

What is WAPHA's mental health scope?

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is committed to investing in strategies that will help people and communities with the greatest need. This involves commissioning services to address gaps in the health system.

Concurrently, the [Australian Government's guidance materials for Primary Health Networks \(PHN's\)](#) defines the scope which PHNs are required to commission within. The scope of WAPHA's mental health programs continues to evolve, in alignment with the guidance materials. In some instances, the scope has changed since WAPHA was established.

WAPHA also responds to policy directives from the Australian Government, which may lead to the establishment of new funding initiatives.

WAPHA and Better Access

The Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) Better Access Initiative provides subsidised mental health care for Australians. The initiative allows GPs to refer patients with a mental health care plan for counselling to clinical psychologists, psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists who are registered with Medicare.

WAPHA commissions services to ensure people who may have difficulty accessing the MBS Better Access initiative (including people living in rural and remote areas) have access to similar care. In this way, WAPHA identifies and addresses gaps in the mental health system to ensure equitable access for people with the greatest need.

Flexible funding

WAPHA has some flexibility to augment service provision in a way which best complements services available in a specific region.

Flexible funding is provided to enable PHNs to respond to national health priorities as determined by the Australian Government, and local health priorities identified in needs assessments undertaken by WAPHA in consultation with local communities.

Alcohol and Other Drugs Services

In addition to its mental health initiatives, WAPHA also invests more than \$12 million annually into the delivery of health services to reduce harm from alcohol and other drug use (AOD). This includes increasing access to specialist treatment and support services for individuals and families as well as initiatives to improve access to services designed specifically for people who experience co-occurring mental health and AOD issues.

WAPHA also invests in education and training to build the capability and confidence of the drug and alcohol, mental health and primary care workforce to respond to people experiencing co-occurring mental health and AOD issues.

For more information regarding WAPHA's initiatives for people experiencing co-occurring mental health and AOD issues, see [Fact Sheet 15: The interface between mental health issues and alcohol and other drugs](#).

What is in scope?

Type/cohort	Notes	The following activities are in scope:
1. Support for people with mild-moderate mental illness	In alignment with the Australian Government's guidance materials, most of WAPHA's funding for mental health programs goes towards supporting people experiencing mild-moderate mental health issues, including anxiety and depression.	<p>Low Intensity Mental Health Services for Early Intervention¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face, low intensity psychological services, delivered on 1:1 or group basis. • Telephone or on-line low intensity psychological services. • Psychological services or coaching provided to support, and supplement digital services provided on-line through the Australian Government's Head to Health website (accessible at: https://headtohealth.gov.au/) or other evidence based digital services. • Activities to promote Head to Health to consumers and health professionals as a source of low intensity digital mental health services. <hr/> <p>Psychological Therapies for Underserved Groups²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of low or medium intensity psychological therapy for people with a diagnosable mild, moderate, or in some cases severe mental illness; and • Services to be time-limited, evidence-based and structured (e.g. cognitive behaviour therapy).
2. Support for people with severe mental illness	WAPHA commissions discrete initiatives, for individuals with higher support needs. These initiatives include the provision of high intensity psychological services for people with severe mental illness, and clinical care coordination which addresses both mental health and physical health needs.	<p>Primary Care services for people with severe mental illness³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence based high intensity psychological services (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy) to complement and enhance existing GP, psychiatrist and allied mental health professional services available through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and to assist people with mental illness in underserved groups; • Clinical coordination services provided by mental health nurses or other health professionals with appropriate clinical credentials, which support ongoing management, monitoring of a patient's symptoms and medication, and links to other needed services; • Early intervention services for young people with severe mental illness which may include clinical services and related vocational and education support; • Broader non-clinical coordination and advocacy provided by peer support workers where this is provided as part of a primary care team; and • Lifestyle interventions and support for integrated physical health care.

1 Australian Government Department of Health. PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Programme Guidance - Low Intensity Mental Health Services for Early Intervention, p3-6. 2019.

2 Australian Government Department of Health. PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Programme Guidance - Psychological Therapies provided by Mental Health Professionals for Underserved Groups, p4. 2019.

3 Australian Government Department of Health. PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Programme Guidance - Primary Mental Health Care Services for People with Severe Mental Illness, p11. 2019.

<p>3. Specific mental health support for Aboriginal people and communities</p>	<p>WAPHA commissions culturally appropriate mental health services for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Mental Health Services⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of culturally appropriate, evidence-based, holistic mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; • A mix of services is required across the lifespan (including services for children and youth) and across the continuum of care to address service gaps; • Services to be developed in partnership with Health Service Providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations; and • Services should be well integrated with drug and alcohol services, suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing services as well as mainstream mental health services.
<p>4. Mental health support for children and young people</p>	<p>WAPHA commissions primary mental health care services for children and young people with, or at risk of, mental illness being managed in primary care. This includes delivery of Western Australia's headspace centres.</p>	<p>Child and Youth Mental Health Services⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based early intervention services for young people with, or at risk of, severe mental illness; • Support continuity of service for children and young people formerly provided under ATAPS and other mental health programs; • Maintain service delivery within headspace centres and increasingly integrate with broader primary mental health care services; physical health services; drug and alcohol services; and social and vocational support services.
<p>5. Support for older adults with mental illness</p>	<p>WAPHA commissions psychological treatment services targeting the mental health needs of people living in residential aged care facilities (RACFs).</p>	<p>Psychological therapies for people with mental illness in residential aged care facilities⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of evidence-based, time-limited psychological services appropriate to the needs of older people with a diagnosed mental illness (or who are assessed as at risk of mental illness if they do not receive services), who are living in residential aged care facilities.

4 Australian Government Department of Health. PHN Primary Mental Health Care Programme Guidance – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Services, p2. 2019

5 Australian Government Department of Health. PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Implementation Guidance – Child and Youth Mental Health Services. 2019.

6 Australian Government Department of Health. Psychological Treatment Services for people with mental illness in Residential Aged Care Facilities. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health; 2018.



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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
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