



Holstep Health
Community care. For life.



Thrive.
Strategic Directions
2025-2028



Holstep Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the unceded lands and waterways where we work. We acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonisation and the sorrow of the Stolen Generations. We pay our deepest respect to Elders past and present and honour their enduring connection to Country. We recognise their ongoing care for these lands over countless generations and commit to listening, learning, and walking together toward a future grounded in truth, respect, and justice.

At Holstep Health, we welcome people at all ages and stages of life. We work with diverse communities shaped by culture, faith, ability, sexuality, gender, age, lived experience and migration status. Enriched by this diversity, we are committed to upholding human rights, promoting equity, and providing culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive services and spaces where everyone feels valued, supported and able to thrive.



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A message from our Chair and CEO

We are proud to introduce the inaugural three year Strategic Directions for Holstep Health - our new organisation formed through the merger of Banyule Community Health and Merri Health in late 2024.

While our name has changed, our unwavering purpose endures: to provide lifelong, community based care that empowers individuals, addresses inequities, and supports every person to thrive - regardless of their background or circumstances.

Built on the strengths of our legacy organisations, Holstep Health moves forward with greater scale, broader expertise, and deeper community connection - well positioned to drive meaningful, measurable impact.

Our Strategic Directions 2025-28 outline our path forward. Developed through conversations with consumers, staff, community, and partners, they are grounded in lived experience and shared aspirations.

Listening and responding to our communities remains central to who we are and how we work.

We recognise significant challenges facing our communities and the health system - rising rates of chronic and complex conditions, an ageing population, social isolation, economic pressures, and escalating effects of climate change on wellbeing.

At the same time, advances in technology, sector reforms, and resource constraints demand adaptability, innovation, and strong leadership.

Our strategy is built around five key pillars:

- 1. Thriving individuals and families**
- 2. Thriving communities**
- 3. Thriving workforce**
- 4. Thriving organisation**
- 5. Thriving sector**

Our focus remains on delivering seamless, person centred care that wraps around each individual and family, while we integrate our systems, teams and programs.

Innovation drives our practice - we are embracing digital solutions, harnessing data, and embedding evaluation to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Sustainable, purpose-led growth is at the core of our approach. We are dedicated to reducing our environmental footprint and building partnerships that reflect our values and expand our impact.

Together, we aim to develop tailored models of care that deliver long term, community benefits.

We will leverage our capability, capacity, and experience in statewide service delivery - as well as our leadership in fostering and managing strategic partnerships - to broaden our reach and maximise outcomes for diverse communities.

Above all, our people are at the heart of Holstep Health. Creating a workplace where our staff feel respected, supported and connected to purpose is key to achieving our vision.

As we move forward, we remain deeply committed to being a strong, trusted voice for our communities - advocating for systems change, equity, and care shaped by those with lived experience.

We invite our communities to walk alongside us as we bring these directions to life - together building a healthier, more connected future for all.



Tass Mousaferiadis
Board Chair



Tassia Michaleas
Chief Executive Officer

Our history

For over 50 years, Banyule Community Health and Merri Health have been caring for the community, continually evolving and growing in response to the changing needs of the people and communities we serve.



Our name

Holstep Health, our new name, was created in 2025 with more than 300 consumers, partners, community members and staff sharing their ideas to help develop our brand.

It captures our deep commitment to holistic care that supports every aspect of your health and wellbeing — physical, mental, social, financial, and legal.



Holstep Health

Community care.
For life.

- **“Hol”** comes from holistic, demonstrating our approach to treating the whole person with ‘wrap-around’ care. It highlights our belief that health is interconnected, and true care requires attention to all areas of a person’s life.
- **“Step”** is the journey we take together with our consumers, walking alongside you every step of your health journey.

“Community care. For life.” reinforces our deep connection and commitment to providing expert local care at all stages of life.

Our logo shows our unwavering commitment to person centred care, putting people at the heart of everything we do. Each coloured ‘step’ represents our comprehensive range of services, supporting you as your needs change.



Our vision

Healthy and connected individuals and communities.

Our purpose

To provide lifelong, community based care that empowers individuals, addresses inequity, and supports every person to thrive.

Our values



Compassion

We are guided by kindness, responsiveness, and equity.



Empowerment

We are grounded in dignity, respect, and meaningful engagement.



