

Mental health training standards 2023–25

A guide for general practitioners



RACGP



Australian College of
Rural & Remote Medicine
WORLD LEADERS IN RURAL PRACTICE



APS Australian
Psychological
Society



Mental Health
Australia



The Royal
Australian &
New Zealand
College of
Psychiatrists

Mental health training standards 2023–25: A guide for general practitioners

Disclaimer

The information in this publication is current at the date of first publication and is intended to be a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to particular patients or circumstances. Nor is this publication exhaustive of the subject matter. When implementing any recommendations contained in this publication, people must exercise their own independent skill or judgement or seek appropriate professional advice relevant to their own particular circumstances. Compliance with any recommendations cannot of itself guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients and others coming into contact with the health professional and the premises from which the health professional operates.

Whilst the text is directed to health professionals possessing appropriate qualifications and skills in ascertaining and discharging their professional (including legal) duties, it is not to be regarded as clinical advice and, in particular, is no substitute for a full examination and consideration of medical history in reaching a diagnosis and treatment based on accepted clinical practices.

Accordingly, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Ltd (RACGP) and its employees and agents shall have no liability (including without limitation liability by reason of negligence) to any users of the information contained in this publication for any loss or damage (consequential or otherwise), cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying on the information contained in this publication and whether caused by reason of any error, negligent act, omission or misrepresentation in the information.

Recommended citation

General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration. Mental health training standards 2023–25: A guide for general practitioners. East Melbourne, Vic: Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, 2022.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Ltd
100 Wellington Parade
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Wurundjeri Country

Tel 03 8699 0414

Fax 03 8699 0400

www.racgp.org.au

ABN: 34 000 223 807

ISBN: 978-0-86906-541-9 (web)

ISBN: 978-0-86906-542-6 (print)

Published October 2022

© The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners 2022

This resource is provided under licence by the RACGP. Full terms are available at <https://www.racgp.org.au/licence-terms>. In summary, you must not edit or adapt it or use it for any commercial purposes. You must acknowledge the RACGP as the owner.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

Contents

Foreword	iii
Preface	iv
The purpose of this guide	iv
Changes from the previous edition	iv
Revised structure and format	iv
Alignment with best practice in mental health care	iv
Revised learning outcomes for accredited training in mental health	iv
Terminology	v
Glossary of terms	v
Acronyms and initialisms	vi
Part 1: Introduction	1
1.1 About the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration	1
Mission statement	1
Governance	1
Membership	1
The role of the GPMHSC	1
The role of the GPMHSC Secretariat	1
1.2 Why GPs are important in mental health	2
Skills and knowledge GPs need to provide mental health services	2
GP Mental Health Treatment Plans	3
1.3 The Better Access initiative and the role of GPs	4
How does the Better Access initiative work?	4
Eligibility for rebated services	4
Approved providers	4
Mental disorders applicable under the Better Access initiative	4
‘Mental disorder, not otherwise specified’	5
Mental disorders not applicable under the Better Access initiative	5
The role of the GPMHSC and GPs in the Better Access initiative	5
1.4 The General Practice Mental Health Training Framework	6
Part 2: Mental health training and education for GPs	9
2.1 Introduction	9
Objectives	9
Choosing training courses from the framework	9
Finding GPMHSC-accredited courses	9
Exemption from completing MHST and FPS ST	9
2.2 GPMHSC-accredited mental health training	10
Mental health courses accredited by the GPMHSC	10
CPD and PDP hours	10
How you can identify an GPMHSC-accredited course	10
The GPMHSC quality assurance program	11

2.2	Level 1 training: Mental Health Skills Training (MHST).....	12
	Objectives	12
	Option 1: MHST Primary Pathway.....	12
	Option 2: MHST Modular Pathway	12
2.3	Level 2 training: Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training (FPS ST).....	15
	What are Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS)?.....	15
	Objectives of FPS ST	15
	FPS ST courses based on CBT and IPT	15
	Prerequisite.....	16
	Requirements	16
	Learning outcomes	16
	Registering as a GP provider of FPS	17
2.4	Mental Health CPD and Focussed Psychological Strategies CPD	17
	Mental Health CPD	17
	FPS CPD	18
	References	21

Foreword

The release of the *Mental health training standards 2023–25: A guide for general practitioners* represents the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration's (GPMHSC's) renewed commitment to continually improve Australia's primary mental health system.

For most Australians, a general practice is the first port of call when they access Australia's healthcare system, and their general practitioner (GP) is usually the first person they consult about their mental health care. Based on findings from the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, in 2020–21, almost 13% of Australians aged 16–85 saw a GP for their mental health.¹

The high prevalence and burden of disease associated with mental illness means that GPs must be able to detect and treat mental illness, and play a central role in providing evidence-based, patient-centred care to people living with a mental illness.

In addition, given the current rates of suicide in Australia, it is critical that GPs have the skills needed to detect and respond to patients at risk of suicide.

For two decades, the work undertaken by the GPMHSC has increased GPs' skills and knowledge in detecting, diagnosing and managing mental illnesses in the context of general practice. By upholding the standards of high-quality general practice training through documents such as this, the GPMHSC will continue to improve the quality of mental health care in Australia.

These mental health training standards complement the standards of education and training of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) curriculum for Australian general practice, by focusing on GPs' post-vocational training and continuing professional development (CPD).

I sincerely thank all those who contributed to the consultation and evaluation process that was undertaken to develop these standards. The GPMHSC sought input and advice from professionals who actively provide mental health services in Australia; organisations with a mental health focus; and, importantly, from consumers and carers. The feedback we received improved our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our previous work and helped us to improve our approach to the work to be undertaken over the next three years.

On behalf of the GPMHSC, I encourage you to refer to this document when reviewing your current skill sets and when participating in professional development relating to mental health.

