

Restructure – Consultation Document (Procedure reference PR2014_016)

Document control sheet

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Stage 1 – Scope, Plan and Approval

1.1 The Need for Change

1.1.1 Description of Service

Since September 2020, Northern Beaches Community Mental Health Service (NBCMHS) has been delivering the Police Ambulance Clinical Early Response (PACER) service to the Northern Beaches community.

Contemporary mental health service delivery calls for trauma-informed, least restrictive approaches to care and treatment. This includes supporting people to safely remain in their communities and, where possible, avoid hospitalisation and unnecessary presentations to Emergency Departments (ED).

The PACER program provides a dedicated, co-located skilled mental health clinician to assist NSW Police located at Northern Beaches Police Area Command (NBPAC) to deliver an appropriate and immediate response for people experiencing mental health crisis in the community. The PACER model offers timely on-scene mental health assessment and care linkages, information sharing and telephone support resulting in decreased restrictive care practices and involuntary admissions.

As per the NBPAC activity data, incidents relating to *Mental Health Act* interventions, attempted suicide, and death by suicide have been increasing since 2020, with consistent increased activity between 9pm to 12 midnight, 7 days a week.

In FY 22/23, NBCMHS PACER team had 1,432 PACER contacts and only 20.6% of these contacts were transferred to emergency department thus limiting the emergency department presentations and reducing overall emergency department presentations to improve the Emergency Treatment Performance (ETP), and an improved consumer experience.

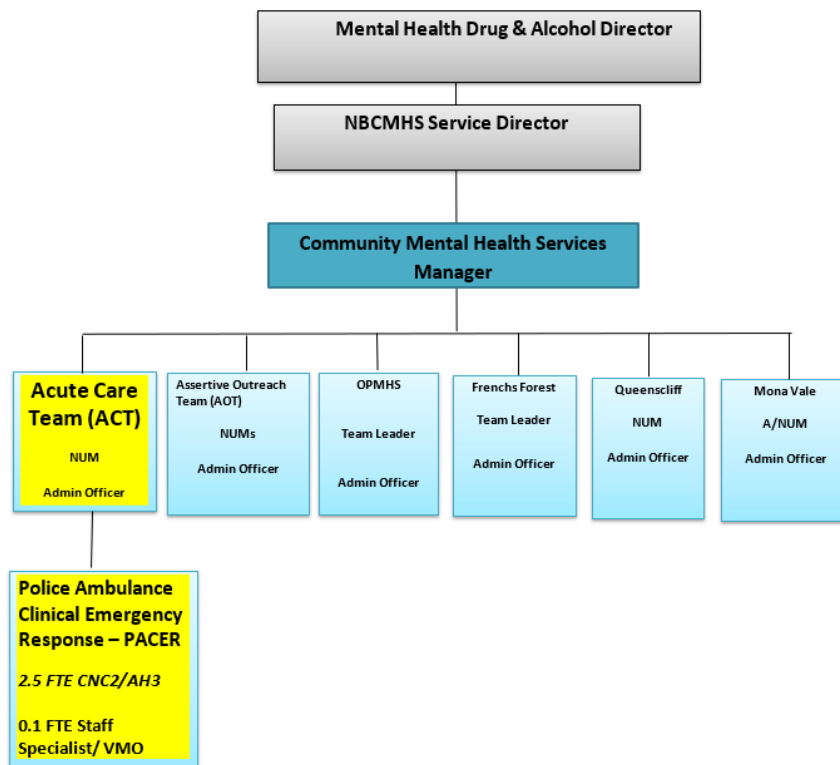
1.1.2 Reason and Purpose for the Restructure

A need to expand NBCMHS PACER program and enhance the support to young people aged from 12 years with mental health (MH) and drug and alcohol (D&A) issues has been supported in line with the:

- objectives outlined in the *NSW Mental Health Reform 2014-2024* by providing a person-centred, trauma-informed response to mental health emergencies in the community,
- recommendations from *NSW Ministry of Health – Formative Evaluation of the Expansion of the PACER Program (December 2021)*, and
- as part of NSW government response into the root cause analysis findings after an investigation into the death of Master Joshua Gill in Northern Beaches in 2021, which identified system wide limitations and challenges due to the dichotomy between youth drug and alcohol services and mental health services to young people aged from 12 years i.e
 - shortage of clinicians with D&A, addiction and mental health specialist training for treatment of a youth population, and
 - fragmented nature of service provision affected by segmented allocation of funding to publicly funded state services and NGOs, and
 - difficulty in navigating the systems for families to fulfill young people care needs and need for multiagency care coordination.