Excellence

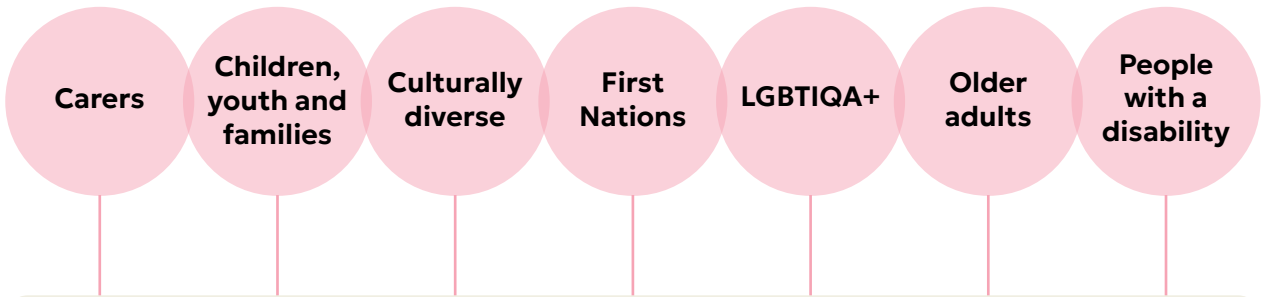
We are driven by quality, innovation, and impact.

Our strategic pillars

1. Thriving individuals and families
2. Thriving communities
3. Thriving workforce
4. Thriving organisation
5. Thriving sector

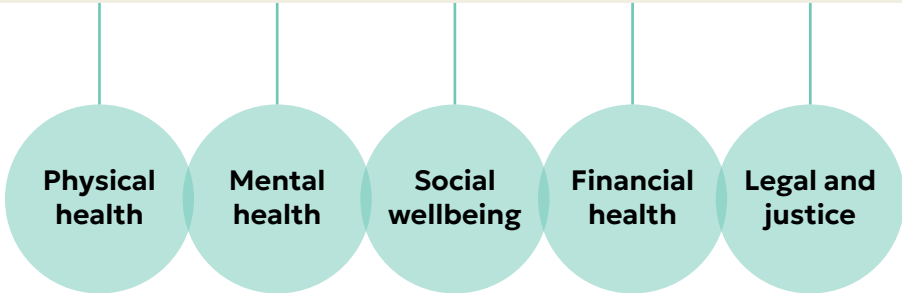


Who we serve



At Holstep Health, everyone is welcome.

We're here for **individuals, families and communities** from all walks of life, providing compassionate community based care, specialist treatment and prevention that empowers individuals and addresses inequity. With over 120 services, we provide holistic care through all stages of life that responds to individual and community needs. Our communities and services include:



Our strategic environment

The needs and expectations of the communities we serve are evolving quickly and Holstep Health is adapting. Challenges such as increasing rates of chronic and complex conditions, an ageing population, the impacts of social isolation, global health events like COVID-19, the impact of climate change and cost of living pressures all shape the environment that we operate in.

The rise in technology based solutions, increasing costs of delivering care and a sector facing reform and constraints in funding requires a contemporary organisation with a keen eye on current trends and community needs. We know there will be future pressures and our focus is firmly on what is best for our communities.



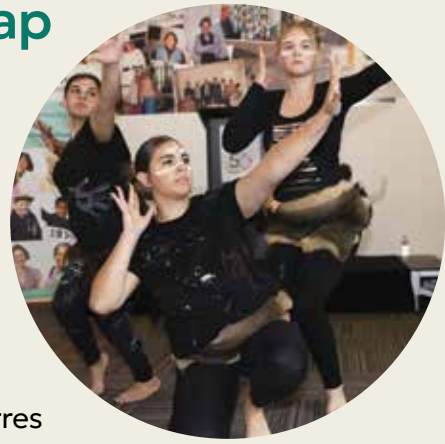
Our commitment to Closing the Gap

Holstep Health is committed to advancing health equity and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in alignment with the national Closing the Gap commitments. We recognise the leadership of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in driving self-determination and commit to working in genuine partnership with Community, ACCOs, and Elders.

