

What is good service quality? Frontline day service staff's perspectives on what it is and how it should be measured.

Jade McEwen
PhD Candidate
School of Allied Health
8th of May, 2019

Background

- For the past 30 years, day services have been operating under government led quality systems.
- Despite this, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with a disability at the hands of staff is '**rife**' within Australia (Parliament of Victoria, 2016).
- People with disabilities are 10 times more likely to have experienced abuse (Coalition of Australian Governments, 2011).
- Many examples of organisations passing quality inspections despite the prevalence of abuse
- Where are we going wrong?

Background

- 81% of the evidence reviewed during quality inspections is a process or record of some kind (McEwen, Bigby & Douglas, 2014)
- Little time is spent exploring the quality of the support people with disabilities receive (McEwen, Bigby & Douglas, 2014).
- Consequently, we don't know a lot about the quality of the supports delivered to people with disabilities in day services;
- And what influences the quality of those supports.

Aim

- This research aims to understand the way service quality is understood by day service staff, and how their understanding influences their attitudes, behaviors and practices.
- 3 disability service organisations across Melbourne took part in the research
- 17 staff in total including 9 'front line' staff; 7 support workers , 2 team leaders & 8 senior leaders.
- This presentation looks at findings from interviews undertaken with frontline staff

Method

- A constructivist grounded theory methodology guided the research
- Semi structured interviews were conducted with day service staff.
- Interview questions included:
 - What does 'good' service quality look like?
 - How do you know if you are delivering 'good' service quality?
 - What factors influence your ability to deliver 'good service quality'?
- Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed for key themes using line by line coding