New funding has been allocated to enhance the Northern Beaches PACER program.

1.1.3 Current Structure



Role	Classification	Funded FTE	Vacant FTE
PACER Mental Health Clinician	Clinical Nurse Consultant level 2	1.5 FTE	0 FTE
PACER Mental Health Clinician	Social Worker	1 FTE	0 FTE
Senior Medical Staff	Staff Specialist/ Visiting Medical Officer	0.1 FTE	0 FTE

The PACER program currently aims to provide cover from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week, however, due to funding shortfall there are gaps in the shifts to be covered. The current PACER Mental Health Clinician roster is as per appendix 1 (attached).

1.1.4 Current Position Description

PACER Mental Health Clinicians are based within respective Police Stations to provide highly mobile, recovery orientated clinical advice, consultancy and support to NSW Police assessing and care planning for mental health related cases in the community.

The PACER clinicians respond to mental health related incidents requested by an operational police unit, provide high quality community or telephone mental health assessment, intervention, undertakes triage, primary assessment, advice on de-escalation strategies, makes mental health referral and transport options. They manage complex mental health emergencies and crises at an advanced level in consultation with the Acute Care Team, consultant and other service providers as needed.

Position Description of the PACER Mental Health Clinician is attached as appendix 2.

1.2 Restructure Plan

1.2.1 Proposed New Structure

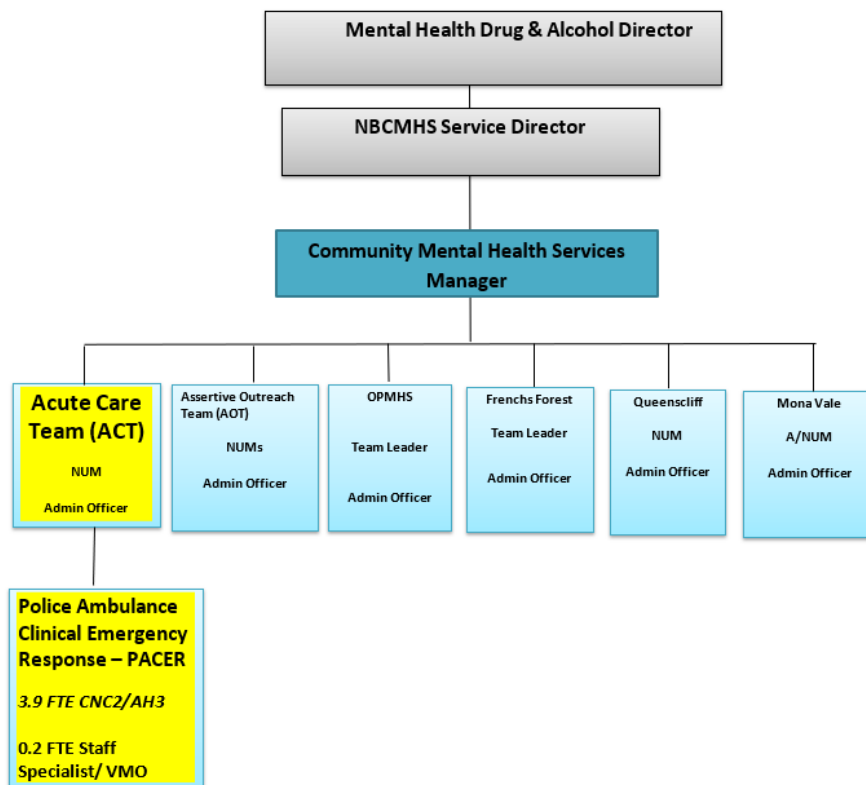
These proposed changes are as below.

- Expansion of the current NBCMHS PACER program to extend coverage across - 8am to 11pm, 7 days a week.
- Enhancement to PACER model of care to:
 - ensure direct immediate contact with individuals identified by police in crisis and follow up to monitor their mental state & facilitate referrals,
 - build capacity & capability of PACER clinicians and first responders through specialist training across drug & alcohol, addiction and mental health, to support young people aged from 12 years and onwards.

