



## FACT SHEET

# Stepped Care Approach to Mental Health at Brisbane North PHN: connecting people to the right services, at the right time and in the right place

Brisbane North PHN is committed to ensuring people receive the right services at the right time and in the right place. Using our primary mental health care funds we will purchase services within a stepped care approach. Through our regional planning role we will promote a stepped care approach across the mental health system.

This paper explains our approach to stepped care and what we are doing to turn it into a reality. We recognise that for many people, their experience is very different to the vision we outline below. Together with stakeholders across the region, we will work to ensure that over time, people get the right services, at the right time and in the right place.

### What do we mean by stepped care?

Brisbane North PHN has produced a short video to explain stepped care from a consumer's perspective.

To view the video, visit: [myvoice.brisbanenorthphn.org.au/mental-health-and-alcohol-and-other-drugs-planning-engagement-hub/videos](http://myvoice.brisbanenorthphn.org.au/mental-health-and-alcohol-and-other-drugs-planning-engagement-hub/videos)



In a stepped care approach, a person seeking support is connected to the services that meet their needs and as their needs change, the services change with them. A person does not need to start at the 'lowest' step, but will be connected to the right level of service for them. This is a person centred approach to care.

### Where has the stepped care approach come from?

The Australian Government's response to the National Mental Health Commission's review of mental health services and programs commits the government to introducing a stepped care approach to the mental health system, including primary mental health care funding provided to PHNs.

#### *Refocusing primary mental health care programmes and services to support a stepped care model*

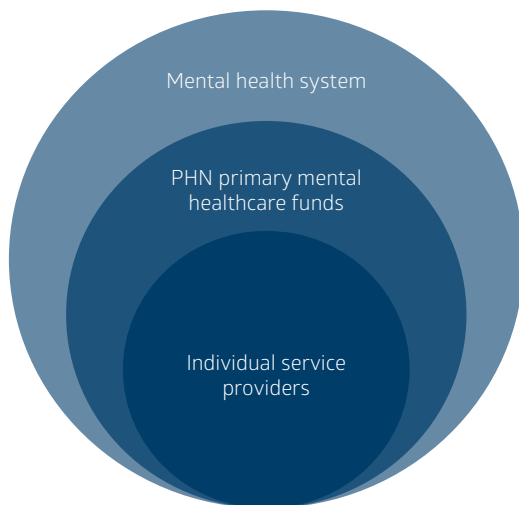
*Primary mental health programmes and services will be redesigned within a stepped care model, moving from the 'one size fits all' approach to better match services to individual need. The PHN flexible pool will support provision of services within this stepped care model. Consumers will benefit from better targeted services.*

Australian Government Response to Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities – Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services, page 3.

### A stepped care approach seeks to:

- reduce the under-servicing and over-servicing of some consumers
- emphasise early intervention and self-care
- match the level of service to consumers' need and change services as their needs change,
- shift focus to services that help prevent the need for acute and crisis intervention
- offer the full continuum of services from low intensity through to high levels of care
- ensure consumers have the choice of a broader range of services, better targeted to their needs
- increase the use of digital mental health services
- strengthen support for GPs in undertaking assessment to ensure people are referred to the right service

A stepped care approach can be implemented at various levels.



The whole mental health system needs to be organised in a way that facilitates easy access to services matched to consumers' needs. PHNs are to use primary mental health care funds to purchase services within a stepped care approach. Individual service providers may deliver multiple services at various levels of intensity and actively connect consumers to different services, internal or external, when their needs change.

### Stepped care has five core elements:

1. stratification of the population into different 'needs groups'
2. defining distinct interventions for each group – this is necessary because not all needs require the same intervention

3. a comprehensive 'menu' of evidence based services to respond to the spectrum of need
4. matching people to services, based on their needs
5. providers delivering services at the level the person requires and adjusting as needs change

### Needs Groups

To help connect people to the service/s that are best for them, we need to understand their situation. This can occur through discussion, assessment tools or screening and triage processes. Based on their needs, people can be stratified into one of the following eight needs groups.