Findings

What good service quality looks like for frontline day service staff

Collaborative hands on leadership on the frontline

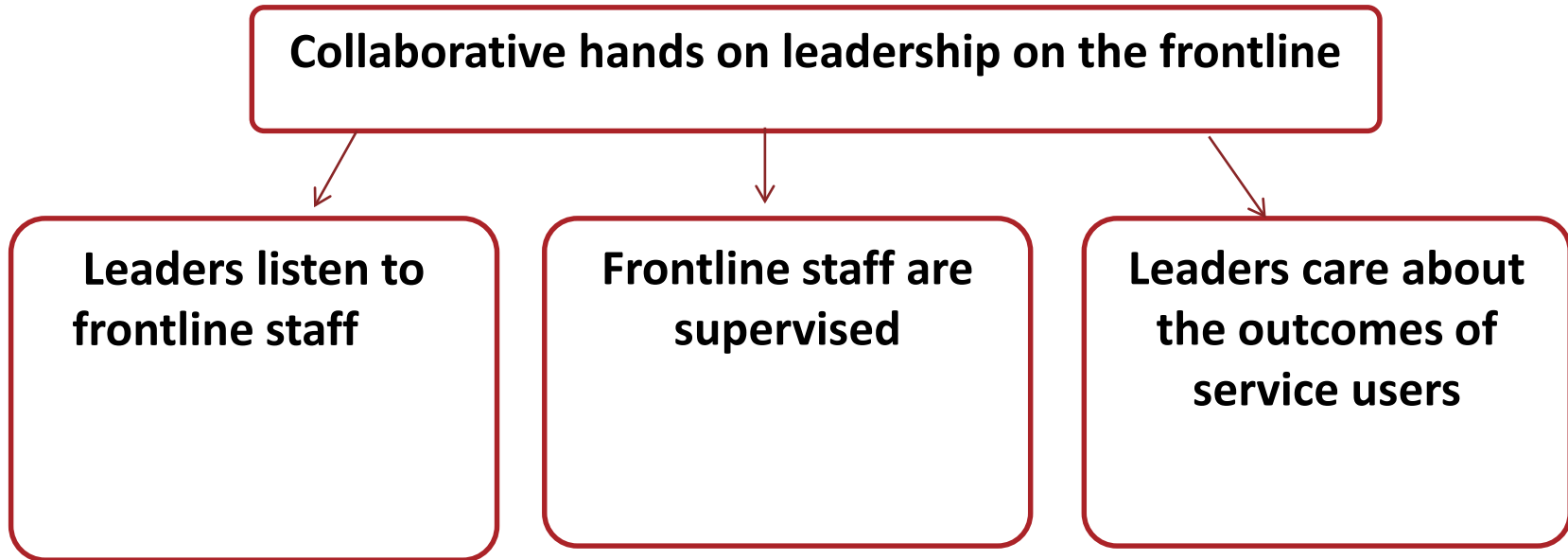
Well planned, organised services

Staff respecting people with disabilities & their carers

There is a culture of continuous improvement

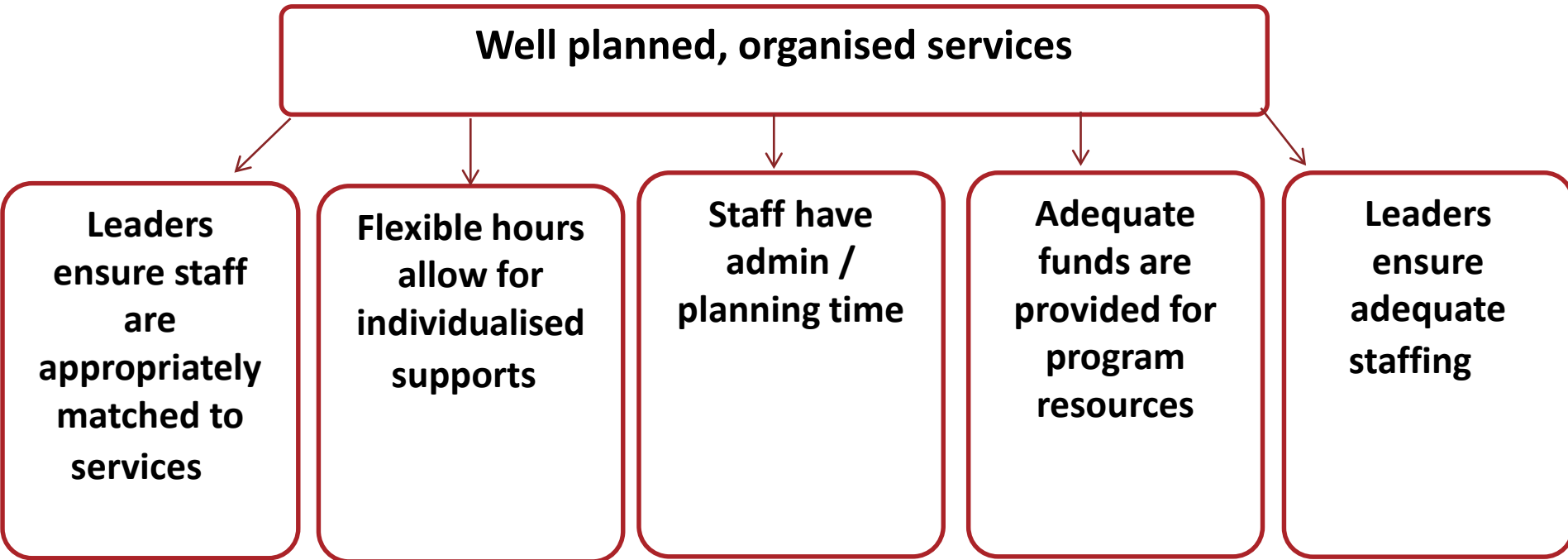
The Support Worker role is professionalised

Findings



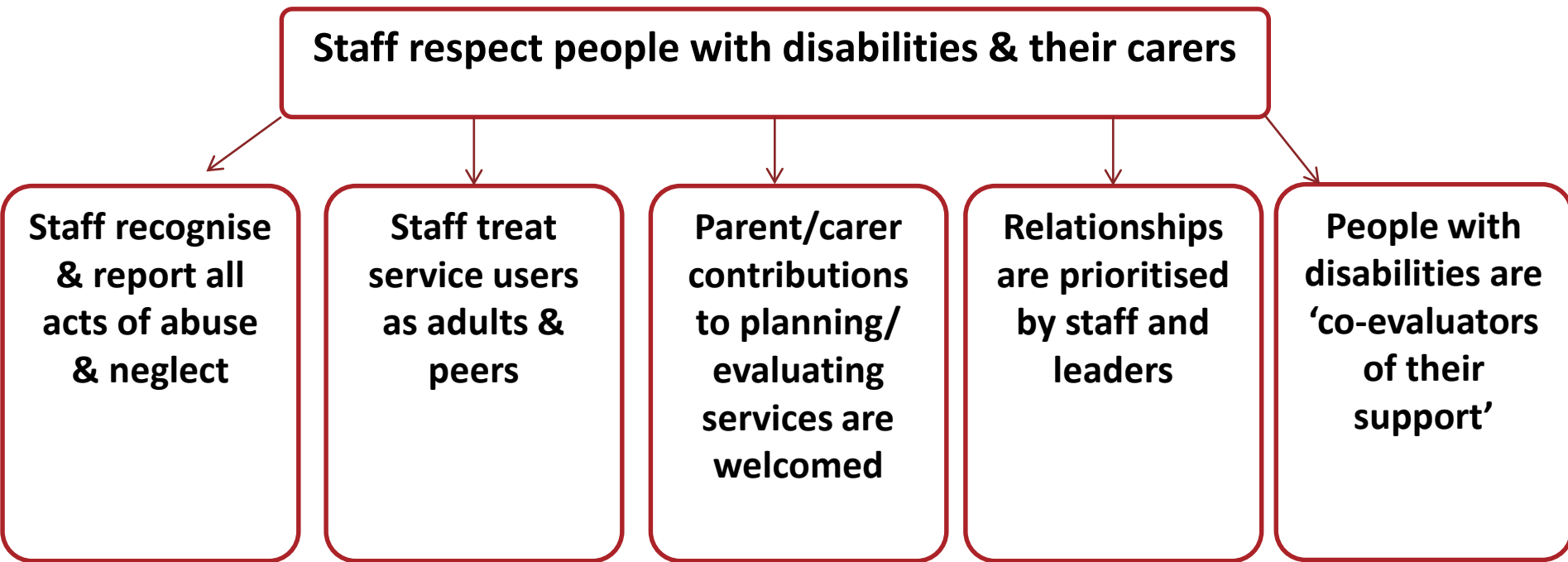
“A program that’s in the back room, sitting in the back room sitting heavily in their chairs, a lot of staff on their phones, driving around, they’re not quality. So I think that for quality in a centre, I think that the management really need to be, keep a better eye on staff, everyone needs to be more accountable about what they are doing in programs, I don’t think that’s emphasised enough, personally” – Mary, Support Worker