Lastly, I would like to thank all past and present members of the GPMHSC Committee. At the time of publication, the current members are Dr James Antoniadis, Dr Zena Burgess, Dr Eleanor Chew, Dr Michael Eaton, Ms Margaret Lewry, Professor Graham Meadows, Ms Heather Nowak, Dr Molly Shorthouse and Associate Professor Louise Stone.



Associate Professor Morton Rawlin

Chair, General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration

Preface

The purpose of this guide

The *Mental health training standards 2023–25: A guide for general practitioners* is a document for GPs who wish to find out about:

- the standards of mental health training and education that GPs must meet to be eligible to access general practice mental health care MBS item numbers under the Better Access initiative
- what they should consider when selecting CPD in mental health so that their skills and knowledge in mental health are up to date and broad ranging.

Further GPMHSC information

You can find information about accredited courses in mental health at <https://gpmhsc.org.au/find-a-course>

Changes from the previous edition

Revised structure and format

- This edition is shorter, and provides clearer and more concise information about the requirements of GP mental health training and education. For example:
 - the processes and procedures outlining the requirements of registering with Medicare have been streamlined
 - there is a concise list of recommended mental health topics you can refer to when searching for and selecting courses in mental health CPD and Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) CPD.
- This edition includes:
 - lists of useful resources throughout the document
 - a glossary that defines important and relevant terms and phrases as they are used in these standards.

Alignment with best practice in mental health care

- After a review of the General Practice Mental Health Training Framework, these standards now more closely align with best practice when providing mental health care in general practice.

Revised learning outcomes for accredited training in mental health

- The learning outcomes of the accredited training in mental health have been revised so that they now align with the learning outcomes and competencies, as outlined in the [RACGP curriculum and syllabus for Australian general practice: Mental health](#), and [ACRRM's Rural Generalist Curriculum for Mental Health](#).
- The learning outcomes relating to practice systems and strategies to provide safe and holistic mental health care now include topics relating to GPs' self-care and wellbeing.

Terminology

Glossary of terms

Where appropriate, definitions from external sources have been adapted to fit the context of the *Mental health training standards 2023–25*.

Term or phrase	GPMHSC definition
Better Access initiative	An Australian Government initiative that gives Medicare rebates to eligible people so they can access mental health services from GPs, other medical practitioners, psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists. ²
Carer	A person who provides, or has provided, ongoing personal care, support, advocacy and/or assistance to a person with a mental illness, in a non-professional role.
Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)	A focused approach that is based on the concept that thoughts influence feelings and behaviours, and that subsequent behaviours and emotions can influence cognitions. ³
Consumer	A person who has personal experience of mental illness and of their recovery journey, and who has accessed mental health services.
Continuing professional development (CPD)	The means by which members of a profession maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives. ⁴
Course content	The educational content, specific to relevant learning outcomes, that GPMHSC-accredited training providers need to deliver in a course accredited by the GPMHSC.
Interpersonal therapy (IPT)	A brief, structured approach that addresses interpersonal issues. The underlying assumption of IPT is that causes of depression and psychological distress can often be traced to aspects of the patient's social functioning (relationships and social roles). ³
Learning outcomes	What learners or participants will be able to demonstrate after completing GPMHSC-accredited training.
Medicare	Australia's universal health insurance scheme. Also known as Services Australia (Medicare).
Mental disorder	The term used by the Better Access initiative to refer to mental illness. See <i>Mental illness</i> .
Mental illness	A clinically diagnosable disorder, subjectively experienced by a person, that significantly interferes with their cognitive, emotional or social abilities. ⁵
Personal lived experience	First-hand perspectives gained from experiences of mental health challenges, the use of services, diagnosis and recovery. ⁶
Predisposing component	Mandatory educational component of a course that participants complete before the delivery of the course. Examples include reading

Term or phrase	GPMHSC definition
	articles and pre-course surveys.
Reinforcing component	Mandatory educational component of a course that participants complete after the delivery of the course, which consolidates the participant's learning. Examples include follow-up surveys and discussions on implemented changes or improvements in practice.
Skills training	The specific knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes required to access, manage and provide ongoing mental health care in the context of general practice, either through preparing General Practice Mental Health Treatment Plans (GP MHTPs) and/or providing FPS.
Structured interactive learning	A highly interactive course (delivered face-to-face or via e-learning) that focuses on participant engagement and active learning.

Acronyms and initialisms

Acronym/initialism	
ACRRM	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
CBT	cognitive behavioural therapy
CPD	continuing professional development
FPS	focussed psychological strategies
FPS CPD	Focussed Psychological Strategies Continuing Professional Development
FPS ST	Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training
GP	general practitioner
GPMHSC	General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration
GP MHTP	General Practice Mental Health Treatment Plan
ICD-10 ICD-11	International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision
IPT	interpersonal therapy
MBA	Medical Board of Australia
MBS	Medicare Benefits Schedule
MH CPD	Mental Health Continuing Professional Development
MHST	Mental Health Skills Training
PDP	Professional Development Program
RACGP	The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 About the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration

Mission statement

The GPMHSC works to achieve optimal mental health and wellbeing for the Australian population, by implementing a multidisciplinary approach to education, policy and advocacy, and by supporting GPs to deliver quality primary mental health care.

Governance

The GPMHSC is a multidisciplinary body funded by the Australian Government under the Better Access initiative. The GPMHSC is managed by the RACGP, which provides secretariat services and chairs the GPMHSC Committee.

Membership

The GPMHSC includes representatives from general practice, psychiatry, psychology and the community.

The GPMHSC comprises:

- representatives from the RACGP, the ACRRM, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the Australian Psychological Society, as nominated by those bodies
- a carer representative and a consumer representative, both nominated by Mental Health Australia.