Holstep Health embraces a whole-of-organisation approach to promote respect, equity, and recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We demonstrate this by:

- Providing culturally safe environments.
- Embedding cultural safety and accountability into our systems, governance, and service design.
- Celebrating the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, past and present.
- Delivering training and building cultural responsiveness across our entire workforce.

Both Banyule Community Health and Merri Health have built strong relationships with local communities and developed Reconciliation Action Plans to formalise these commitments. While a new plan is being developed, we will continue to act on existing commitments and identify opportunities to embed Aboriginal-led priorities across Holstep Health's programs and strategy.



Nunkeri Tiddas

Celebrating and championing LGBTIQ+ inclusion



We proudly welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, non-binary, aromantic, asexual, and gender-diverse people.

We are committed to addressing health inequities and discrimination often experienced by LGBTIQ+ people; and to ensuring everyone feels safe, valued, and respected when accessing our services, working with us, or partnering with us.

Holstep Health's LGBTIQ+ Committee is committed to overseeing our action plan, which includes:

- Maintaining Rainbow Tick accreditation to ensure our services meet best-practice standards.
- Delivering mandatory LGBTIQ+ awareness and inclusion training for all staff, as well as ongoing development opportunities.
- Listening and learning from lived experience community and staff to ensure our services and spaces are culturally safe, welcoming and inclusive.
- Celebrating key milestones and cultural events, including Midsumma, IDAHOBIT and Pride Month.



Midsumma Festival

Our principles of working

Our principles put our values into action and form the foundation of our decision-making, underpinning every aspect of our operations. They guide how we work together to achieve our strategic goals—enabling us to act with integrity, adapt strategically, and deliver impactful results.



Community centred

Our origins stem from a movement of community action and leadership. We connect through engagement to empower individuals and address inequity. We advocate and work in partnership with communities to design programs to make an impact and meet need.

Person led

We recognise each person is unique and requires responses that respond and reflect their needs. We deliver a person centred approach through compassionate care and accessible services.

Culturally safe

We are enriched by the diverse communities we serve and are committed to providing culturally safe and respectful services. We listen to the voices of our communities and ensure our people are trained to be responsive to needs.

Quality focused

We are led by the best available evidence and research, clinical expertise, and the guidance of consumers and those with lived experience. We are driven by processes of feedback, review and continuous improvement to achieve excellence in what we do.

Health equity focused

We are committed to ensuring a social justice approach to our work, acknowledging the importance of community participation, intersectionality, and the social determinants of health.

Environmentally focused

We are committed to leading environmental sustainability within the sector. We are focused on reducing our carbon footprint through building organisational resilience to climate-related risks and continually improving our environmental sustainability practices.

Our strategic pillars

Five strategic pillars underpin our strategy and focus our efforts.

1. Thriving individuals and families

We support the health, wellbeing and success of individuals and families by creating inclusive, empowering services and environments where everyone can thrive. We commit to work alongside them, providing services with compassion, and a focus on quality and excellence.



Our ambitions

Grow holistic care that impacts positive health outcomes, lifts equity and increases access to services.

Drive service innovation and delivery that responds to the needs of individuals and families.

Empower individuals to lead change, and develop and deliver initiatives that promote health and wellbeing.

Deliver quality and safe services that respond to need and build capacity of individuals and families.

Outcomes

- Implement new clinical practice approaches that improve consumer outcomes.
- More individuals reached by expanding accessible, place based services within local communities.
- An Integrated Practice Service Model that improves consumer outcomes by fostering coordinated, holistic approaches to care.
- Lived Experience Framework renewed and embedded.
- A comprehensive Impact Measurement Framework developed.

Kalpana's story... Caring for carers



Kalpana has been caring for her son, who has lived with mental health challenges since childhood. For many years, she has gone above and beyond to support him, often putting her own needs last.

A few years ago, her son needed additional support, and Kalpana began to feel overwhelmed. She couldn't stop worrying about what the future might hold.

"You go through a cycle of 'Why me? Why is this happening to my son?'"

Realising she needed to prioritise her own wellbeing to continue caring for her son, Kalpana admits, "I needed to be more practical; I needed to look after myself too." That's when she called Carer Gateway at Holstep Health.



“ They helped a great deal in changing my thought process and eased many of my worries.”

Through Carer Gateway, Kalpana accessed in-person counselling sessions.

