

# How does WAPHA commission mental health services?

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is responsible for planning, guiding and directing investment towards primary health services across Western Australia, on behalf of the Australian Government.

## What is Commissioning?

Within health contexts, commissioning is the act of committing resources with the aim of improving health, reducing inequalities, and enhancing patient experience<sup>1</sup>.

Commissioning is a strategic, evidence-based approach to planning and procuring new health services or changing existing health services, where required.

Commissioning includes a cycle of activities in which:

- investment in services is aligned to needs and evidence of what works
- services are developed and shaped accordingly
- accountability for service delivery is underpinned by monitoring and evaluation<sup>2</sup>.

## WAPHA's commissioning role

Primary Health Networks target and prioritise health services to meet the identified needs of the local community in a continuous cycle of improvement<sup>3</sup>.

WAPHA's expenditure on services and programs has increased from \$40 million in 2015/16, to \$67.8 million in 2016/17 and \$97.8 million in 2017/18. In 2018/19 expenditure on services and programs exceeded \$100 million.

WAPHA is committed to identifying where people with mental health issues could be effectively managed in primary care settings and avoid unnecessary hospitalisations.

## Commissioning for better health

In 2019, WAPHA developed its Commissioning for Better Health Framework. The framework outlines the approach and processes WAPHA takes for the commissioning of primary care services to improve health equity in Western Australia. The framework articulates how WAPHA incorporates processes, including: needs assessment, service planning, service specification, contracting, performance management and evaluation activities to ensure services outcomes meet the needs of the community and deliver value for money.

For more information, see [WAPHA's Commissioning for Better Health Framework](#)

## Commissioning mental health services

WAPHA invests more than \$55 million annually into commissioned primary mental healthcare services (with an additional \$15-20m for the National Psychosocial Support Measure).

WAPHA's estimates that its funding equates to approximately six per cent of the total mental health expenditure in Western Australia. WAPHA also invests more than \$12 million annually into the delivery of health services relating to alcohol and other drugs. This includes treatment and support services for people with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues.

1 20 Sobanja M. Cited in Commonwealth of Australia. *Challenges and lessons for good practice. Review of the history and development of health service commissioning.* PwC, the King's Fund, and Melbourne University. 2016.

2 WA Primary Health Alliance, *Commissioning for Better Health*, Perth, p6. 2019.

3 Australian Government Fact Sheet – *Primary Health Networks*. 2015. Accessed on 3 February 2019 at: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Fact-Sheet-Primary-Health-Networks+>

The scope for WAPHA's mental health commissioning continues to evolve along with the [Australian Government's guidance materials for Primary Health Networks](#). WAPHA is working to ensure all commissioned activity fits within this remit.

WAPHA primarily targets mental health services supporting people with mild to moderate mental health issues, including:

- Low Intensity Mental Health Services for early intervention.
- Psychological therapies for people who experience barriers to accessing Medicare Benefit Schedule based psychological therapy.
- Aboriginal Mental Health Services.

There are, however, discrete initiatives where the remit is different and individuals with higher support needs are targeted, including clinical care coordination for people with severe mental illness, youth early intervention services and services for people with psychosocial disability under the National Psychosocial Support Measure, part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Details of WAPHA's commissioned mental health services can be found on the [WAPHA website](#)

## Partnership approach

WAPHA partners with State Government agencies, the Mental Health Commission (MHC), Health Service Providers (HSPs) and the WA Department of Health (WA Health), to ensure consistency in the identification of priorities and use of health data and to explore avenues for coordinated commissioning.

WAPHA has developed a partnership protocol which promotes a shared and coordinated approach with these partners, to effectively and efficiently address the health needs of the local population.

WAPHA is working with HSPs, the MHC and WA Health on the development of Joint Regional Plans for the three Western Australian Primary Health Network regions (Perth North, Perth South and WA Country). The Joint Regional Plans will provide a regional platform for addressing many problems which people with lived experience of mental illness or suicide and their carers and families currently face. This includes fragmentation of services and pathways, gaps, duplication and inefficiencies in service provision.

WAPHA has established GP-led Clinical Councils and Community Advisory Committees, to ensure that clinicians and the community have input into decisions about primary health care services. More information about WAPHA's advisory councils and committees can be found on the [WAPHA website](#)

The success of mental health commissioning depends on the strength of relationships between funders and providers of services, and on incorporating the voice of the community, consumers and their families and carers in service design<sup>4</sup>.

Good commissioning is also culturally appropriate, valuing the continuing culture of Aboriginal Western Australians<sup>5</sup>.

WAPHA has a Memorandum of understanding with the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia, the peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in Western Australia.

WAPHA also has Memoranda of Understanding with the MHC and WA Health to allow us to work collaboratively to plan and commission healthcare services.

WAPHA also has a number of member organisations, including:

- Health Consumers' Council WA
- MHC
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (WA Branch)
- WA Council of Social Services
- WA Health
- WA Local Government Association
- Western Australian Association for Mental Health
- Western Australian Network of Alcohol & other Drug Agencies.

