



Evaluation summary

Integrated Mental Health Service Hubs

March 2022

Background

Brisbane North PHN funds three Integrated Mental Health Service Hubs that provide integrated clinical and non-clinical services for people living with severe and complex mental illness in Brisbane North.

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) receive several streams of funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health to commission mental health services to meet the needs of people with severe mental illness in the community.

In 2018, Brisbane North PHN undertook a review of its commissioned services and engaged in a co-design process to inform potential commissioning approaches that better meet these needs. Consumers, carers and service providers were involved in the review. A key recommendation from this process was to establish three *Integrated Mental Health Service Hubs* ('hubs') in the region that combine clinical and non-clinical services in one location, and facilitate access to tailored packages of care for people with severe and complex mental illness.

Informed by this review along with the *Planning for Wellbeing* joint regional plan and local Health Needs Assessment, Brisbane North PHN has funded three place-based hubs since mid-2019. The hubs use a pooled funding strategy with funding from the following programs — Primary Mental Health Care Services for People with Severe Mental Illness; National Psychosocial Support Measure; Continuity of Support; and Psychological therapies provided by mental health professionals for underserved groups.

Three organisations are funded by Brisbane North PHN to deliver the hub model across three areas:



The Living and Learning Centre, Strathpine
Delivered by Neami National



The Recovery and Discovery Centre, Bardon
Delivered by Communify



Stride Hub, Caboolture
Delivered by Stride

Why a hub model?

There is a growing need for integrated service responses that meet the clinical and non-clinical needs of people with severe and complex mental illness.

An estimated 3% of the Australian adult population has a severe mental illness with symptoms that can be persistent or episodic in nature. Reducing the severity of mental illness requires a range of services and supports. The importance of coordinating and integrating these services and supports to meet the needs of individuals across the areas of medication management, physical health, alcohol and drug services, psychosocial support and broader community services such as housing, education and employment is increasingly recognised in policy and program guidance.

As part of the '[Planning for Wellbeing](#)' joint regional plan for mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services, Brisbane North PHN and Metro North HHS have committed to delivering integrated services through new and different approaches to service delivery, creating better alignment and integration between services across the stepped care continuum, and support for the mental health workforce.

What do the hubs do?

Each hub aims to support people with severe mental illness to live well in the community, access clinical and non-clinical services matched to their level of need, and achieve their recovery goals.

Hub model components

- Assessment, triage and intake
- Service navigation
- Care coordination
- Psychological therapy (groups)
- Physical health care
- Psychosocial support
- Assistance to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- A range of in-reach services by external providers, including alcohol and other drug treatment, employment, housing, finance.

Hub model core elements



Services are provided through a hub or hub-and-spoke model



The hub leverages off and strengthens existing infrastructure and facilitates access to a wider range of services and supports



The hub is accessible to and welcoming of people with severe mental illness including those from diverse populations



Clinical and non-clinical services are integrated with services both within and external to the hub, and provided as part of a stepped care approach



GPs remain central to the care team



Psychological therapies, mental health nursing and psychosocial supports are physically co-located in the hub and outreach is provided to ensure maximum geographical reach in the catchment area



Formalised agreements with external providers ensures provision of in-reach services (e.g. AOD treatment, financial counselling), strong referral pathways and smooth transitions



A diverse workforce, including people with a lived experience of mental illness, provide services and support ensuring the ability to accommodate varying types of presentations, needs and supports.

What outcomes has the hub model achieved?

In 2021, an external evaluation explored the experiences and outcomes of service users across each of the three Hubs during their first two years of operation.


The evaluation demonstrated the hubs were effective in engaging people living in the community with severe mental illness, led to improvements in psychological distress and recovery outcomes, and met the needs of service users.

The evaluation considered the appropriateness, effectiveness, implementation and sustainability of the hub model. Evaluation methods included client and program data collected by program staff; a hub experience survey completed by service users, program staff and local stakeholders; qualitative focus groups with program staff, managers and the PHN, and a desktop review of key program documentation.