She also joined a monthly Carer Gateway peer support group, where she connects with other carers, learns coping skills and shares experiences. "We talk about each others' issues and have a good laugh. As mothers, we understand each other."

“

Don't undermine your experience because someone else might seem like they're having a harder time, or because you don't identify as a carer. Remember that while your caring role is important and does matter, you matter as well!"

- Courtney, Young Carer Engagement Advisor with Carer Gateway



2. Thriving communities

Thriving communities are built with wide collaboration and support. We are dedicated to working alongside communities, drawing on lived experiences to co-create solutions that lead to meaningful and lasting change.



Our ambitions

Partner with communities to shape local solutions by embedding community engagement and lived experience at the heart of planning and service delivery.

Mobilise communities to drive change and reach its potential.

Collaborate with our local communities and partners to build healthy and connected communities.

Elevate diversity and inclusive practices across all programs and services.

Outcomes

- New programs and services that reflect community needs.
- A Partnership Framework that strengthens engagement and relationships with community partners.
- Community advocacy campaigns and activities that strengthen our communities.
- A Diversity and Inclusion Plan that is codesigned and reflective of our diverse and unique communities.
- A new Reconciliation Action Plan launched and embedded.
- Implementation of new strategic and operational partnerships to enhance the health and connectiveness of diverse communities.

Building friendships and staying active!

Connecting with each other is fundamental to your health. Social connections keep our mind and body active. A range of programs support people coming together and enjoying each other's company. Since 2008, the Banyule Men's Shed is driven by an ethos of inclusion, acceptance and working 'shoulder to shoulder'. It has been a pivotal space for men to connect and belong, creating friendships and keeping hands busy.



“ I enjoy the social aspect of the Shed. There's always someone to help out with a project or to chat to.”

Every weekday in West Brunswick, you can hear the excited chatter among many of the different social groups gathering. There are outing groups that hop on buses for day trips, an Italian group catching up over morning tea, gardening groups turning soil and movement groups keeping active.

A regular participant in our Social Support Program, Lovie, decided to get moving after retiring last year. She knew she needed to stay active and joined after seeing the program on Facebook.

“I said, I have to do something after working for so long, your mind is always working, and then you suddenly stop. This is great because I don't need very intense exercise. It's really enjoyable!”

Rose found the program through the local council and started attending the group after retiring during the pandemic. She found it hard to find the motivation to get out and socialise again.

She now joins the weekly outings group, enjoying the chance to explore new places. One of her favourite trips was to Geelong's beach and botanical gardens.



“ I feel like it's my community. I come out and I feel connected again where I was isolated before.”

3. Thriving workforce

Grow and nurture a thriving, skilled workforce that reflects our diverse communities - where every individual employee, volunteer and student feels valued, respected, supported and empowered to lead positive change and deliver lasting impact.



Our ambitions

Build a purpose centred culture that connects our people to the organisation's values, community impact, and promotes pride in their contributions.

Attract and retain a skilled, diverse workforce as an employer of choice that provides flexible and meaningful career opportunities, where people can bring their whole self to work.

Empower leadership at all levels where decision making is shared and adaptive leadership is modelled throughout the organisation.

Invest in growth and development by embedding continuous professional development and access to career pathways.

Invest and support students with practical, meaningful experiences that build future health and community sector leaders.

Outcomes

- Engaged and satisfied employees and volunteers.
- Increase workforce and capability through high levels of training engagement.
- An employer of choice that successfully attracts skilled individuals.
- A strong culture of purpose and commitment where values are clearly reflected in everyday behaviours and decision making.
- Staff are recognised for outstanding staff achievements and outcomes.
- A leader in health and community sector student development.

Staff spotlight

“

Meet **Ladan**, Health Promotion Officer since 2022.

I work at Holstep Health because I care deeply about the health and wellbeing of my community. Being able to connect with my community, share knowledge, and support others in navigating services makes this work not just a job, but something I'm genuinely proud of. I'm excited to continue to support the community and be at the forefront of emerging community needs.”



“

Meet **Chris**, Receptionist since 2025.

Working at Holstep Health means I am part of an organisation that helps vulnerable people often overlooked by the system. I also work with a wonderful team who welcomed me from day one and encourage me to be myself and bring my personality to work.

Seeing consumers progress through their journey and knowing we are helping improve their quality of life regardless of their history or background is a highlight of my job.”



