changes include:

- MAGIC discharge checklist embedded in workflow
- Updated guidelines for preventer prescribing after flare-ups
- Automatic processes to support referrals to community asthma programs
- Virtual asthma follow-up for children discharged from the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department

For families, these changes mean clearer conversations in hospital, more confidence at home, and better support beyond discharge.

OUR IMPACT

Families are leaving hospital with clearer explanations of what to do when symptoms worsen, how to use inhalers correctly, and when to seek help. More children are being referred to community asthma programs, strengthening support after discharge. Services are testing flexible models of care, including virtual clinics.

These changes are an important step towards reducing avoidable hospital visits and supporting children with asthma to stay well at home.

Across the collaborative:

- 651 children received optimised medicines for home management.
- 131 families linked to community asthma programs
- Teach-back education increased to 84% (from 39%), supporting families to confidently demonstrate correct inhaler and spacer use.
- Booked GP follow-up increased to 51% (not routinely done previously).

'This was the first time anyone had explained asthma that way and I now understand asthma and how to start treatment with symptoms from now on.'
– Family member

Families and children reported greater confidence in using inhalers correctly, recognising worsening symptoms, and knowing when to seek help.

'Everything was explained well to us. We were shown how to use a spacer and how to follow the action plan.'
– Family member

Clinicians and project teams also reported stronger improvement capability and valued learning alongside others, contributing to more consistent and coordinated care across the health system.

NEXT STEPS

Safer Care Victoria has launched the ICAM toolkit, which provides resources and strategies for acute health services to help:

- provide high-quality, consistent care for children with asthma
- support children and their families to build the skills and confidence to manage asthma effectively
- test, adapt and implement meaningful change in childhood asthma care.

Visit the ICAM webpage:

<https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/improvement/projects/improving-childhood-asthma-management>

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