The role of the GPMHSC

The GPMHSC:

- establishes standards for general practice training in mental health in relation to the Better Access initiative
- accredits skills training related to general practice mental health care
- promotes accredited general practice training in mental health that aims to develop GPs' knowledge of, and skills in, detecting and treating mental illness
- promotes the uptake of MBS mental health items under the Better Access initiative
- develops resources that support GPs to provide mental health services
- regularly informs the general practice sector about current mental health issues
- contributes to developing policies relating to general practice and mental health.

The role of the GPMHSC Secretariat

The GPMHSC Secretariat:

- pre-adjudicates courses before the GPMHSC Committee completes a formal adjudication
- pre-adjudicates applications from GPs seeking exemption from completing mental health courses
- adjudicates Mental Health Continuing Professional Development (MH CPD) and Focussed Psychological Strategies Continuing Professional Development (FPS CPD) in accordance with the GPMHSC training standards
- provides Medicare with the details of GPs who are eligible to claim Better Access initiative MBS item numbers

- develops resources relating to primary mental health care and the Better Access initiative for GPs and training providers
- supports the GPMHSC Chair and Committee
- responds to general enquiries from GPs, practice managers, training providers, Primary Health Networks and other stakeholders about GPMHSC-accredited training and the Better Access initiative, and provides ongoing communication, marketing and support to help them implement the GPMHSC standards.

1.2 Why GPs are important in mental health

In 2020–21, almost 13% of Australians aged 16–85 saw a GP for their mental health.¹

In 2019–20, approximately 30% of Medicare-subsidised services specific to mental health were provided by GPs.⁷ In a recent report, GPs reported – for the sixth consecutive year – that psychological conditions (including sleep disturbance and depression) were the most commonly reported reasons for patient presentations.⁸

This is why GPs need skills and knowledge to identify and address patients' mental health needs.

Skills and knowledge GPs need to provide mental health services

GPMHSC-accredited training provides GPs with the fundamental skills required to assess a patient's needs, recommend appropriate referral options, and manage a patient's ongoing mental health care in the context of general practice.

In Australia, 'general practice mental health care' refers to the assessment, management and ongoing care of people who experience mental illness of varying degrees.

To provide general practice mental health care, GPs need to be able to:

- identify mental health issues
- ensure that the patient receives appropriate care.

Identifying mental health issues

This includes being able to:

- perform a biopsychosocial assessment, taking into account the patient's chronic and acute physical and mental health issues, and their past and present personal, social and cultural circumstances (the GPMHSC does not endorse any diagnostic tool for GPs, who may choose the assessment method and diagnostic tool they believe to be the most suitable)
- identify early warning signs of mental illness
- identify risk factors of mental illness
- identify signs of suicide risk, and respond accordingly
- provide support and advice that can reduce risk factors and potentially prevent mental illness.

Ensuring appropriate care

This includes being able to:

- provide or recommend appropriate care based on the patient's assessed needs (such as e-mental health for mild mental health issues, and face-to-face counselling for moderate to severe mental health issues), and cultural factors that may influence the model of care chosen
- provide continuity of care, which is a key component of the successful treatment of people with mental illness
- use and participate in a multidisciplinary approach to care
- develop a General Practice Mental Health Treatment Plan (GP MHTP) for each patient.

Useful GPMHSC resources

Suicide prevention and first aid: A resource for GPs. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/resources-for-gps/suicide-prevention-and-first-aid>

After suicide: A resource for GPs. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/resources-for-gps/after-suicide>

Practice guide: Communication between medical and mental health professionals. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/resources-for-gps/communication-between-medical-and-mental-health-professionals>

Working with the Stepped Care Model: Mental health services through general practice. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/resources-for-gps/stepped-care-model>

GP Mental Health Treatment Plans

A GP MHTP aims to:

- provide continuity of care for a patient with a mental illness
- provide a structured framework for you to undertake assessment, early intervention and management of a patient with a mental illness
- help you coordinate the patient's care and provide a referral pathway to allied mental health service providers
- enable you, when possible, to actively involve the patient and carer in their care.

GP MHTP templates

The GP MHTP templates developed by the GPMHSC can enhance the quality of mental health care provided and support GPs to manage common mental health disorders under the Better Access initiative.

The templates prompt you to ask important questions when you are assessing a patient with symptoms of a mental illness, planning their treatment and reviewing their progress. The templates also make the documentation of this information easier and more consistent.

There are four templates that you might decide to use:

- a short-form template titled Minimal requirements
- a template to use with adult patients
- a template to use with child and adolescent patients
- a template to be used as a Subjective Objective Assessment Plan.

When preparing and claiming for a GP MHTP, you can use any of these templates, and you can adapt the templates according to the needs of your practice and your patients. For example, you might decide not to enter information in some of the fields of the template.

Reviewing a patient's GP MHTP

Because GP MHTPs do not expire, a patient will continue to be eligible for rebated allied mental health services from one year to the next unless you (as the referring GP) consider that a new plan is clinically necessary. Generally, new plans should not be developed within 12 months of the previous plan.

You can assess and manage the patient's progress and write a new referral for further services using any of the following MBS items:

- 2712: GP MHTP review item
- 2713: general practice mental health consultation item
- 23, 36 and 44: standard general practice consultation.

Useful GPMHSC resources

GP Mental Health Treatment Plan. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/gp-mental-health-treatment-plans>

GP MHTP templates. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/mhtp-templates>

1.3 The Better Access initiative and the role of GPs

The Better Access initiative (introduced by the Australian Government in 2006) aims to improve health outcomes by providing targeted treatment for people with a clinically diagnosed mental disorder.

How does the Better Access initiative work?

The Better Access initiative allows eligible people with an assessed mental disorder to access mental health services for which they can receive a rebate. At the time of publication, each person is entitled to access up to 10 individual services and up to 10 group services per calendar year.