“

Meet **Kim**, Home Care Packages Intake Officer since 2016.

I work at Holstep Health because it feels good to do something that matters. I believe everyone deserves to be supported with dignity and respect – especially as they get older. I'm not one who can sit back while people struggle to get the help they need. At Holstep Health, I get to be a part of the solution.

We will always keep our focus on people – staying real, being responsive and doing the right thing.”



“

Meet **Dom**, podiatrist since 2009.

Since starting at Holstep Health as a graduate podiatrist I've been able to grow and develop professionally. I've learned so much from the community I work with and feel rewarded by the work we do. Every day I love working with the team around me - they've been so supportive in everything we do.”



4. Thriving organisation

We will build by investing in systems, processes and facilities to improve consumer and staff experience. Investing in our organisation is a commitment to our communities and our future to enable us to thrive. We believe a strong and modern organisation will appeal and align to staff, attract opportunities for purpose driven growth and meet environmental and social expectations.



Our ambitions

Build a sector leading organisation by integrating services and systems.

Attract diverse and new funding by demonstrating measurable outcomes, value-for-money, and the capacity to sustainably scale.

Achieve measurable improvements in safety, quality, and consumer experience.

Invest in data, systems, technology and facilities to drive better operational outcomes for staff and the community.

Invest in research and evaluation by embedding evidence driven learning into every level of the organisation to inform decision making, drive innovation and demonstrate impact.

Grow for purpose and impact by expanding our reach, strengthening community partnerships, and scaling solutions that deliver lasting change.

Outcomes

- High public profile of sector leading practice and excellence.
- Growth and diversification in service funding.
- Improved data, systems and technology.
- Fit for purpose modern facilities for staff and communities.
- Evidence based practice and evaluation embedded at the core of organisational decision making and innovation.

Shayne's story...

Not a Dollar More

Shayne's experience is similar to many others - he began struggling with gambling addiction as a teenager and wasn't able to stop until he was 27.

It was this struggle that inspired Shayne to work with us in 2019 to develop the **Not a Dollar More** podcast series. It was designed to share the lived experience journey of shame, help seeking and recovery.

The nine-episode podcast series created by Holstep Health tackles different aspects of gambling addiction starting with the essential question of "is your gambling harmful?"



“ People have an opportunity to listen to someone who has gone through it. The day to day struggles; the struggle with not being able to afford to put petrol in your car. All these things that people can't talk to other people about - this podcast is great for.”



GAMBLING HARM
PODCAST

Shayne's advocacy and unique approach to engagement helped shape the role of lived experience responses to gambling related harm in Victoria.

Not A Dollar More is one of a range of confidential supports for people experiencing harm from their gambling and for those affected by someone else's gambling.

5. Thriving sector

Leaders in our sector, working collaboratively to deliver improved and innovative responses to benefit our communities. We believe we can make a valuable contribution through our experience, skill, and lived experience voices to shape a sector that empowers individuals, addresses inequity and supports every person to thrive.



Our ambitions

Lead conversations that matter, strengthening advocacy as a trusted voice for the communities we serve, guided by human rights and lived experience.

Shape policy, investment, and reform by working with funders, government, and sector leaders to direct resources to community based preventative and responsive models of care.

Partner with other services to develop, collaborate and deliver innovative solutions that improve health and sector outcomes, and reduce the burden on hospitals.

Lead environmentally sustainable practices and responses to climate related health impacts.

Outcomes

- Partner and provider of choice for funders, government, peak bodies and other services.
- Influence policy development and funding, to prioritise community focused, preventative, and responsive care models.
- Reduced carbon footprint, improved waste management and a future ready organisation prepared for climate related risks.

Our impact...

Working together to prevent elder abuse



Holstep Health proudly leads the Elder Abuse Prevention Network (EAPN) in Victoria’s North and West Metropolitan regions – a partnership of 60+ community organisations and local government agencies dedicated to preventing elder abuse and promoting respect for older people.

Together, EAPN partners work to challenge ageism, address the root causes of abuse, and build the skills and confidence of professionals to respond. The strength of the network lies in our shared knowledge, diverse perspectives, and deep community roots.

“ Together, we are shifting the conversations, culture and systems that allow elder abuse to go unnoticed. Our strength is in our collaboration—and the belief that every older person deserves safety, dignity, and a voice.”

