

SPECIALIST OLDER PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Health

Like people of any age, older people can be vulnerable to mental illness. Some older people develop a mental illness as they age, while others grow older with a continuing experience of a mental illness that developed earlier in their lives. Such illnesses include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and other psychotic illnesses, bipolar disorder, alcohol and substance misuse disorders and behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. Suicide is also a significant issue for older people, particularly older men, and depression is an important risk factor for late life suicide.

As the NSW population ages, the number of older people with mental illness is projected to increase significantly, rising to approximately 260,000 in 2026. However, contrary to many preconceptions, later life is a time of improved mental health for many people, and the proportion of people with diagnosable mental illness reduces in later life.

Funding for Mental Health Reform in 2017/18

The NSW Government's mental health reforms promote a greater focus on community care. This initiative will promote improved community mental health care and support for older people with mental illness, by supporting teams providing specialist mental health services for older people.

New funding of \$2.4 million per annum recurrent will be allocated to all fifteen local health districts and Justice Health to improve access to older people's mental health services across NSW.

This funding builds on previous funding of \$5 million per annum from 2016-17, allocated to six local health districts to address key service gaps in relation to population needs across NSW: Central Coast, Mid North Coast, Nepean Blue Mountains, Northern NSW, South Western Sydney and Sydney. Districts have recruited new clinicians to deliver specialist mental health care to older people with mental illness in the community and further recruitment is being finalised to deliver a total of 31 new full-time equivalent specialist clinicians.

The NSW Ministry of Health has developed a statewide model of care to guide improvements to specialist community older people's mental health services in line with good practice directions identified in statewide consumer, carer and clinician consultations, expert advice, and relevant published evidence.

Over the next 12 months, approximately 15 new specialist clinicians will deliver specialist mental health care to older people with mental illness in the community and within the Justice Health system. Service improvement in line with good practice for these services is expected to improve the accessibility, quality and efficiency of these services. A further specialist residential aged care facility will be established in Western Sydney local health district under the Pathways to Community Living Initiative.

To learn more about mental health care reform in NSW visit

www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/reform

