

TRANSFORMING THE TREATMENT LANDSCAPE: THE NSW SERVICE PLAN FOR PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS 2013-2018



The release of the NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2013-2018 begins the process of transforming the treatment landscape in NSW for people with eating disorders. Over the next five years, we will develop a network of responsive evidence-based therapies within local health districts across NSW to treat people with eating disorders promptly, equitably and, above all, effectively.

Eating Disorders are a whole-of-health concern and responsibility. They are mental illnesses with multiple and often severe medical symptoms. As such, they require a collaborative, comprehensive and well-articulated response from the health system.

The NSW Service Plan confirms the central role for the LHD in ensuring access to care for people with eating disorders at the local level, as well as links with general practitioners, private health providers in the community, and pathways to high-level specialist services for those most severely ill. While it is acknowledged that not all services for eating disorders will be provided by the LHD (e.g. prevention/very early intervention or tertiary specialist services), the plan identifies the LHD as the central coordinator for access to healthcare for its residents.

The implementation of the Service Plan will be a staged project. The first stage, through to 2015, includes the following priorities for LHDs:

1. Identifying current access points for service for people with eating disorders within your LHD;
2. Identifying major gaps in the service spectrum and workforce capacity to treat eating disorders within your LHD;
3. Developing a local Service Plan for eating disorders to guide current and planned service provision.

This is a process the LHD need not embark on alone. The NSW Ministry of Health has funded the Centre for Eating and Dieting Disorders (CEDD) to support roll-out of the plan across NSW. A request for support link on the CEDD website can be accessed by LHD staff at anytime (www.cedd.org.au). A CEDD representative will be assigned to the LHD to support them through the process of implementing the plan. Guidelines and tools to assist them in completing the first stage of implementation are available on the website.

The LHD will be supported further in its endeavours to provide access to the full range of service for people with eating disorders by the enhancement and expansion of the specialist tertiary hubs for eating disorders for both children and adolescents, and adults. The Ministry of Health has enhanced statewide adult inpatient services for eating disorders at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA) to provide a pathway to care for the most severely ill patients throughout NSW. Similarly, the child and adolescent statewide specialist tertiary hub, delivered through Sydney Children's Hospital Network, has also been enhanced.

To build capacity at the local level will take time and needs to include: training the workforce to feel competent and skilled dealing with these illnesses, developing a range of evidence-based therapies, streamlining access and pathways into hospital for the most severely ill, and supporting community evidence-based treatment for those needing it.

It will also take great collaboration between multiple sectors of health, and health providers both public and private.

But as we embark on this journey armed with the NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders and the support, tools and links it provides, there is real hope that improvements to access, treatments and outcomes is possible.