



## **Introduction to Part A Primary Health Network (PHN) Mental Health Lead Site Project (Lead Site Project) evaluation**

### **What is the Part A PHN Lead Site Project evaluation?**

Part A of the PHN Lead Site Project evaluation assesses changes to Australian Government-funded mental health care delivered in the primary care setting that aim to achieve a more efficient, integrated and sustainable mental health system and to improve mental health services for Australians. The evaluation is funded by the Australian Government and is being conducted by researchers at the University of Melbourne.

The changes to mental health service delivery involve a regional (local) approach, led by PHNs, to planning, integration and commissioning mental health services at a local level, in partnership with relevant services and with a new flexible primary mental health care funding pool. All 31 PHNs across Australia have been funded to commission primary mental health services in six mental health priority areas: low intensity services; psychological therapies for underserved populations; child and youth services; services for adults with severe and complex mental illness; Indigenous mental health services; and suicide prevention.

Ten PHNs have been selected to act as mental health reform leaders in the PHN Mental Health Reform Lead Site Project (Lead Site Project). These PHNs (Lead Sites) will provide enhanced services in nominated key focus areas (e.g., by fast-tracking their activity in these service areas, establishing different partnerships and funding arrangements for services, and/or trialling approaches that are innovative in terms of types and modes of commissioned services). The key focus areas are:

- Regional planning and service integration;
- Stepped care;
- Low intensity services; and
- Services for youth with, or at risk of, severe mental illness.

The Part A evaluation aims to address the following questions in relation to the above key focus areas:

- What approaches were undertaken by Lead Sites to the planning, commissioning, management and delivery of services in each of the focus areas?
- What activities and approaches were found by the Lead Sites to be effective in achieving objectives in each of the focus areas?
- What were the barriers and facilitators to achieving objectives in each of the focus areas?
- What are the implications for future activity by PHNs and primary health care reform more generally?

### **What does the Part A PHN Lead Site Project evaluation involve?**

The Part A evaluation involves collecting and analysing data from a series of primary data sources including:

#### **a. Reviews of key documents**

- PHN regional mental health and suicide prevention plans; qualitative reports from Lead Sites; formalised agreements and arrangements (including with general practice, Local Hospital Networks [LHNs] and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [ATSI] mental health and social and



wellbeing services); other documentary evidence of links; annual activity work plans and budget reports; 6-monthly performance reports.

**b. Stakeholder consultations\***

- Consultations with **consumers and carers**, including young consumers and their carers;
- Consultations with **regional and other representatives** – e.g., PHNs, Local Hospital Networks (LHNs), other regional service providers, GPs, other individual providers or services (including drug and alcohol services, youth services, social and community support services, disability support and/or National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] services), state/territory policy officers, non-Lead Site PHNs).

**c. Observational or participatory data**

- From national PHN workshops.

**d. Routinely collected data**

- Service use data from the Primary Mental Health Care Minimum Data Set (PMHC MDS), administrative funding data, administrative workforce data.

**e. General input**

- Input from Lead Sites, PHN-commissioned services, LHNs, headspace, schools and other providers, training providers.

\*Stakeholders will be invited to take part in the evaluation using a variety of approaches, such as, by the University of Melbourne evaluation team directly, or with the assistance of PHNs, professional associations and service delivery organisations. Stakeholders will be invited to provide their views related to the four key focus areas under investigation via focus groups, interviews and/or online surveys. The evaluation has been deliberately designed to be flexible in its approach to data collection to facilitate representation from all key stakeholder groups.

**Where is the Part A PHN Lead Site Project evaluation happening?**

Ten Lead Site PHN regions will be involved in the evaluation of regional planning and service integration, stepped care and low intensity services. These include Australian Capital Territory, Central and Eastern Sydney, Murrumbidgee, North Coast, Eastern Melbourne, North Western Melbourne, South Eastern Melbourne, Perth South, and Tasmania. Three of these PHNs (Australian Capital Territory, South Eastern Melbourne, and Tasmania) will also focus on services for youth with, or at risk of, severe mental illness.

Individual stakeholders are free to make their own decision about whether or not they want to take part and this decision will have no impact on services delivered or received.



### **When will data be collected for the Part A PHN Lead Site Project evaluation?**

The Part A evaluation commenced early in 2017. Key documents and PHN workshop material available to date have been collected and other key documents and workshop material will be sourced as they become available over the life of the evaluation. Stakeholder consultations will be conducted in two phases – September to November 2017 and September to November 2018. Routinely collected data will be analysed when it is made available to the evaluators. All data will be synthesised, with preliminary findings submitted to the Department of Health in February 2018, and final results in July 2019. Outcomes may also be presented via conference presentations and publication of journal articles. No individual stakeholders will be identified or linked to the results.

### **Who are the researchers?**

This evaluation is led by the University of Melbourne and has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee. The research team includes the following people:

Professor Jane Pirkis, Professor Jane Gunn, Dr Bridget Bassilios, Dr Susie Fletcher, Dr Meredith Harris, Associate Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos, Professor Philip Burgess, Dr Victoria Palmer, Associate Professor Matthew Spittal, Dr Patty Chondros, Dr Angela Nicholas and Ms Anna Wood.

### **Who can I contact for more information?**

If you have questions about the evaluation, please email [phn-evaluation@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:phn-evaluation@unimelb.edu.au) and one of the researchers will get back to you soon.