



Supporting people

To prevent suicide deaths, we must ensure that people who have attempted suicide receive whatever supports they need as soon as possible. This is particularly important immediately after they have attended a hospital emergency department.

In 2017, the Collaborative worked with member organisations – Grand Pacific Health (GPH), Flourish Australia, South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District – to develop a new service to support people during the transition from hospital-based care to the community. It is called the Next Steps Aftercare Service.



South Coast
Medical Service
Aboriginal Corporation



NSW
GOVERNMENT
Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District



The Next Steps Aftercare Service involves a combination of support from peer workers (who have their own experiences of mental health and suicidality) and psychologists (who are trained to provide traditional, clinical therapies). Next Steps is not about mental health treatment. It is about supporting recovery by helping people identify and work towards their goals as well as connect with supports in the community.

100% of people supported by Next Steps have said they would recommend this service to others. As one person who benefited from the program described her Next Steps peer worker: "She was amazing. She always made me feel great and think about things in a new way." The exceptional level of satisfaction reported by people engaged with Next Steps is remarkable for a new service supporting people at such a critical time.

after a crisis



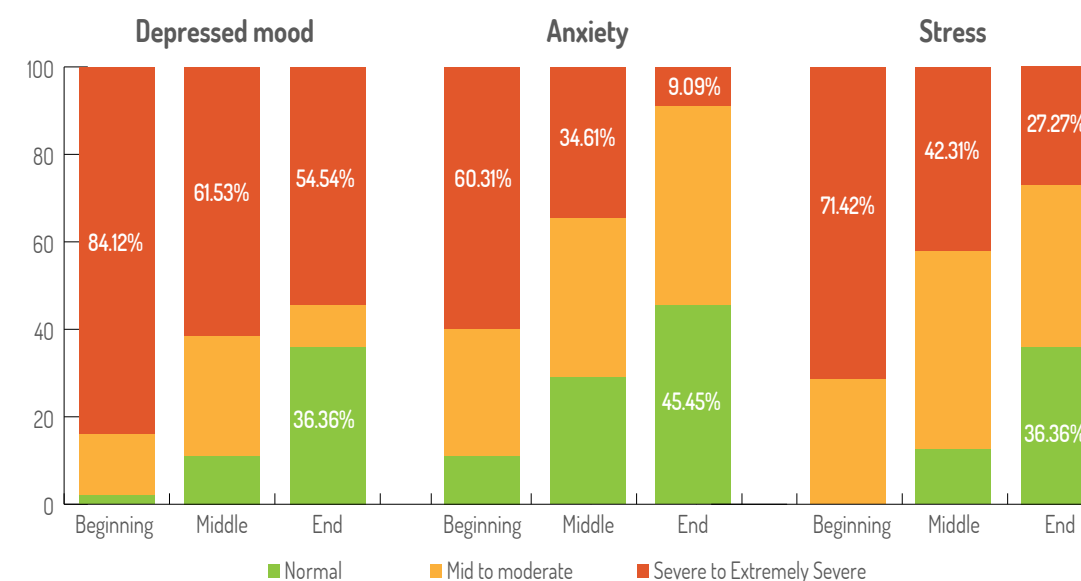
Reviewing, learning and improving

Setting up and engaging people in the Next Steps service has been a big achievement, but the work does not stop there.

Systematically reviewing and feeding back how the service is going, then taking steps to improve things, is vital for ensuring it is effective.

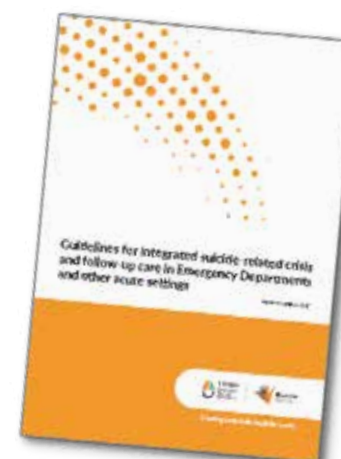
The University of Wollongong, the Centre for Health Research Illawarra Shoalhaven Population (CHRISP), GPH and the Collaborative are conducting a very sophisticated evaluation of the Next Steps program. Early signs are very positive.

Not only are participants reporting marked improvements in their mood (see figure below), but they are also connecting with supports and achieving their goals.



Consumers' reported depressed mood, anxiety and stress over the course of the Next Steps Aftercare Service, by proportion of people in each category.

"This approach works, it is different, it is pioneering, it is evolving and most of all it is making a difference." – Next Steps Peer Worker



The Collaborative is also proud to sponsor a position that will soon begin working within local emergency departments. We want to ensure that this new aftercare service becomes embedded so that all people presenting to an emergency department with suicidality are offered this support.

To ensure people's experience of emergency departments is as warm and therapeutic as possible, the Collaborative is also working with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District to align current practices with the recently released Guidelines for Integrated Suicide-related Crisis and Follow-up Care in Emergency Departments and other Acute Settings developed by the Black Dog Institute.