Patients can access more than 10 individual services and/or more than 10 group services, but they can receive rebates for only the first 10 individual services and only the first 10 group services within a calendar year.

For up-to-date information, visit the Department of Health website at: https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/better-access-initiative?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=callout-auto-custom&utm_campaign=digital_transformation

Eligibility for rebated services

Patients with an assessed mental disorder are eligible to access services under the Better Access initiative when they are referred to an approved provider by a:

- GP managing the patient under a GP MHTP
- referred psychiatrist assessment and management plan, or
- psychiatrist or paediatrician.

Approved providers

Approved providers are:

- GPs who are registered as a provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS)
- psychologists
- appropriately trained and accredited social workers and occupational therapists.

Useful resources

Department of Health. Better Access initiative. Available at: https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/better-access-initiative?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=callout-auto-custom&utm_campaign=digital_transformation

Services Australia. Better Access initiative – supporting mental health care. Available at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/better-access-initiative-supporting-mental-health-care>

Mental disorders applicable under the Better Access initiative

At the time of publication, the following mental disorders are eligible for treatment under the Better

Access initiative, as per the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD-10).

- acute psychotic disorders
- adjustment disorder
- alcohol-use disorders
- bereavement disorders
- bipolar disorder
- chronic psychotic disorders
- conduct disorder
- depression
- dissociative (conversion) disorder
- drug-use disorders
- eating disorders
- enuresis
- generalised anxiety
- hyperkinetic (attention deficit) disorder
- mental disorder, not otherwise specified
- mixed anxiety and depression
- neurasthenia
- panic disorder
- phobic disorders
- sexual disorders
- sleep problems
- unexplained somatic complaints.

As it is likely ICD-11 will be adopted during the 2023–25 triennium, there may be variation to the above list of mental disorders applicable under the Better Access initiative.

‘Mental disorder, not otherwise specified’

The condition listed above as ‘mental disorder, not otherwise specified’ covers any mental disorder that does not meet the description of any other mental disorder in the ICD-10. Similar to the ‘not otherwise specified’ codes in the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, it allows for atypical cases. For a patient to be diagnosed with this condition, they must have mental health symptoms that reach the threshold for clinical significance but do not fall neatly into one of the categories.

Organic mental disorders, such as those due to brain damage, are excluded under ‘mental disorder, otherwise not specified’.

Mental disorders not applicable under the Better Access initiative

In addition to organic mental disorders, the following are not applicable under the Better Access initiative:

- delirium
- dementia
- mental retardation
- tobacco-use disorders.

Although not applicable under the Better Access initiative, GPs can address these disorders if a patient with an applicable mental disorder has comorbidity with one or more of these disorders (for example, when a patient has dementia and generalised anxiety).

Useful resources

World Health Organization. International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-10). Available at: <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en>

World Health Organization. International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11). Available at: <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en>

The role of the GPMHSC and GPs in the Better Access initiative

The GPMHSC sets and monitors the training standards for GPs that allow them to deliver services during general practice consultations that correspond to mental health MBS item numbers.

Table 1 sets out services and the corresponding MBS item numbers that GPs can claim based on their mental health training.

Table 1. GPs' eligibility to provide mental health MBS items

Mental health training	Services	MBS item numbers	MBS rebate
None	Preparation of a patient's GP MHTP	2700 2701	Minimum MBS rebate
Level 1: MHST	Preparation of a patient's GP MHTP	2715 2717	Maximum [higher schedule] MBS rebate
Level 2: FPS ST	FPS interventions related to mental health conditions identified in the patient's GP MHTP	2721, 2723, 2725, 2727	MBS rebates apply for up to 10 FPS sessions and 10 group sessions per person per calendar year

FPS, Focussed Psychological Strategies; FPS ST, Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training; GP MHTP, General Practice Mental Health Treatment Plan; MBS, Medicare Benefits Schedule; MHST, Mental Health Skills Training

Useful resources

Department of Health. MBS Online. Available at:

<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Home>

GPMHSC. Mental health MBS item number descriptors and rebates. Available at:

<https://www.gpmhsc.org.au/gp-resources/mbs-descriptors-and-rebates>

1.4 The General Practice Mental Health Training Framework

The framework provides an overview of the different levels of training and education recommended by the GPMHSC before GPs can provide different levels of mental health care in general practice (Table 2).. The pathway for GP mental health training and education is shown in Figure 1.

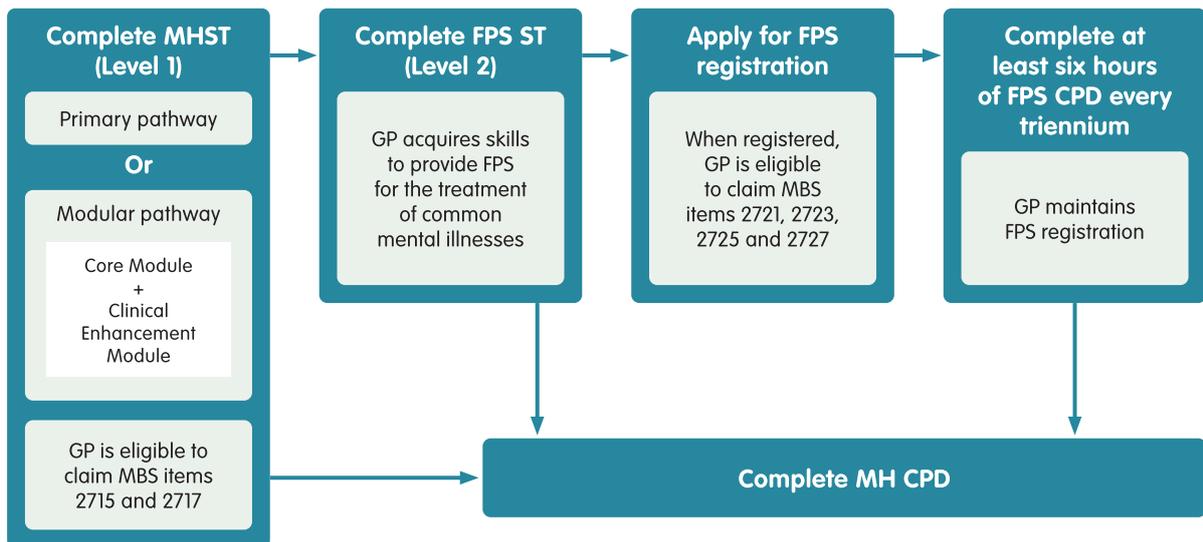
The framework assumes that, having completed undergraduate and pre-vocational training, GPs have achieved entry-level proficiency in the following areas:

