

8 Survey of carers

8.1 Sampling

Information on the evaluation and hyperlink to the survey was placed on the website of Beyond Blue and the Public Mental Health Consumers network. Information was also provided to other peak consumers and carer NGO organisations via the peak mental health NGO in each state or territory.

The survey was live for a five week period. There were 30 responses to the survey.

8.2 Responses to survey of carers

Due to low sample size, percentages are not reported.

Q1. What is your age and gender?

Over half of respondents were older than 45 years. There were few respondents over the age of 65 years. Most respondents were female.

Age	Female	Male	Gender not given	Total
Children 0 - 12			1	1
25 to 44 years	7	1		8
45 to 64 years	13	4		17
65 years and over	2	1		3
Did not respond		1		1
Grand Total	22	7	1	30

Q2 and Q3. State and region of residence

Almost half of respondents were from NSW and most were from major cities and inner regional areas.

Region	Inner Regional	Major City	Outer Regional	Did not respond	Total
NSW	3	12	1		16
SA	1	4			5
VIC	1	2			3
NT			1		1
QLD		1			1
(blank)				4	4
Grand Total	5	19	2	4	30

Q4. Who do you care for that is a user of mental health services?

Most respondents reported that they provided care to their child.

Care provided to	Respondents
Child	13
Partner	8
Parent	5
Brother, sister or other close family member	4
Total	30

Q5. Has the person you care for seen a GP for assistance with a mental health problem?

Most respondents reported that the person they cared for had been to see a GP and that the waiting times to see the GP were acceptable.

Person cared for has seen a GP	Respondents
Yes	24
No	6
Total	30

Q5a. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I thought the waiting time to see the GP was acceptable.

Waiting time to see GP was acceptable	Respondents
Strongly agree	7
Agree	12
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	1
Total	24

Q6. Did the GP refer the person you care for to an allied health provider (psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist)?

Of the 24 carers reporting that the person they cared for had been to see a GP, most reported that the GP referred the person they care for to an allied health provider.

Referral to an allied health provider	Respondents
Yes	19
No	5
Total	24

Q7a. I thought the waiting time to see the allied health provider (psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist) was unacceptable?

Of the 19 carers reporting that the person they cared for had been referred to an allied health provider, more than half reported the waiting time as unacceptable.

Waiting time to see the allied health provider was acceptable	Respondents
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	2
Unsure	1
Disagree	4
Strongly Disagree	4
Did not respond	7
Total	19

Q7b. I thought the out of pocket payments were affordable.

Of the 19 carers reporting that the person they cared for had been referred to an allied health provider, approximately half of respondents considered out of pocket expenses were affordable.

Out of pocket expenses were affordable	Respondents
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	5
Disagree	5
Strongly Disagree	1
Unsure	1
Did not respond	6
Total	19

Q7c. The services provided to the person I care for helped them

Of the 19 carers reporting that the person they cared for had been referred to an allied health provider, more than half reported that the services were helpful.

Services were helpful	Respondents
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	4
Unsure	1
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1
Did not respond	7
Total	19

Q7d. The services provided to the person I care for made things easier for me

Services were made things easier	Respondents
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	5
Unsure	1
Disagree	1
Did not respond	11
Total	19

Q7e. The mental health services for the person you care for were available in your local area

Services were made things easier	Respondents
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	3
Did not respond	10
Total	19

8.3 Comments from survey of carers

Female aged 25 to 44 years, Major City, NSW

Caring for sibling or close family member. There needs to be an obvious and well known source of appropriate information eg. a website, Centrelink or Family assistance office, for all services required by Mental Health Users and carers in their local area-a one stop shop of services available in the community. (#19)

Female aged 25 to 44 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for sibling or close family member

Psychiatrists need to refer patients to it more often for it to have any use or effect on a consumers' well being. (#11)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Inner Regional, NSW, Caring for child

My daughter has been using the Better Access Initiative since it started. Initially she was given the referral by her GP with no consultation with me as her carer. The main problem being that for her to access the service she needed \$110 cash up front. (#27)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Inner Regional, NSW, Caring for partner

I have been in the caring role since before the Better Access Initiative. If this was in place during our time, it would have given us more choice at a lot less expense. I am not sure how useful it would have been as the person i care for needed frequent treatment. (#9)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for child

With waiting lists so long in regional areas like ours, couldn't some sort of "priority" system be in place to fast track those requiring urgent attention? I'm talking about those with serious self-harm or aggression issues. (#31)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for partner

I think that GPs need more knowledge in regard to communicating with people who have mental health issues. I understand that Doctors have an overwhelming workload however, taking the time to talk to the patient and their carer and make sure that there is. . . .(incomplete comment) (#15)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for partner

Access should be provided where the carer and consumer have a joint visit occasionally. (#6)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for child

Twelve services may not be enough for someone with a longstanding psychological/mental health issue. (#10)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, QLD, Caring for child

I was told that we were not eligible because he was not taking any medication. I had to pay for all the services full price. There is no extras refund from MBF for psychology and nothing from Medicare. Even with his own Health Care Card, I had to pay full price. (#32)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, SA, Caring for partner

Many attempts are made to get a diagnosis, without success, so no treatment was available, but information was used to prove incapacity. (#24)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, VIC, Caring for child

Yes, I think that the divide between clinical and generalist psychologists is destructive, non evidence based and damaging in the narrowing of effective therapeutic interventions. (#4)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, VIC, Caring for partner

There were providers in our area but too difficult to access in an acceptable timeframe. (#7)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Caring for child

The person I care for doesn't live within the same postcode as myself. (#23)

Female aged 65 years and over, Inner Regional, VIC, Caring for child

The efficiency of the service seems to depend on the relationship the family already has with the GP. The GP's knowledge of the family, its general health and background facilitates Better Access. (#29)

Female aged 65 years and over, Major City, NSW, Caring for child

The time the doctors spend with the patient is minimal and the intervals between appointments is far too long (three months). The other problem is that the patient doesn't see the same doctor.. (#13)

Female aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, SA Caring for partner

The B.A. initiative is good, but needs much extending, especially rurally. (#30)

Male aged 25 to 44 years, Inner Regional, NSW, Caring for a parent

The better outcomes initiative is corrupted by GP services only referring to their own psychologists in the practice. I waited months for my mother to be seen by a Psychologist from the Division of GP in the surgery, only to discover that we could in fact see one through Better Access. (#18)

Male aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for child

These resources are stretched to the limit, which means that sometimes the person I care for can only get basic help. There is a need for more thorough follow-up at my local level. (#20)

Male aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, NSW, Caring for a parent

GPs seem reluctant to complete the paperwork that is required in this process. (#28)

Male aged 45 to 64 years, Major City, SA, Caring for partner

Anything that can make any part of the caring procedure less complicated and quicker can only be OF GREAT VALUE. (#21)

Male aged 65 years and over, Major City, SA, Caring for child

I write as a desperate Caring for a parent. Our adopted son is 35, has bi-polar and sees a private psychiatrist. We pay all medical bills and health insurance, and significant other bills to keep him in public housing so he has a place of his own. (#25)