

Information for GPs and private psychiatrists

Changes to mental health services at EMPHN

Eastern Melbourne PHN (EMPHN) will continue to fund mental health services but in a different way from January 2018.

EMPHN will implement a Mental Health Stepped Care Model to provide a continuum of primary mental health services within a person-centred stepped care approach. The model provides a range of service types, making the best use of available workforce and technology within the local region, to better match individual and local population needs. The development of a Mental Health Stepped Care Model is consistent with Australian Government policy following a review of primary mental health services by the National Mental Health Commission in 2014.

What is stepped care?

Stepped care is an evidence-based, staged system comprising a hierarchy of interventions, from the least to the most intensive, matched to the individual's needs. The multiple levels within a stepped care approach offer a spectrum of service interventions that incorporate existing, as well as a new range of modalities from e-health to services delivered by peer workers, allied health professionals and credentialed mental health nurses. The level of intensity of care should be matched to the complexity of the conditions experienced by the consumer, addressing mental health and associated needs in relation to physical health, education and employment, alcohol and other drug harm reduction, family and social functioning, and suicide and self-harm reduction.

Why use a stepped care approach?

This approach will address some of the key concerns and challenges in the mental health system by shifting the focus towards an early intervention approach where people with mental health problems and mental illness have their needs addressed early, rather than waiting until the problems worsen and require more intensive intervention.

There are three broad outcomes EMPHN is seeking to change as part of implementing the Stepped Care Model:

- At the consumer (individual) level, through active implementation of a person-centred approach and a holistic assessment of needs.
- At the organisational/workforce level, through effective performance measurement frameworks integrated with the structure of the organisation and relevant to the way the workforce operates 'on the ground'.
- At the systems level, through improved referral pathways consumer journeys, and through evidence-informed services delivered with cost effective use of resources.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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How will the Stepped Care Model be implemented?

EMPHN will implement its Stepped Care Model in three geographical stages over a 12-month period.

1. North East Melbourne: LGAs of Whittlesea, Banyule, Nillumbik, and parts of the Shires of Mitchell and Murrindindi within the EMPHN catchment, with service delivery to be operational by 15/1/2018.
2. Outer East Melbourne: LGAs of Maroondah, Knox, Shire of Yarra Ranges. Service delivery to be operational by 1/7/2018 (indicative).
3. Inner East Melbourne: LGAs of Boroondara, Manningham, Whitehorse, Monash with service delivery to be operational by 14/1/2019 (indicative).

Following co-design and engagement with stakeholders over more than a year to develop EMPHN's Stepped Care Model, an open tender process was undertaken to commission the first stage of the model in the north east of EMPHN's catchment.

To mitigate service disruption in the north east, EMPHN has used a phased approach wherein some of the current providers have been given extension of their contracts until mid-January 2018 as the new service providers under the new Stepped Care Model commence.

What will happen to the Mental Health Nursing Services and Psychological Strategies?

As part of the transition to the Stepped Care Model, the programs of Mental Health Nursing Services (formerly MHNIP) and Psychological Strategies (formerly ATAPS) will come to an end starting in the North East. Services such as clinical care coordination and short-term psychological interventions within a primary care setting will form part of the suite of services offered in the Stepped Care Model. The workforce of the new Stepped Care Model will include peer workers, allied health professionals and mental health nurses.

During the transition, where can I get more information or find additional services to help my clients under the care of a mental health nurse or allied health professional commissioned by EMPHN?

GPs, private psychiatrists, allied health professionals or the mental health nurses can contact EMPHN's Access and Referral Team (Ph: 9800 1071) to discuss appropriate referral options for your client.

Referrals to the new Stepped Care Model will be available via the new Stepped Care provider or EMPHN's Referral and Access Team from late January. Further information about referral pathways and processes for the new Stepped Care Model in the North East will be distributed to GP practices in early January 2018, in addition to information sheets for clients and carers.

For further information:

EMPHN's Referral and Access Team
P: 9800 1071
W: www.emphn.org.au