- general clinical skills, including communication, cultural competency and recording of patients' medical history
- knowledge of the general aetiology, epidemiology and prevalence of mental illness in the community
- knowledge of the principles of psychiatric assessment and diagnosis
- knowledge of common evidence-based pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments.

Table 2. General Practice Mental Health Training Framework

Level 1: Mental Health Skills Training (MHST)		
Action	Outcomes	Recognition
Complete one of the following:	You should be able to:	You can access MBS item numbers:
MHST Primary Pathway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted at general practice registrars and other doctors entering Australian general practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake mental health assessments for common mental illnesses in the context of general practice and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and review GP MHTPs 	2715 2717
MHST Modular Pathway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a core module and a clinical enhancement module Targeted at GPs who are more experienced or have particular interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake mental health assessments for common and more complex mental illnesses / specific population groups within the context of general practice and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and review GP MHTPs 	
Level 2: Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training (FPS ST)		
Action	Outcomes	Recognition
	You should be able to:	You can access MBS item numbers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete FPS ST (Prerequisite: Level 1 MHST) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide cognitive behavioural therapy or interpersonal therapy to patients eligible for treatment under the Better Access initiative in the context of general practice 	2721 2723 2725 2727 plus registration with Medicare as a GP provider of FPS

FPS ST, Focussed Psychological Strategies; FPS ST, Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training; GP MHTP, General Practice Mental Health Treatment Plan



FPS, Focussed Psychological Strategies; MBS, Medicare Benefits Schedule; MH CPD, Mental Health Continuing Professional Development; MHST, Mental Health Skills Training

Figure 1. GPMHSC-accredited pathway for GP mental health training and education

Part 2: Mental health training and education for GPs

2.1 Introduction

Objectives

Mental health training and education for GPs provides you with the skills and knowledge you need to deliver mental health care in general practice with relevant MBS item numbers.

Choosing training courses from the framework

To ensure your mental health skills and knowledge remain up to date, we encourage you to:

- complete a variety of mental health training courses that refresh and broaden your undergraduate and prevocational skills and knowledge in primary mental health
- include MH CPD as part of your regular professional development
- when choosing your CPD, consider the profile of your practice.

Finding GPMHSC-accredited courses

For further information about accredited courses in mental health, refer to the GPMHSC website <https://gpmhsc.org.au/find-a-course>

If you need advanced skills in mental health care, we encourage you to select from relevant courses referred to in the Advanced Mental Health Skills Acknowledgement Position Statement found on the GPMHSC website: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/advanced-mental-health-skills-acknowledgement-position-statement>

You can use the framework to plan your professional development in mental health at different stages during your career.

Additional GPMHSC information

FAQs: Mental health education and training. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/faqs-mental-health-training>

FAQs: Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) items. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/faqs-mbs>

Exemption from completing MHST and FPS ST

In exceptional circumstances, the GPMHSC may exempt a GP from completing MHST/FPS ST accreditation and still allow the GP to gain access to mental health care items through the MBS.

If you believe you can demonstrate that you have achieved the learning outcomes of MHST (Primary Pathway or Modular Pathway) or FPS ST, you can apply for an exemption.

Additional GPMHSC information

Exemption from accredited mental health training. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/exemption-from-accredited-mental-health-training>

2.2 GPMHSC-accredited mental health training

Mental health courses accredited by the GPMHSC

There are two types of mental health courses for GPs that the GPMHSC accredits, and each have two sub-categories:

1. Skills training courses
 - Mental Health Skills Training (MHST)
 - Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training (FPS ST)

This training is referred to as 'skills training' because you acquire specific knowledge and skills required to access, manage and provide ongoing mental health care to your patients.

2. CPD courses
 - Mental Health CPD (MH CPD)
 - Focussed Psychological Strategies CPD (FPS CPD).

CPD and PDP hours

After successfully completing accredited mental health training and education, you can accrue RACGP CPD hours and/or ACRRM Professional Development Program (PDP) hours.

Accreditation process

All courses submitted for accreditation are adjudicated by the GPMHSC to ensure that they:

- meet relevant standards
- include the required content
- deliver required learning outcomes.

The courses are also subject to regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they continue to satisfy these requirements.

How you can identify an GPMHSC-accredited course

A training course displaying one of the GPMHSC accreditation logos is accredited by the GPMHSC for:

- the nominated type of mental health training (for example, MHST, FPS CPD)
- the nominated triennium.

MHST and FPS ST logos

A course displaying one of the following logos is GPMHSC-accredited MHST or FPS ST training.



CPD logos

A course displaying one of the following logos is GPMHSC-accredited MH CPD or FPS CPD training.



A course displaying one of the following logos is GPMHSC-accredited as a gold standard MH CPD or FPS CPD training.



Gold standard CPD courses run for a minimum of six hours and include predisposing and reinforcing components, as well as involvement from consumer and carer representatives.