## Needs Assessments

Every three years WAPHA undertakes a Needs Assessment for each of the three Primary Health Networks (Perth North, Perth South and WA Country), within Western Australia. The Needs Assessments analyze the health and service needs of people within the three Western Australian Primary Health Network regions, to identify opportunities and ensure that services are prioritised and located in areas where they are most needed.

<sup>4</sup> WA Primary Health Alliance (2019), p6.

<sup>5</sup> WA Primary Health Alliance (2019), p38

The Needs Assessments include:

- population health analysis at state, primary health network and locality levels
- clinician and community engagement regarding priorities
- consultation with service providers and partner agencies, including the Mental Health Commission and the WA Department of Health
- community consultation.

In addition to the Needs Assessments, WAPHA has developed the Guide to Local Primary Health Priorities 2020–2024, to provide clarity regarding the priorities outlined in the Needs Assessments and the activity WAPHA is undertaking to address these priorities.

Through these processes, WAPHA continues to build a comprehensive and detailed picture of the health of local communities across Western Australia. This information supports WAPHA to target resources where they can have the biggest impact on improving health equity<sup>6</sup>.

### Data and performance monitoring

There is a requirement for commissioned treatment services to report service delivery data, under the National Minimum Data Set. This data is collected by WAPHA and used to inform planning.

The Australian Government implements the Primary Health Network Program Performance and Quality Framework (the PQF), to measure how the activities and functions delivered by PHNs contribute towards achieving PHN Program objectives. The PQF provides a structure for monitoring and assessing PHNs' individual performance and progress towards achieving outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> WA Primary Health Alliance (2019), p37

<sup>7</sup> WA Primary Health Alliance (2019), p28

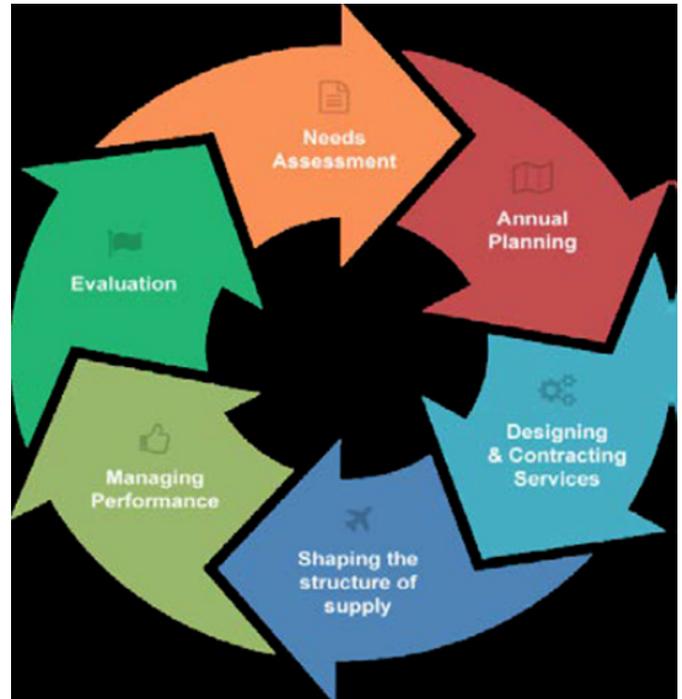


Figure 1: Primary Health Network Commissioning Framework

Needs Assessments	Annual Planning	Designing and contracting services	Shaping the structure of supply	Managing performance	Evaluation
<p>Population health analysis at State, Primary Health Network and locality levels</p> <p>Clinician and community engagement regarding priorities</p> <p>Consultation with service providers and partner agencies, including the Mental Health Commission and the WA Department of Health</p> <p>Community consultation</p>	<p>Setting the policy context and determining key priorities reflecting information gathered in the needs assessment</p> <p>Approval and acquittal of annual work plans involving the Australian Government</p> <p>Identifying health inequities and gaps</p> <p>Mapping services, including services provided by other funding organisations</p> <p>Developing partnerships</p>	<p>Identifying and implementing evidence-based and innovative solutions</p> <p>Co-designing services with funding partners, service providers and consumers</p> <p>Exploring opportunities to coordinate and integrate services</p> <p>Exploring co-commissioning opportunities, and defining shared accountability for outcomes</p> <p>Designing and approving accountable contracts, focused on quality, outcomes and value for money</p> <p>Determining preferred procurement options and payment models</p>	<p>Supporting and building capacity in general practice and the primary care sector</p>	<p>Relationship management of service provider contracts</p> <p>Managing performance and addressing performance issues</p>	<p>Evaluating outcomes against the parameters in the Quadruple Aim for Health Care</p> <p>Assessing quality, effectiveness, and value for money</p>

Figure2: WAPHA's Commissioning Activity<sup>7</sup>.



**WA Primary Health Alliance**  
Better health, together



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This is one of a series of factsheets regarding mental health and primary health care, developed by WAPHA. Further factsheets and other resources can be found at [www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework](http://www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework). The information in this factsheet is current at December 2020.