Key outcomes over the past year include:

- **Sector capacity building:** co-developed the Abuse of Older People Response Toolkit with regional family violence services—a practical guide to help professionals in health, aged care, and community respond confidently to elder abuse using trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches.
- **Raising awareness:** through World Elder Abuse Awareness Day events.
- **Empowering older people:** through initiatives like a digital literacy pop-up with Lively, supporting older people to build confidence with technology to reduce social isolation.
- **Celebrating voices:** with grassroots initiatives including *Silver Threads and Golden Needles*, a powerful project that combats the combined impacts of ageism and gender inequality.
- **Equity and access:** launched a digital accessibility audit tool to help organisations create more inclusive websites for older users.



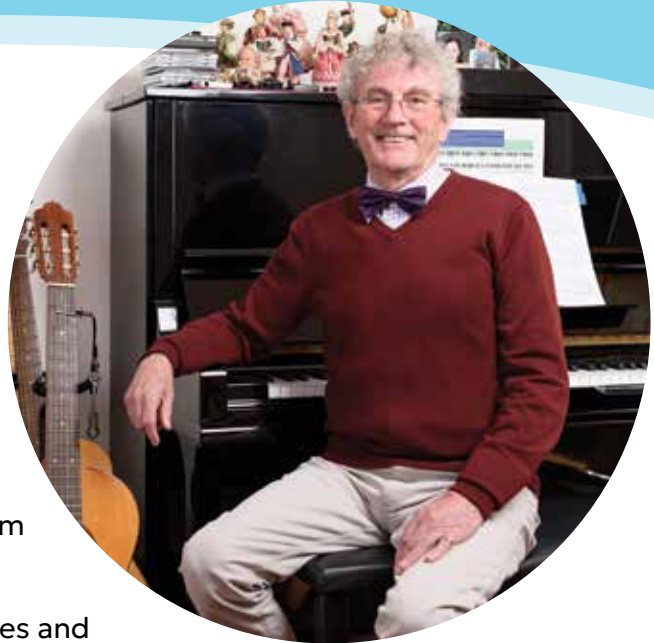
Bernie's story...

Putting your mental health first

Since the passing of his wife, Eva, in 2015, Bernie has experienced grief, anxiety and sleep problems, accompanied by low moods. In early 2023, he was referred into the Holstep Health Stepped Care for Older Adults program by our partner, St Vincent's Hospital.

The program offers a range of different groups tailored to help each person. Bernie liked the structure and enjoyed meeting other people from different cultures and backgrounds.

He found support through sharing his experiences and listening to others around him. Inspired by a new friend, he even started piano lessons, which he continues to enjoy.



“ Don't give up! If you recognise that you have a problem, don't bottle it up. Go and see a health professional, there is plenty of help out there.”



Bernie's journey shows that it's never too late to seek support — and to find joy in new beginnings.

Bringing our strategic directions to life

Our strategy is more than a document — it is a living framework that guides how we think, work, and lead every day.

Grounded in our values, it shapes our decisions, drives our actions, and unites our efforts across the organisation. These values are the foundation of how we collaborate with each other, engage with communities, and deliver services with purpose and integrity.

The strategy is brought to life through our Executive Plan and translated into clear program, team, and individual workplans. These plans ensure that every part of the organisation is aligned with our shared goals and contributing meaningfully to our strategic priorities.

Our ambitions and defined outcomes guide how we measure progress, evaluate performance, and stay accountable. This approach enables us to continually improve and deliver tangible impact.

The Board and Executive Group review and monitor our progress annually to ensure we remain responsive to emerging community needs, evolving policy and funding landscapes, and the opportunities ahead.

We are committed to transparency and shared learning. We will report on our progress and impact regularly to our community, funders, and partners — including through our Annual Report and other communication channels.

Ian uses Holstep Health podiatry and dental services. A routine visit to Lisa, his podiatrist, revealed swelling in his ankles that prompted an immediate visit to his doctor and then a cardiologist. The ankle swelling was linked to an unknown heart condition that required six stents in his heart.

“ Lisa, my podiatrist, saved my life! I wrote a letter to her CEO and told them that her observation was life saving.”

Ian continues treatment but believes support from Lisa, his healthcare team, and wife gave him ‘a second chance’.



Thrive.

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