A detailed evaluation report was provided to Brisbane North PHN in January 2022. A summary of key findings is outlined below:

- ▶ Over **1,650** episodes of service commenced since establishment.
- ▶ Over **38,000 service contacts** completed, averaging 23.3 service contacts per episode.
- ▶ **Net growth in episodes of service** per quarter over time, indicating an increasing capacity to respond to service users.
- ▶ Over 2 in 3 clients (68.6%) had **very high levels of psychological distress** at baseline.
- ▶ **Most common presenting diagnosis** were post-traumatic stress disorder then major depressive disorders.
- ▶ Service users tended to be **aged 25-54 years**, female (62%) and born in Australia (84%).
- ▶ Around **1 in 10** people accessing support through the hubs identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- ▶ **13%** of people were experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- ▶ **7%** of service users identified as LGBTIQ+.

What outcomes has the hub model achieved?

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- ▶ Measurement of client outcomes using the K10 tool at timepoints throughout an episode of service demonstrated group-level **improvements in mental health outcomes** as a result of engagement in the service.
 - ▶ A higher proportion of service users reporting K10 scores that are **indicative of no mental illness** at review and episode end.
 - ▶ **Overall improvement in the total recovery score** (RAS-DS score) of service users over the duration of engagement in an episode of service.
 - ▶ **Significant positive treatment effect** for those with matched pre and post scores of 51% for distress (K10+) and 41% for recovery (RAS-DS).
 - ▶ Integration of clinical and non-clinical support provided through the hub model generally leads to **positive experiences of service**.
 - ▶ Evaluation participants consistently reported that the hub model's **psychosocial support component facilitates integrated care** and is highly valued by service users.
 - ▶ Service users reported **positive changes** in:
 - hope for the future
 - reduced need to access hospital based services
 - overall wellbeing
 - ability to access services needed
 - belief in own ability to manage illness
 - day-to-day living skills.

Service user experience

"Every aspect of my day to day life has changed for the better since I have been attending the hub."

"I am learning skills to cope with my illness and putting them into practice as well."

"I feel more independent and capable with dealing with difficult emotions."

"The consideration and effort put into my circumstances and wellbeing."

"Different life skills are helping me to interact better in my relationships so both needs/wishes are met and valued/respected."

"I feel less isolated because I am connected with people who truly understand the struggle of living with severe mental health issues."

"I am no longer living an isolated life. I can converse with strangers. I am coping with life. I am smiling"

Staff and stakeholder perceptions

"The Hub is very driven to meet the needs of its clients, while supporting the team. It has a great culture of support"

"My experience with [the hub] has been fantastic – they are responsive, engaging and collaborative regarding referrals and work actively to engage these clients in their recovery goals."

"I believe the hubs are an excellent resource run by people dedicated and passionate about supporting people with complex mental health issues."

"The key difference is that people can access a suite of service through that one referral pathway and through that one intake process they can then be linked in with a wide variety of health professionals to meet their needs"

Where to from here?

A set of recommendations for consideration by Brisbane North PHN and the hubs were included in the full report to improve future service commissioning and delivery.

These recommendations include:

- Communicating the outcomes of the evaluation through targeted reporting products
- Better understanding and responding to the factors driving levels of non-engagement and disengagement
- Building awareness and strengthening relationships with referring organisations
- Increasing referrals to the hubs from the primary care setting (GPs) to identify and connect people with support earlier in their journey
- Engaging with Metro North HHS to better integrate the hubs as part of a local service system
- Strengthening the impact of the program through additional program capacity and reach, supported program exit and involvement of natural supports
- Updating the monitoring and evaluation framework to reflect meaningful outcomes, develop data quality and collection protocols, and establish regular performance reporting mechanisms
- Undertaking forward planning to guide the future delivery of the hubs model
- Connecting with other PHNs to share with and learn from integrated approaches to commissioning services for people with severe mental illness
- Exploring opportunities for Brisbane North PHN to deliver on other strategic priorities (e.g. single multi-agency care planning; integrated assessment and referral) as part of the hubs model.



More information

The Recovery and Discovery Centre

Located in Bardon, delivered by Community

☎ 07 3510 2777

🌐 www.community.org.au

The Living and Learning Centre

Located in Strathpine, delivered by Neami National

☎ 07 3493 6780

🌐 www.neaminational.org.au

Stride Hub Caboolture

Located in Caboolture, delivered by Stride

☎ 07 4593 0500

🌐 www.stride.com.au

For information about
Mental Health Service Hubs
in Brisbane North:

visit www.brisbanenorthphn.org.au

or call the Head to Health
Service Navigation team
on 1800 595 212

The findings presented here are taken
from an external evaluation completed by **Beacon Strategies** 