

Changes to the Mental Health Nursing Services

Information for referrers, GPs and private psychiatrists

EMPHN appreciates the valuable service provided by credentialed mental health nurses in the community as part of the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP) established by the Commonwealth in 2007 to meet the needs of people experiencing severe mental health issues.

From 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, MHNIP was part of a suite of mental health programs that Eastern Melbourne PHN (EMPHN) was funded to deliver by the Commonwealth Government Department of Health.

In a parallel process, Primary Health Networks (PHNs) across Australia have begun developing their respective Stepped Care Models (SCM) for mental health services to:

- offer a variety of support options for people with different levels and types of need
- provide clear pathways between these options as individuals' needs change
- connect to other community and clinical mental health services available in the local area.

Why?

The Stepped Care Model is part of the Australian Government's response to the [National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services](#). The reforms outlined in the response aim to transform Commonwealth mental health funding and program delivery over the next three years to achieve a more efficient, integrated and sustainable mental health system and to improve mental health services for Australians into the future.

How will the transition occur?

As EMPHN continues shaping its Stepped Care Model, in consultation with its stakeholders, its priority is keeping clients at the centre by putting in place arrangements that will ensure continuity of care for clients currently receiving mental health nursing services from EMPHN's contracted providers.

To mitigate service disruption, EMPHN will use a phased approach wherein some of the current providers will be contracted to continue service delivery, as the new service providers under the new SCM framework come on-board.

EMPHN is committed to assisting to build the capacity of the sector to transition to a new system of mental health care tailored to north-east and east Melbourne and is working with the sector to identify what the capacity building and workforce training needs are.

We want to retain good practitioners from the existing workforce and they will have a key role in the future Stepped Care Model.

How can I help my clients during the transition?

The Mental Health Nursing Incentive Program or Mental Health Nursing Service was established to help people with severe and persistent mental disorders and at risk of hospitalisation. Given the challenges of this target group, a collaborative team approach is often required. This means that the MH nurse and GP are not the only service providers responsible for the individual's care arrangements. Good practice recommends the involvement of other relevant service providers such as psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and Partners in Recovery (PIR) Support Facilitators. If this is not yet in place, it is recommended that the transition arrangements in the recovery plan (or MHTP) include linking the client with other service providers.

Where can I find additional services to help my clients under the care of a mental health nurse?

GPs, private psychiatrists or the mental health nurses can contact EMPHN's Intake Team (phone 9800 1071) to discuss possible services or providers that your client may be referred to. For instance, EMPHN is piloting a service for the next six months where GPs and other primary health service providers can access secondary consultation from either a mental health nurse practitioner or a psychiatrist. There are other pilot programs under Psychological Strategies that may also be appropriate.

Can I still refer my client who requires the service of a mental health nurse?

Yes, EMPHN has extended contracts with organisations delivering mental health nursing services as part of ensuring service continuity during the transition to the stepped care model. The referral process is the same e.g. GPs complete a Mental Health Treatment Plan and the MH services Referral Form, the latter to be sent to EMPHN's Intake Team.

However, it is recommended that the GP/psychiatrist and mental health nurse include transition arrangements in the client's MHTP or recovery plan.

Timelines to transition to the future Stepped Care Model

- Procurement and appointment of the first providers under the new model is planned to be undertaken in late 2017.
- Transition to the new model is planned to be complete in 2020, allowing the sector time to adapt, evolve and adjust to the changes.

For more information about these changes: EMPHN Referral and Access Team: 9800 1071