The GPMHSC quality assurance program

The GPMHSC conducts ongoing quality assurance of accredited courses to ensure GPs receive high-quality general practice education and training in mental health.

Through the quality assurance program, we:

- review and evaluate how accredited courses are being delivered so they continue to meet the standards
- give training providers the opportunity to openly discuss and receive feedback on their mental health courses.

Useful GPMHSC resource

Overview of the GPMHSC Quality Assurance Program. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/quality-assurance-program>

2.2 Level 1 training: Mental Health Skills Training (MHST)

Objectives

In the context of general practice, MHST aims to:

- enhance your skills in recognising and assessing mental illnesses to prepare evidence-based GP MHTPs
- enhance your skills in monitoring and reviewing a patient's progress
- provide you with insight into the perspective of people who have a lived experience of a mental illness
- provide you with insight into the perspective of non-professional carers caring for people living with mental illness.

There are two ways you can complete Level 1 training:

1. Option 1: the MHST Primary Pathway
2. Option 2: the MHST Modular Pathway.

Option 1: MHST Primary Pathway

The most common pathway GPs choose to become accredited with MHST, the Primary Pathway is designed for:

- general practice registrars and other doctors entering general practice in Australia
- GPs who need a refresher on core mental health skills as part of their CPD.

If you are an experienced GP, you can attend an MHST Primary Pathway course. We encourage GPs who have already completed MHST to complete courses in the MHST Modular Pathway because this will extend your skills in assessing and/or managing specific mental illnesses.

Requirements

You must complete:

- a six-hour (at minimum) MHST Primary Pathway course accredited by the GPMHSC (either an e-learning or a face-to-face course)
- the relevant predisposing components
- the relevant reinforcing components.

Learning outcomes

After completing the MHST Primary Pathway, you will be able to, in the context of general practice:

- detect mental health issues experienced by consumers
- assess and manage commonly presented mental illnesses
- in consultation with consumers and carers, develop an agreed evidence-based and needs-based GP MHTP
- develop a GP MHTP that incorporates the lived experience and needs of consumers, their carers and others in their network
- use practice systems and strategies to provide safe and holistic mental health care, including strategies that acknowledge and support your own self-care and wellbeing
- use appropriate MBS item numbers when providing mental health care.

Option 2: MHST Modular Pathway

Developed in response to the increasingly complex mental health issues that patients present with,

this pathway is designed for more experienced GPs who have a particular interest in mental health. Typically, this would be GPs who:

- want to know more about mental health
- consult many patients with mental illness.

By choosing the MHST Modular Pathway, you can:

- acquire core skills and knowledge in mental health, then
- tailor your MHST learning according to your special interests and needs by completing different clinical enhancement modules as part of MH CPD, thereby expanding your skills and ability to treat complex mental illnesses.

After successfully completing the MHST Modular Pathway (see Requirements below), you will be able to use relevant MBS item numbers when providing mental health care.

If you require a refresher on core mental health skills, you can complete a mental health core module as part of your CPD.

Requirements

You must complete:

- one core module (minimum three hours), plus
- one clinical enhancement module (minimum four hours).

About the core module

Duration

At least three hours

Content

Covering the fundamentals of mental health care in Australian general practice, the core module includes:

- an overview of:
 - the Better Access initiative
 - mental health care services
 - mental health care resources available to GPs
- the key components of a GP MHTP
- a deeper understanding of mental illnesses commonly encountered in general practice
- an introduction of the concept of the consumer and carer perspective when providing mental health care.

Learning outcomes

After completing the core module, you will be able to, in the context of general practice:

- detect mental health issues experienced by consumers
- assess and manage the treatment of commonly presented mental illnesses
- in consultation with consumers and carers, develop an agreed evidence-based and needs-based GP MHTP
- discuss the use of practice systems and strategies to provide safe and holistic mental health care, including strategies that acknowledge and support your own self-care and wellbeing
- discuss appropriate MBS item numbers when providing mental health care.

About the clinical enhancement module

Prerequisite

The mental health core module.

Choosing a clinical enhancement module

We encourage you to:

- choose the mental health clinical enhancement module that best suits your specific needs or areas of interest, then
- complete a range of mental health clinical enhancement modules as part of your CPD.

Clinical enhancement modules focus on one or more of the mental illnesses specified in the Better Access initiative, so that after you complete both the core and clinical enhancement module, you can:

- develop GP MHTPs
- claim relevant MBS items.

Flexibility with timing and providers

You do not have to complete the core module and the clinical enhancement module on the same day, nor with the same training provider.

However, if you complete modules with a different training provider, your RACGP CPD / ACRRM PDP accrual of hours may be affected. For more information about this, contact the RACGP or ACRRM.

Duration

At least four hours.

Content

The mental health clinical enhancement module:

- builds on the knowledge acquired in the core module
- includes carer and consumer perspectives relating to the specific mental illness(es) covered
- applies that knowledge to a specific mental health condition, or complex situations, or a specific consumer group, which means that the content is more specific than the content covered in the MHST Primary Pathway.

Learning outcomes

After completing the clinical enhancement module, you will be able to, in the context of general practice:

- detect mental health issues experienced by consumers
- assess and manage the treatment of commonly presented mental illnesses
- in consultation with consumers and carers, develop an agreed evidence-based and needs-based GP MHTP
- develop a GP MHTP that incorporates the lived experience and needs of consumers, their carers and others in their network
- use practice systems and strategies to provide safe and holistic mental health care, including strategies that acknowledge and support your own self-care and wellbeing.

Useful GPMHSC resources

Mental Health Skills Training. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/mhst>

Becoming an accredited MHST provider – a step-by-step process. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/mhst-accreditation-process>

2.3 Level 2 training: Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training (FPS ST)

What are Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS)?

Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) are specific mental health care treatments, derived from evidence-based psychological therapies. At the time of publication, they include:

- cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), including behavioural interventions and cognitive interventions
- interpersonal therapy (ITP)
- psychoeducation, including motivational interviewing
- relaxation strategies, including progressive muscle relaxation and controlled breathing
- eye-movement desensitisation reprocessing (EMDR)
- skills training, including training in problem-solving, anger management, social skills, communication, stress management and parent management.

For an up-to-date list of recognised FPS interventions, visit MBS online

<http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/fullDisplay.cfm?type=note&qt=NotelD&q=AN.0.57>

Under the Better Access initiative, GPs who are registered FPS providers can use a range of these recognised FPS interventions.

Objectives of FPS ST

In the context of general practice, FPS ST aims to:

- enhance your knowledge and skills attained in MHST
- develop your skills in providing evidence-based psychological interventions for common mental health illnesses
- give you insight into the perspective of people who have a lived experience of a mental illness
- give you insight into the perspective of non-professional carers caring for people living with mental illness.

FPS ST courses based on CBT and IPT

Table 3 shows the skills that are covered in GPMHSC-accredited FPS ST.

Table 3. Focussed Psychological Strategies skills training courses

Courses based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)	Courses based on interpersonal therapy (IPT)
<p>These courses will provide skills in the following strategies, and may provide those shown as optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psycho-education • motivational interviewing • theory and principles underlying CBT • behavioural interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ behaviour modifications ▪ activity scheduling (optional) ▪ exposure techniques (optional) • cognitive interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cognitive analysis, thought challenging and cognitive restructuring ▪ self-instructional training, attention regulation and control (optional) • relaxation strategies • skills training (such as training in problem-solving, communication, parent management and stress management) 	<p>These courses will provide skills in the following strategies, and may provide those shown as optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psycho-education • motivational interviewing (optional) • theory and principles underlying IPT, mental illnesses linked to four types of relationship difficulties (loss, role dispute, role transitions and interpersonal deficits) • IPT training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ explores consumer’s perceptions, expectations of others and relationships ▪ identifies problems with relationships ▪ uses the patient’s affect to bring about change ▪ problem-solves to achieve a resolution of relationship issues ▪ includes communication analysis and training ▪ includes role-play changed behaviour ▪ looks at use of the therapeutic relationship

Prerequisite

MHST Primary Pathway or MHST Modular Pathway.

Requirements

You must complete:

- a minimum of 12 hours of face-to-face or live/interactive contact time (delivered over consecutive weekdays or a weekend)
- an additional interactive structured learning course of a minimum of eight hours
- a predisposing component
- a reinforcing component.

Learning outcomes

After completing the FPS ST, you will be able to, in the context of general practice:

- select and demonstrate evidence-based FPS interventions appropriate to consumer issues and needs outlined in the GP MHTP
- provide FPS that incorporate the lived experience and needs of consumers, their carers and others in their network
- use practice systems and strategies to provide safe and holistic mental health care, including

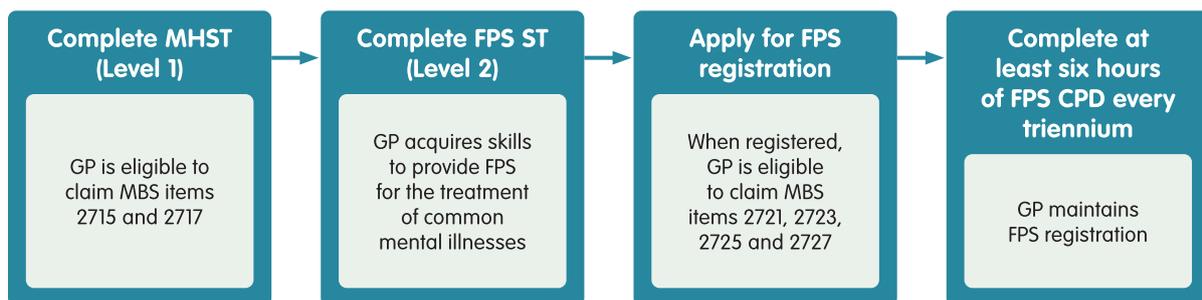
strategies that acknowledge and support your own self-care and wellbeing

- know and understand the value of:
 - regular professional supervision with a more experienced mental health professional
 - completing other professional development to maintain and extend your skills in providing FPS
- use MBS item numbers when providing mental health care.

Registering as a GP provider of FPS

After successfully completing FPS ST, you can register with Medicare as a GP provider of FPS and claim the relevant MBS item numbers for providing FPS in general practice.

Figure 2 outlines the steps to complete to register with Medicare as a GP provider of FPS and maintain your registration.



CPD, continuing professional development; FPS, Focussed Psychological Strategies; FPS ST, Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training; MBS, Medicare Benefits Schedule

Figure 2. Education required to be a registered GP provider of FPS

Useful GPMHSC resources

Focussed Psychological Strategies Skills Training. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/fps-st>

Registering with Services Australia (Medicare) as a GP provider of FPS. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/registration-gp-provider-fps>

2.4 Mental Health CPD and Focussed Psychological Strategies CPD

Mental Health CPD

Although it is not mandatory, the GPMHSC strongly encourages you to complete a variety of MH CPD courses as part of your ongoing professional development.

MH CPD courses aim to extend your skills in assessing and/or managing mental illnesses in the context of general practice and expand your knowledge of the areas addressed in MHST.

Completing clinical enhancement modules as part of your MH CPD is a good way of keeping your mental health skills and knowledge up to date and ensuring that you have a broad knowledge across several areas.

Finding and selecting MH CPD courses

You can find a list of accredited MH CPD courses on the GPMHSC website at <https://gpmhsc.org.au/find-a-course>

Strongly recommended MH CPD courses

The GPMHSC strongly recommends that you complete MH CPD that addresses:

- trauma-informed care and practice
- suicide prevention – undertaking risk assessments, recognising and responding to those at risk of suicide
- child and adolescent mental health
- domestic family violence
- intimate partner abuse and violence
- substance-use disorders
- other areas that are relevant to the community in which you practise.

