



Community Mental Health Participant Survey in response to COVID-19

Period 1 April – 14 April 2020

Introduction

There has been a need for community mental health and NDIS service providers to rapidly adapt in response to COVID-19, having an impact to Participants and potentially the Family/Friends of Participants.

As the peak body for community mental health in the Northern Territory, the NT Mental Health Coalition released a survey to assess the impact and concerns of Participants and their Family/Friends.

This report relates to responses received between 1 April to 14 April 2020, for the survey which was shared and promoted through Facebook. Included is an overview to the respondent participation, issues/concerns raised and support needs.

Survey Participation

Table 1 Role of respondent (Q1)

Role	Response	
Participant	7	54%
Family / Friend	5	38%
Support Worker	1	8%
Total	13	100%

Table 2 Location of respondent (Q2)

Region	Response	
Darwin / Palmerston	12	92%
Coomalie / Belyuan / Litchfield	1	8%
Total	13	100%

Note: Survey was promoted through all regions of the NT.

Table 3 Types of supports/services (Q3)

Supports/Services	Response	
Recovery Day Program	1	8%
Psychosocial Support Worker	3	23%
Supported Accommodation	1	8%
Mental Health / AOD Counselling	2	15%
NDIS Access Support	4	31%
Peer Support Group	2	15%
NDIS Capacity Building Supports	3	23%
NDIS Coordination of Supports	5	38%
NDIS Assistance with Daily Living	2	15%
NDIS Social and Community Participation	2	15%
NDIS Transport	1	8%
Case Management / GP/ MH Nurse / Psychology / Psychiatry	10	77%
Family / Friend	1	8%

Note: Multiple responses were allowed. Therefore, responses do not add to 100%

Survey Responses

Table 4 Change to supports/services (Q4)

Change	Response	
Yes	7	54%
No	5	38%
Unsure	1	8%
Total	13	100%

Questions 5 to 8 sought a description of participant concerns, experiences and needs. Each question allowed a free text, open-ended response. Responses varied in length and included multiple sentiments. An overview of the sentiments expressed at each question is provided below. An *asterisk has been used to indicate repeated sentiments, which are listed in order of priority.

(Q5) Nature of changes to supports / services

- Concerns impacting health and wellbeing (approx. 50% of sentiments expressed)
 - o Mental health and wellbeing*
 - o Isolation*
 - o Cooccurring health issues*
 - o Access to medication/transport
 - o Loss of employment
 - o Impact on carer (family supports)
- Inability to access to supports/services (approx. 30% of sentiments expressed)
 - o Waitlisted/can't access new supports*
 - o Reduction in usual supports*
 - o Foodbank supply
 - o Inability to access peers
 - o Ineligible for NDIS
 - o Ineligible for other services
- Seeking specific supports/services (approx. 20% of sentiments expressed)
 - o Psychology/Psychiatry*
 - o Advocacy support
 - o Face to Face appointments

(Q6) Key issues or concerns during this time

- Concerns impacting health and wellbeing (approx. 1/3 of sentiments expressed)
 - o Mental health and wellbeing*
 - o Isolation*
 - o Recovery/development*
 - o Cooccurring health issues
 - o Family breakdown
 - o Impact on carer (family supports)
 - o Finances
 - o Suicidal thoughts
- Concerns related to supports/services (approx. 1/3 of sentiments expressed)
 - o Reduction in usual supports*
 - o Lack of face to face access*
 - o GP access*
 - o Access to transport*
 - o Access to community
 - o Exposure to COVID-19
 - o Support to live independently
 - o Waitlisted/can't access new supports
 - o Ineligible NDIS/other services
 - o No diagnosis
 - o Confidentiality

- Seeking specific supports/services (approx. 1/3 of sentiments expressed)
 - o Psychology/Psychiatry*
 - o Resume access to former supports*
 - o Access to new/increased supports*
 - o Access to different/appropriate supports*
 - o Delivery services/medication support
 - o After hours support
 - o Financial support

(Q7) Supports that have helped

- o GP support*
- o NDIS support coordination*
- o Transport*
- o Counselling
- o Financial support
- o NDIS core supports
- o Online information
- o Peer support
- o Psychiatrist
- o Support to live independently
- o TEMHCO service
- o Open Arms service

(Q8) Key supports to manage during this time

- o Check-in/Phone call**
- o Resume access to former supports**
- o Psychology/Psychiatry*
- o Advocacy support*
- o Access to new/increased supports*
- o Carer support*
- o Person centred care*
- o Delivery service
- o Face to face supports
- o Family support
- o Peer support
- o ICT support
- o Guide to available services
- o Medication support
- o Financial support
- o Vocational support
- o Regular GP
- o Reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- o Activities to complete

Recommendations

The survey highlighted specific issues, concerns and support needs related to the COVID-19 environment. However, it also highlighted broader issues and needs unrelated to the current extenuating circumstances.

The survey results to date, highlight the needs of participants within the Darwin, Palmerston and rural areas. The following recommendations have been made accordingly.

Services for existing clients

- Maintaining / resuming supports and services wherever possible including
 - o Psychosocial support services
 - o Allied health (OT, speech pathology, psychology)
 - o Respite and carer support
- Resuming face to face appointments based on client's preferences.
- Reaching out and providing regular check-ins or phone calls to existing clients.
- Facilitating connections between peers who formally connected through day programs. (Potential to set up online groups or exchange of phone numbers with permission.)
- Transport or delivery of goods to support clients to address primary care needs (medication, food, appointments).

New services

- Registration for a telephone support service that provides regular check-ins and decreases isolation.
- Individual advocacy.
- Service navigation and supported referral pathways.
- Alternate forms of psychosocial support (including peer support).
- Support to navigate online supports/services.

Expanded services

- Fully funded psychiatry
- Fully funded psychology
- Afterhours access to psychiatry/psychology
- Food bank