

Gold Coast Primary Health Network
NEEDS ASSESSMENTS 2020

LOW INTENSITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



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GOLD COAST

An Australian Government Initiative

LOW INTENSITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Local health needs and service issues

Low intensity mental health services aim to target the most appropriate psychological interventions to people experiencing or at risk of developing mild mental illness (primarily low acuity anxiety and/or depressive disorders). Defining target populations, educating consumers and providers and developing low intensity service models will contribute to improved outcomes for a wide group of consumers. Within a stepped care approach, low intensity mental health services target lower intensity mental health needs. This enables the provision of an evidence based and cost-efficient alternative to the higher cost psychological services available through programs such as Better Access and other primary mental health care services.

- Flexible evidence-based services for at risk and mild illness needs are required
- Limited promotion and support of low intensity services to General Practice to support complementary use with other primary health interventions.
- Limited use and accessibility of evidence based electronic (digital) mental health services.
- Limited visibility of demographic data on people experiencing or at risk of developing mild mental illness.



LOW INTENSITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Key findings

- While there are a broad range of quality online and telephone services (eMH services) available for people with low acuity mental health issues, there is limited data on local usage.
- There is limited integration of eMH services as complementary service options within existing primary health care service delivery.
- Consultation indicates effective early intervention can prevent deterioration but there are limited soft entry point models (coaching, wellness focussed, peer-support) that focus on social and community connectedness.
- From a client perspective, a significant positive impact on recovery can be gained by General Practitioners referring to services that fit the needs of the client. For example, treatment options can be augmented using community-based self-help groups and soft entry services that use activities to engage clients and build their skills and confidence.

Prevalence, service usage and other data

The National Mental Health Commission estimate there were approximately three million Australians with a mild-moderate mental illness in 2014. This equates to an estimate of around 77,000 people in the Gold Coast community.

Low intensity services can include online, telephone, individual and group-based interventions. As depicted through the below service mapping table, there are myriad telephone and online services that could be accessed by people on the Gold Coast. While there is limited local usage data for these services a 2015 sample from Beyond Blue's telephone counselling service indicated approximately 44% of calls from the Gold Coast related to depression (26%) and anxiety (18%).

Access to online low intensity service options requires internet connectivity, which may present a barrier for some people. In 2016, Gold Coast households that did not access the internet was 11.4%, lower than the state average of 13.6%. Within the Gold Coast the areas with the most households that did not access the internet were in Coolangatta (15.6%, 3,194 households) and Gold Coast North (14.9%, 3,915 households) ².

Service System

Services	Number in GCPHN Region	Distribution	Capacity Discussion
NewAccess, Beyondblue, Low intensity CBT Coaching (funded by GCPHN)	1 service with 2 FTE coaches that can have an active caseload of 20 each	Service offers online, telephone and face to face services. Outreach locations based in Mermaid Beach and Southport.	NewAccess is a new service with increasing referrals. Due to the paucity of local service usage, it is unclear if there are significant capacity issues with telephone or online services.
Counselling helplines and websites.	10 national help lines (men's line, Veterans and veterans families counselling service, Qlife, CAN, Carers Australia, eheadspace, 1800 Respect, Relationships Australia, Counselling online, Child abuse preventions service	Online and telephone services. Public knowledge of these services and connectivity capacity would drive uptake/demand. Service offers online, telephone and face to face services. Outreach locations based in Northern corridor and Varsity lakes.	Issues may arise during peak periods of call volumes and web activity. Potential access barriers include internet infrastructure and associated costs, digital literacy and consumer and health provider awareness.
Information and referral helplines and websites.	9 national (MindHealthConnect, Mi networks, SANE Australia, beyond blue, ReachOut.com, R U Ok? Black Dog Institute, Mental Health Online, Commonwealth Health Website)	Online and telephone services. Public knowledge of these services and connectivity capacity needed to drive uptake/demand. Online and telephone services. Public knowledge of these services and connectivity capacity would drive uptake/demand.	
eTherapy. Information and referral helplines and websites.	57 (online programs recommended through MindHealth Connect to promote eTherapy and self-care).	Online. Public knowledge of these services and connectivity capacity needed to drive uptake/demand. Online and telephone services. Public knowledge of these services and connectivity capacity needed to drive uptake/demand.	
General Practice	207	Clinics are generally distributed across the Gold Coast, with the majority located in coastal and central areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Practice is a key point of contact for people with mental health needs