Additional funding has been approved for 1.4 FTE of PACER Mental Health Clinician and 0.1 FTE of Staff Specialist /VMO. This would allow staffing to the proposed extended hours and provide leave relief to support the expanded program. The enhancement will also support PACER clinicians by providing structured protected time for staff to manage the workload, which is unpredictable and changing, improve the quality of reporting and outcomes, and meet community demand.

The NBCMHS has also received enhancement funding of 1FTE Clinical Nurse Educator whose role will facilitate building capability of PACER/NBPAC and the NBCMHS Team through provision of access to specialist training across drug & alcohol, addiction and mental health, to support young people aged from 12 years.

The enhanced PACER capacity provides an opportunity to work with stakeholders and enhance the model of care by trialling a Mental Health Co-responder Model to enhance local cross-agency responses to and care of consumers requiring mental health emergency care. NSW Health have developed a soon to be released 'Mental Health Co-responder Models of Care' document and complementary 'Operating Guidelines' which will capture detailed operational/procedural aspects for stakeholders to consider if feasible to trial within NBCMHS prior to broader roll out across the NSLHD.



Role	Classification	Funded FTE		Vacant FTE
PACER Mental Health Clinician	Clinical Nurse Consultant level 2	1.5 FTE		0 FTE
PACER Mental Health Clinician	Social Worker	1 FTE		0 FTE
PACER Mental Health Clinician	Mental health clinician level 4 (Nursing/ Allied Health)	1.4 FTE		1.4 FTE
Senior Medical Staff	Staff Specialist/ Visiting Medical Officer	0.2 FTE		0 FTE

The proposed roster is as per appendix 3.

It is expected that staffing contingency strategies will be applied during short staffing as result of vacancies or staff leave. Reduction in the number of the shifts and changes to shift times would be applied to ensure prioritised service provision.

1.2.2 Proposed Changes to Position Descriptions

The position description of the PACER Mental Health Clinician is not expected to change. The proposed change relates to working hours and structured work to better manage workload in line with demand & to build capacity and capability to respond to young people with D&A, addiction and mental health issues.

In relation to the staff specialist role, there is no change proposed to the position description.

1.2.3 Impact on services and functions

The proposed change will provide additional coverage to the NBCMHS PACER program and enable capacity to take on additional workload to ensure follow up of all PACER encounters and build capacity & capability of clinicians to assess, triage and manage young people with mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues to meet the growing service need.

1.2.4 Likely impact on employees

The proposed change is to amend the existing PACER Mental Health Clinician roster through the following changes:

- The current evening shift time – 1330 to 2200 hours is proposed to change to 1430 to 2300 hours
- Creation of an additional shift – 1030 to 1900 hours

For existing mental health clinical staff, their current rotating shift arrangements/ pattern is proposed to change as per Appendix 3.

For staff specialists participating in the after-hours on-call roster the coverage would extend to the proposed extended operating hours of enhanced PACER to 11 pm, 7 days a week.

Stage 2 – Consultation

2.1 Notification to employees

A consultation meeting outlining the change in reporting lines and the impact on the business functions will be held with the PACER team and with senior medical staff with opportunity to ask questions.

2.2 Notification to Union/Industrial Bodies and other relevant parties

The relevant industrial bodies that need to be consulted/ notified include:

- NSW Nurses and Midwives Association

- Australian Salaried Medical Officers Foundation (ASMOF)
- Health Services Union.

A letter outlining the proposed changes and impact on staff will be provided. If there are any issues that arise from this, then a meeting with the union will be held to understand any issues.

Stage 3 – Implementation

It is intended that the key changes would take about 2-4 weeks of consultation.

The table below indicates the key actions to occur and the timeframe.

Action	Timeframe (by when)
Inform affected staff and unions by correspondence.	Week beginning the 5 February 2024
Consult with stakeholders to discuss proposed changes.	February 2024
Seek approval from NSLHD/ ATF Committee for recruitment of the relevant positions.	February 2024/ March 2024
Recruitment of the new positions through internal expression of interest, and external recruitment processes.	Mar 2024/ April 2024
Onboard and orientate new staff.	Mar 2024/ April 2024

Stage 4 – Review

Formal evaluation of the change will be undertaken in 6 months to identify issues for resolution and for further improvements to meet service needs.