

## Service Announcement

December 2024

# Service Navigators set to link vulnerable communities with accessible, appropriate healthcare

Service Navigators who will link people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and refugee backgrounds, and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with appropriate primary healthcare services in South Western Sydney will be available across our region early next year.

South Western Sydney PHN has funded Settlement Services International (SSI) - an organisation with known expertise and experience in delivering support and programs to South Western Sydney's diverse community - to provide the service.

Chief Executive Officer, Dr Keith McDonald PhD, said SWSPHN designed the Service Navigator in partnership with community, service providers, healthcare professionals and people with lived experience, after identifying a need in our community.

In South Western Sydney, about 42 per cent of people were born overseas, reflecting our region's demographics.

CALD and refugee communities face specific health challenges, with priority needs centred around chronic disease management, sexual and reproductive health, domestic violence and infectious diseases.

These communities report significant disparities in healthcare experiences, including not feeling understood and supported by healthcare providers, inadequate information to manage their health effectively, insufficient social support systems and reduced likelihood of having a regular GP.

More than 12,000 people across South Western Sydney were homeless or at risk of homelessness, according to the 2021 Census.

Community feedback identified several barriers for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, when accessing primary healthcare.

These barriers include financial hardship, limited awareness of available healthcare services, challenges in physical access to facilities, social stigma associated with homelessness, difficulties in accessing mental health services, and a lack of well-defined referral pathways between service providers.

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**This service is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the PHN program.**

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, water and skies of South Western Sydney, the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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Dr McDonald said the Service Navigator would improve access to primary healthcare, enhance connection to community health services and provide financial relief through subsidised primary care costs, for these targeted populations.

The Service Navigator will:

- serve as a single point of contact for individuals from CALD and refugee backgrounds, or people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- provide ongoing service navigation support to ensure comprehensive care coordination
- connect clients with community health services
- connect clients with a regular GP for ongoing care
- set clients up with a Medicare card where eligible
- work with each client to provide personalised support tailored to their specific health needs
- promote access to preventative healthcare measures such as cancer screening

“We would like to thank all those who contributed to the design of this service which is an important step towards ensuring everyone in our community, especially our most vulnerable, have equal access to culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and person-centred care,” Dr McDonald said.

“We’re looking forward to working with SSI to ensure the service’s success and improve health outcomes for our community.”

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