Stepped care approach to mental health service

Stepped care is an evidence-based approach that aims to match people to the right level of support to meet their current need. In a stepped care system, the care and supports around a person 'expand' as their needs increase. As a person recovers and their needs change, the level of care and supports can be decreased. Throughout a person's recovery journey, there are different supports available to compliment support from their General Practitioner.

Stepped care provides guidance to Primary Health Networks in our role in planning, commissioning, and coordinating primary mental health care services. Embedding a stepped care approach is fundamental objective for mental health and service planning and commissioning to be undertaken by Gold Coast Primary Health Network. The joint regional plan completed by Gold Coast Primary Health Network and Gold Coast Health offered an opportunity for both organisations to partner in identifying gaps and priorities against the stepped care framework , and to identify workforce and service needs to address these.

While there are multiple levels within a Stepped Care approach, they do not operate in silos or as one directional step, but rather offer a continuum of service interventions matched to the spectrum of mental health. The spectrum and the levels of needs associated with it at a population level are illustrated below.



Consultation indicated some elements of a Stepped Care approach are functioning well in the Gold Coast region; however, commitment is required to continue to engage local stakeholders in a shared understanding.

The Stepped Care model was primarily developed within the mental health sector. While it does not preclude suicide prevention or alcohol and other drugs services it does not specifically address some of the unique issues within these specialist areas. While some services are associated with a single level of care, most contribute to multiple levels.

Consultation

Various consultation activity was undertaken across the 2015-16 period with the Gold Coast community, clinicians and service providers. Mechanisms included broad scale community briefing, consumer journey mapping, one to one interviews, industry presentations, working groups and co-design processes.

Service provider consultation

- Getting the right treatment at the right time can be a way of getting the most out of a low intensity service. Delay in acknowledging need and seeking treatment combined with stigma and discrimination contribute to poor client outcomes.
- The ability of the GP to maintain an awareness of local services and confidently refer clients has a significant positive impact on recovery. It means that the care of the GP can be augmented with services that best fit the needs of the client. Examples are coaching services, community-based self-help groups and soft entry e-services that use activities to engage clients and build skills and confidence.
- If GPs know about and refer patients to online, self-help, low intensity services, it can assist the recovery journey for the patient.
- Balanced against service provider feedback, a comment received from a GP is- "If patients are able to articulate what their needs are this is associated with a level of satisfaction, but sometimes they don't want what is offered, so it is difficult to find the most appropriate solution or referral pathway".

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Service provider consultation

Service users report the identification and development of flexible evidence-based services, would add value to existing available options. Additionally, a campaign to inform General Practice about the services available would add value for consumers. Digital mental health services do fulfil a need for some consumers, and effective pathways can increase the accessibility of these evidence based electronic services.

Consultation and feedback from stakeholders:

- Increasing numbers evident of middle-aged females who are exhibiting potentially harmful numbers use of alcohol which have been frequently reported to be in relation to increased psycho-social stressors. Underserved groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQAP+ people from CALD communities and individual's using substances experiencing psychosocial stressors can benefit low intensity services.
- Low intensity mental health services must be supported to be the primary referral point for mental health support.
- Concerns with health literacy and awareness of prevention and recognising when people are becoming unwell is an issue especially with mental health.

Gold Coast Primary Health Network

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“Building one world class health system for the Gold Coast.”

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