- **Keeping healthy (whole population)** – all people can benefit from being physically and mentally healthy throughout their lives
- **Community & Family** – much support comes from family, friends and other natural supports in the community and they may have their own support needs as carers
- **Early intervention/at risk** – people with signs of distress, including from life events such as a relationship breakup or losing a job, may be at risk of developing mental illness if support isn't provided early (23% of population)
- **Mild** – people diagnosed with mental illness (including feeling depressed or anxious), that impacts on wellbeing and functioning to a level that is concerning but not overwhelming and is less than 12 months duration (9% of population)
- **Moderate** – people diagnosed with mental illness, which causes significant disruption to daily life, wellbeing and functioning and can be over 12 months duration (5% of population)
- **Severe** – people diagnosed with mental illness, which is very disruptive to daily life, wellbeing and functioning, may include risks to personal safety and is either persistent or episodic (3% of population)
- **Severe & Complex** – people with a diagnosed mental illness which is severe in its impact on wellbeing and functioning and where there are additional complexities such as difficulties with housing, employment and daily living (0.4% of population)
- **Crisis** – people with or without diagnosed mental illness who are in crisis, including self-destructive behaviour, suicidal behaviour, and harm to self or others and immediate action is required

## Services

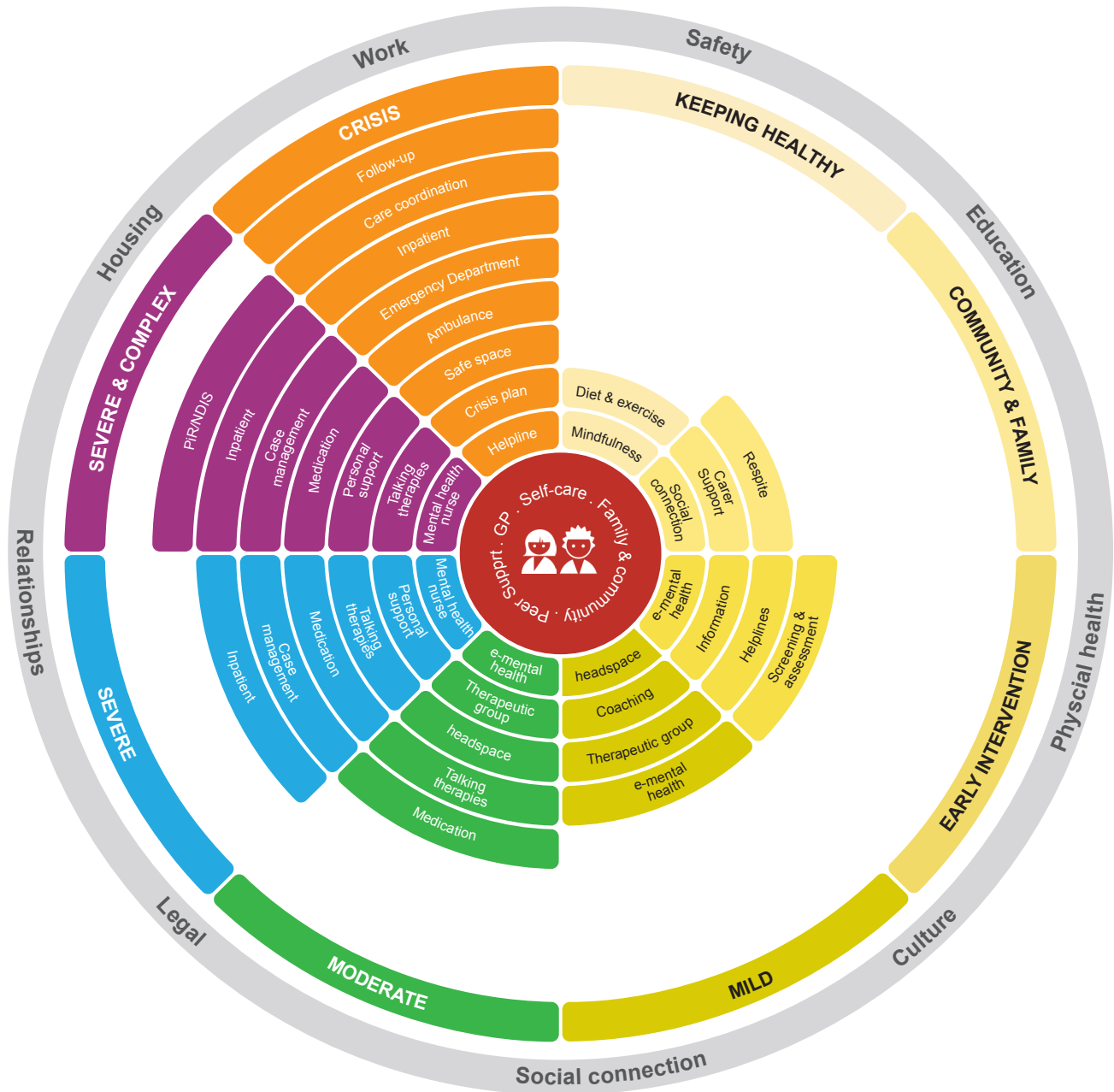
There are core services and supports that people in all needs groups benefit from:

- self-care
- family & community
- peer support
- general practice

Specific service types for each needs group are outlined in the following diagram (the list of service types is not exhaustive).