Other useful MH CPD courses

The GPMHSC encourages you to consider completing MH CPD courses that cover:

- affective disorders
- anxiety disorders
- bodily distress disorders
- eating disorders
- mental health first aid training
- interpersonal skills training – relationships, rapport, communication skills, interview skills.

FPS CPD

FPS CPD expands on the skills and knowledge acquired in FPS ST.

Finding and selecting FPS CPD courses

You can find accredited FPS CPD courses on the GPMHSC website at <https://gpmhsc.org.au/find-a-course>

When selecting FPS CPD courses, please consider provision of FPS to specific populations, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- those experiencing domestic family violence
- those experiencing intimate partner abuse and violence
- those living with addictions (such as alcohol and other drugs)
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and adolescents.

Self-recording FPS you have learnt

You can also self-record any learning you believe extends your skills in FPS and therefore qualifies as FPS CPD. This might include peer-group learning, or completion of a mental health course not accredited by GPMHSC.

Contact the GPMHSC for more information on how you can self-record for FPS CPD.

Useful GPMHSC resources

Mental Health CPD. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/mental-health-cpd>

Focussed Psychological Strategies CPD. Available at: <https://gpmhsc.org.au/info-for-gps/fps-cpd>

Maintaining your FPS registration

To maintain your registration as an FPS provider with Medicare, each triennium after the triennium in which you first registered. For example, if you were registered as an FPS provider in the 2020–22 triennium, you must complete a minimum of six hours of FPS CPD during the 2023–25 triennium to remain registered, and one in every subsequent triennium.

You must complete FPS CPD that:

- is accredited by the GPMHSC
- equates to at least six hours of FPS CPD
- includes a course that is interactive structured learning with predisposing and reinforcing components.

If you do not complete ongoing FPS CPD, you may lose your access to claim MBS items for providing FPS.

Re-registering if your registration expires

If your FPS registration expired in the previous triennium, you can apply for re-registration without re-starting the whole process and will be required to complete **two** FPS CPD courses during the current triennium.

If your registration expired before the previous triennium, contact the GPMHSC Secretariat. The GPMHSC Secretariat will consider your circumstances and may consult with the GPMHSC Committee before deciding what you will have to do to regain your registration.

Recommended types of CPD

If you are choosing CPD, you should consider CPD categories as defined by the Medical Board of Australia.

Table 4 shows how different modes of learning map to CPD categories as defined by the Medical Board of Australia's Registration Standards.

Table 4. Recommended types of CPD

Modes of learning	Examples	Medical Board of Australia CPD categories
Courses	Workshops, seminars, lectures and conferences	Educational activities
Online learning	e-learning and webinars	Educational activities
Peer group learning	Balint groups	Reviewing performance
Higher education/professional certification	Graduate diploma or Master's degree in psychology, psychiatry or another related field	Educational activities Reviewing performance
Audit	Systematic review of FPS skills in clinical practice	Measuring outcomes
Supervised clinical attachment	Working directly under a mental health practitioner, in a variety of settings, such as an inpatient psychiatric	Reviewing performance

	facility, community mental health service, or a drug and alcohol service	
Research	Mental health research in the context of general practice (individual GP or group)	Educational activities Measuring outcomes

Useful resource

Medical Board of Australia. Registration Standards. Available at:
<https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2020–21. Canberra: ABS, 2021. Available at <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/first-insights-national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing-2020-21> [Accessed 22 July 2022].
2. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Better Access initiative. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2022. Available at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/better-access-initiative> [Accessed 15 August 2022].
3. Australian Psychological Society. Evidence-based psychological interventions in the treatment of mental disorders. A review of the literature. 4th edn. Melbourne: APS, 2018. Available at <https://psychology.org.au/getmedia/23c6a11b-2600-4e19-9a1d-6ff9c2f26fae/evidence-based-psych-interventions.pdf> [Accessed 6 April 2022].
4. Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency. Continuing professional development. Melbourne: AHPRA, 2019. Available at [https://www.ahpra.gov.au/registration/registration-standards/cpd.aspx#:~:text=Continuing%20professional%20development%20\(CPD\)%20is,required%20throughout%20their%20professional%20lives](https://www.ahpra.gov.au/registration/registration-standards/cpd.aspx#:~:text=Continuing%20professional%20development%20(CPD)%20is,required%20throughout%20their%20professional%20lives) [Accessed 16 May 2022].
5. World Health Organisation. Mental disorders. Geneva: WHO, 2022. Available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders> [Accessed 16 May 2022].
6. National Mental Health Commission. National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines. Sydney: NMHC, 2022. Available at [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/lived-experience-workforces/peer-experience-workforce-guidelines/national-lived-experience-\(peer\)-workforce-develop/clarity-understanding-lived-experience-work/chapter-1-achieving-integrated-regional-planning-a](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/lived-experience-workforces/peer-experience-workforce-guidelines/national-lived-experience-(peer)-workforce-develop/clarity-understanding-lived-experience-work/chapter-1-achieving-integrated-regional-planning-a) [Accessed 16 May 2022].
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Mental health services in Australia: Medicare-subsidised mental health-specific services. Canberra: AIHW, 2022. Available at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/medicare-subsidised-mental-health-specific-services> [Accessed 1 April 2022].
8. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. General Practice: Health of the Nation 2022. East Melbourne: RACGP, 2022. Available at <https://www.racgp.org.au/getmedia/c6fc787b-9c6e-43a5-a1d9-46847a151615/ID-949-HOTN-21-summary-v4-WEB.pdf.aspx> [Accessed 17 March 2022].