

PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH

Frequently asked questions for clients and carers

14 February 2018

With the reform of the primary mental health system and the implementation of stepped care from 1 March this year, there may be changes to the way you receive your mental health services in future.

This Commonwealth Government reform is aimed at providing the best possible care for people experiencing mental illness and to make that care available in a way that best suits individuals. It is also focussed on increasing care among underserved people in Australia's priority health groups.

Stepped care gives people the opportunity to step their care up, or step it down, depending on their health needs. It provides access to a range of care options that may be appropriate from time to time.

Your primary mental health service provider may be impacted by this funding change, or they may not. If you are concerned about any possible impact on the continuity of your care, we would encourage you to speak with your provider as soon as possible.

Affected primary mental health service providers are now working on transition plans for each client, as necessary. Many service providers will continue to operate as before. So please contact your mental health provider or your GP if you have any concerns.

My provider has not been selected, so will I automatically get a spot at another clinic or will I have to reapply?

Providers are being supported by Murray PHN to develop transition plans for each of their affected clients, so they will help you work through the specifics of your situation. Your provider will discuss your care plan and future service needs with you before speaking to a preferred provider, confirming eligibility and providing handover information with your consent.

Why did the change have to occur?

The Federal Government has changed the way it funds mental health services, based on the findings from the Contributing lives, thriving communities: report of the national review of mental health programmes and services (National Mental Health Commission: 15/9/2015).

The change in focus is expected to provide a better targeted treatment response, more cost-effective model, while providing appropriate care for patients in their local area.

With the implementation of stepped care in our region, our service system will change to support the new model of care, which is based on the needs of each individual, within a connected and collaborative system.

Why were these new providers chosen over others?

All proposals were reviewed by an expert evaluation panel where bids were scored by panel members and ranked in order. Each bid was mapped for its service area and potential impact on our region, then scored on five main criteria – core competencies, client experience, population health targeting, workforce capability and sustainability and, finally, value for money.

The bids were also rated on their understanding of their local system, their ability to ensure to deliver step up and step down care, and their ability to demonstrate both equity of access and team-based access to clinical care coordination. The decisions of the panel were unanimous.

There were some excellent service providers who were not selected as preferred providers. This does not reflect on the quality of their care, but on the depth of high quality proposals that we received. It is also worth remembering that some service providers opted not to bid in this round of funding.

What happens to my information?

Murray PHN will work with service providers to ensure that the necessary transition of care includes client consent and participation and will continue to monitor the numbers of clients being supported by previous service providers. Murray PHN does not receive any information about individual clients.

When does all the change take place?

The implementation of stepped care reform begins on 1 March 2018 and will continue for some months to come. Some providers will be ready on 1 March; others will take a little longer to start services.

Detailed transition plans will be developed and agreed with incoming providers to support patient continuity. We will also provide a transitional referral advisory and support service to support GPs as they become familiar with the new services available in their areas.

Who can I talk to about these changes?

In the first instance, please speak with your mental health provider, or your local GP. Remember, you can always seek a second opinion from another GP if you prefer.