

COVID-19 Response Strategic Statement Executive Summary



Overview

The management of COVID-19 in the primary care setting, including the critical partnership with general practice, will form an increased role in WA Health's system-wide response for COVID-19 management and care and the ongoing measures that support living with COVID-19 in WA as the disease spreads.

WA Primary Health Alliance's (WAPHA) Australian Government mandate is to support and strengthen primary care to manage an increase in COVID-19 cases as Australia starts to move into Phases B (vaccination transition) and C (vaccination consolidation) of the National Plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response.

Noting the emerging nature of WA's health system response strategy, WAPHA's Strategic Statement will align to the State response as it is currently understood and will be regularly updated to reflect the emerging living with COVID-19 primary care context.

Current models of care and modes of care delivery will need to be scaled, expanded and supplemented with innovative and agile approaches that recognise the lessons learned within WA and through national and international experience over the past 18 months – and, especially with the emergence and spread of the Omicron variant.

Read the full [COVID-19 Primary Care Response Strategic Statement](#).

Role of PHNs

The Australian Government has tasked Australia's 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) with leading five key primary care activity workstreams:

1. COVID-19 Positive Community Care Pathway

- Work in partnership with the WA Department of Health and Health Service Providers to develop a core COVID-19 Positive Community Care Pathway for Western Australia, with localisation as required. The Pathway will chart a clear plan on where and how COVID-19 positive Western Australians will be managed through primary and community care services, when care needs to be delivered through hospitals, including clear and rapid escalation arrangements.

2. Support for Primary Care from the National Medical Stockpile

- Remain the primary coordination and communications channel for vaccination information to general practices, Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics, and residential aged care facilities as well as providing advice to the Australian Government Department of Health on emerging issues via regular surveying of general practices;
- Identify vulnerable groups of people who may experience difficulty in accessing vaccination and commission primary care providers to provide these services;
- Coordinate the provision of personal protective equipment bundles to general practices which intend to treat COVID-19 positive patients face to face until a national distribution service is established;
- Commission a provider for respirator fit testing for general practices and Aboriginal Medical Services; and
- Provide an ordering service for pulse oximeters for general practices and General Practice Respiratory Clinics (GPRCs) which have agreed to care for COVID-19 positive patients isolating at home.

3. PHN Commissioned Home Visits by clinicians to prevent avoidable hospitalisations

- Procure a clinical service provider or providers, including but not limited to, medical deputising services, nurse practitioners and practice nurses, to undertake home visits to provide care to COVID-19 positive patients where their GP does not have capacity or where a person does not have a managing GP.

4. Provision of up to date and reliable information and resources for general practice

- Continue to support WA's general practices with information, resources and advice on a range of clinical and business topics.

5. Extension of the role and reach of General Practice Respiratory Clinics

- Conduct a refresh of GPRCs which includes expansion of services into the afterhours (including weekend) period.

Principles

In implementing the COVID-19 PHN workstreams in WA, WAPHA will:

- Align our effort to the Quadruple Aim of Healthcare
- Keep patients, carers and the community at the centre of what we do
- Leverage existing effort and avoid duplication
- Share information to ensure continuity of care and public safety
- Build genuine partnerships
- Be ready to adapt and collaborate to co-design new and innovative models of care
- Create a safe learning environment and culture to enable us to adapt
- Be guided by the Australian Government COVID-19 primary care response mandate for PHNs

Enablers

HealthPathways

- Create and update COVID-19 HealthPathways giving WA GPs and hospital-based specialists access to referral protocols intended to ensure limited delays in COVID-19 positive patients self-isolating and reduce spread within the community and households.

Support for Commissioned Service Providers

- Continue to provide advice and support to people working in our commissioned services during the COVID-19 pandemic, including advice on government mandated directions and policy measures, planning support, workforce management and wellbeing, HealthPathways and webinars.

Digital Health

- Assist general practice to understand, and use, digital health solutions in a meaningful way throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including telehealth, e-prescribing, My Health Record and secure messaging.
- Support digital readiness and response within our commissioned service providers.

Planning for Longer Term Care to Manage Impact of COVID-19 in the WA Community

- Monitor, understand, and support general practice and commissioned service providers to address the ongoing population health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to, longer term mental and physical health conditions, management of chronic conditions, promotion of health screening, family and domestic violence and promoting social isolation programs.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Prioritise engagement based on our Stakeholder Engagement Framework, noting effective engagement will not look the same for every stakeholder or every situation.
- Use existing advisory and reference groups where possible, and, where required, establish purpose specific, time limited advisory and/or reference groups to inform COVID-19 pathways, models of care and a one system approach to Living with COVID-19.

COVID-19 Case Modelling

- Continue to monitor the commonalities, discrepancies and inconsistencies between Commonwealth and State Government modelling, to ensure our primary care response planning is informed by sound data and contextual information, and is regularly reviewed and adjusted in response to the dynamic environment.

Communications

- Focus on priority target groups and priority communications activities, to ensure we are investing our time and effort where our communications will have most impact and remain within our scope as determined by the Australian Government.

Advocacy

- Continue our role as an advocate in the system, including drawing on WAPHA's unique understanding of the population and providers in WA's metropolitan and country regions and those populations at higher risk of COVID-19 and the associated longer-term impacts.

Acknowledgement

WA Primary Health Alliance acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners and Elders of this country and recognises the significant importance of their cultural heritage, values and beliefs and how these contribute to the positive health and wellbeing of the whole community.

Disclaimer

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