Findings



“There’s some days where in that back room people could just be changing all day and feeding them and that’s it, they don’t have time to do anything else, we’ve got that many clients and so little staff in our service, but if we had more money we’d employ more staff”. – Holly, Team Leader

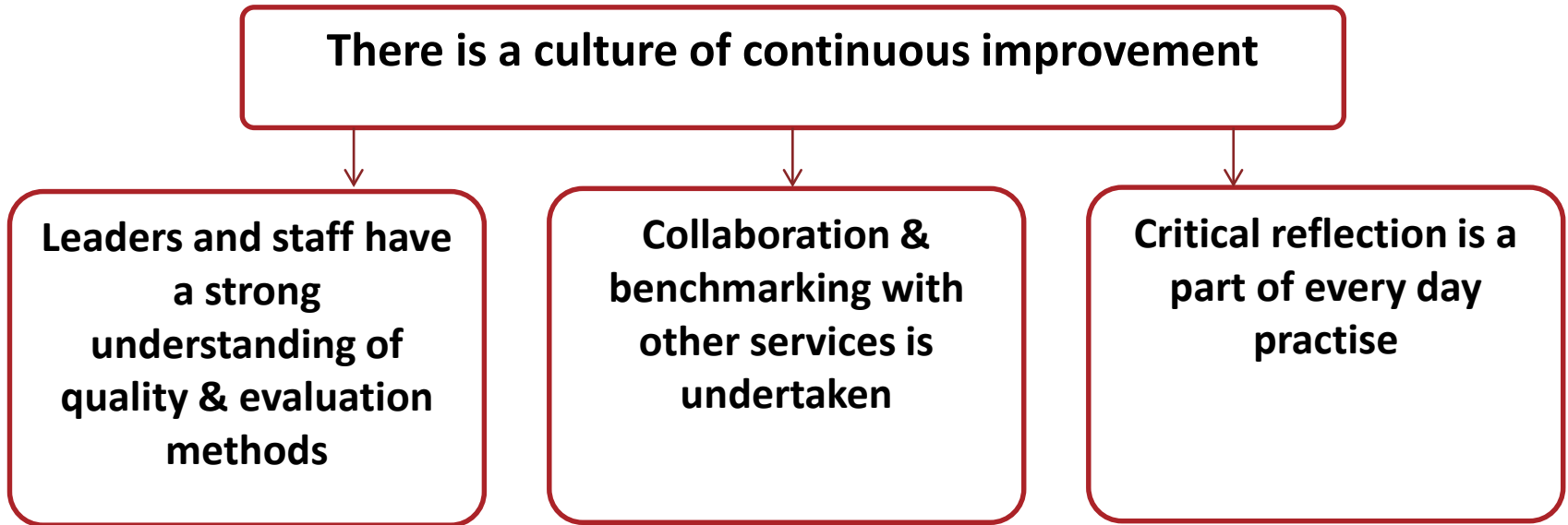
Findings



“It’s not just heading into a van and driving out somewhere and calling it community access” – James, Support Worker

“Well for me it's more, I suppose it's treating someone how you wish to be treated, you know, if you don't want to be spoken to in a nasty manner, if you don't want to be, you know, left in a dirty incontinence aid for 5 hours then yeah, you're not going to do that to anyone else” – Natalie, Support Worker

Findings



“We sort of throw in a couple of extra things, we might say, for the guy's that are verbal, 'oh what was the best part of your day? 'And they'll say ' I cooked, I had cooking this morning and I cooked a beautiful lasagna or something' and then we can check they're diaries and say 'Oh I see you had music today, I know you love music, did you sing any of the songs today/ or whatever they're favorite songs are”.

– Leo, Support Worker

Findings



“There’s lots of different personalities here where some staff are quite strong in personality and that can clash with the needs of the individuals because that person is actually a little bit shy or a bit reserved or conservative and that is an issue for them to be in a program where there is a facilitator who might be a bit loud” – Lucy, Team Leader

“It gets a bit frustrating, you know, you're supposed to be so highly qualified and you don't know what, you know, what the different types of Epilepsy are or different types of Autism, it's just a bit frustrating”. – Mary, Support Worker

Conclusion

- Current ways of measuring service quality are not working
- We need to measure the way that people with disabilities are being supported
- We need to understand staff's perceptions, beliefs and experiences
- We need to make the connection between the 'frontline' and 'authentic' service quality – Total Quality Management in engineering vs human services.



Thank you