People can wrap the services and supports around them that they need. A person can continue to benefit from less intense services even if they have higher needs, as long as those higher needs are being attended to. As people's needs increase they can 'dial up' the range of services and supports they use. When things get back on track, they can 'dial down' the services and supports.

People do not need to start at the lowest level and work up nor are they limited to just those services suggested for their level of need.





### How has Brisbane North PHN purchased services within a stepped care approach?

PHNs have been given responsibility for purchasing primary mental health care services for residents in our region. The diagram below shows the services purchased by the PHN for 2017-2018. PHN purchased services are provided to consumers at no cost.

Through this funding from the Australian government, we have been able to introduce new low intensity psychological services as an alternative to seeing a psychologist or medication for people with mild mental illness.

Primary mental health services			
Low intensity	Moderate intensity	High intensity	Suicide prevention
NewAccess – MIFQ			
Optimal Health – Neami National	Brisbane MIND		
Problem Management Plus – MDA		Mental Health Nursing in Brisbane North (MHNiB)	The Way Back Support Service - MIFQ
Residential Aged Care – Change Futures			Nexus - QPASTT
Sunshine Parenting Program - Peach Tree			
Daybreak – Hello Sunday Morning			
Brisbane MIND4KiDS			
headsace – Nundah, Caboolture, Taringa and Redcliffe		Asha - youth mental health program	
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health – Social Health Team (Moreton Bay)			





Brisbane MIND, our service for people who are financially disadvantaged, continues to provide limited access to psychology services for people with moderate to severe mental illness or at risk of suicide. Brisbane MIND4KIDS continues to support children with mild to moderate mental illness. These services complement the wider Better Access program available to all through Medicare.

headspace centres, now funded by Brisbane North PHN, support young people with mild to moderate mental illness. A new service in Moreton Bay, 'Asha', supports young people with or at risk of severe mental illness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mild to severe mental illness are supported by the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) through their social health team at Moreton ATSICHS.

Through a revamped Mental Health Nursing in Brisbane North (MHNiB) service we have been able to widen the access for people with severe mental illness who can be supported in primary care, with the additional assistance of a mental health nurse.

A new approach to supporting people who have recently attempted suicide is being trialled in the Redcliffe region, in partnership with Redcliffe Hospital.

The PHN continues to fund Partners in Recovery for people with severe mental illness with complex multiagency needs, while PiR transitions to the NDIS in the coming year.

With a wider range of services available, people in Brisbane North are better able to get the primary mental health services that are right for them.

### **What are we doing to support the implementation of a stepped care approach?**

In addition to purchasing services within a stepped care approach, we are also promoting and enabling stepped care through other means.

#### **Triage and referral tool**

Together with a number of other PHNs, Brisbane North has developed a new electronic triage and referral tool for mental health called 'Redicase'.

Initially used by general practitioners, but with plans to expand to other referrers and self-referral, the tool supports people to get connected to the service that is right for them. Based on demographic information, level of mental distress and other information, the tool suggests programs and service providers that best match the person's need.

Selecting a service provider initiates an electronic referral, with an alert being sent to the provider. The provider then logs in to the system, accepts the referral and contacts the person. Service providers are also able to assist people to 'step up' or 'step down' to other services as their needs change, by initiating an onward referral.

## Minimum data set

A new national minimum data set for primary mental health care has been developed by the Department of Health. All PHN funded primary mental health care services complete and send this data to the PHN, via the Redicase system. The PHN, together with providers can use this anonymised data to analyse trends, including whether people were connected to the right service the first time and the outcomes people achieve at each level of service.

This data will help providers to improve their service and help the PHN to plan a better mental health system.

## Regional plan

More widely, the PHN is working with key stakeholders to develop a regional plan for mental health, suicide prevention and alcohol and other drug treatment services. The plan will set out a vision for services in Brisbane North and actions to help the region move towards the vision. The plan will utilise a stepped care approach to ensure that people get the services they need.

## Summary

A stepped care approach is key to the ongoing reform of the mental health system. Over time people will have more access to services that meet their specific needs. This will ensure that people receive the right services at the right time and in the right place.

The PHN is supporting the implementation of a stepped care approach, including through our purchasing of services and the development of a regional plan.

## Contact

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