



Health Care Homes Program Cessation-FAQs for participating practices

9 August 2021

What is the Health Care Homes (HCH) program?

Health Care Homes (HCH) is a trial program through which general practices or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) provide a 'home base' for the management of an eligible patient's chronic condition/s. The HCH program delivers coordinated, team-based care around the needs and goals of the patient.

When is the HCH trial program ceasing?

The HCH program is ceasing on 30 June 2021 as planned. The trial program commenced in October 2017 and was extended in November 2019 until 30 June 2021.

Why is the HCH Program ceasing?

HCH is a trial program with a planned end date of 30 June 2021. A government-commissioned evaluation of the program is being undertaken by a consortium led by Health Policy Analysis. The evaluation, under way since the trial's commencement and due for completion in the first half of 2022, has provided close to four years of valuable data and insights into patient-centred, team-based care for people with chronic or complex conditions. The evaluation will document the lessons learned to inform potential future primary care reforms.

What will happen to the enrolled patients and their continuity of care?

The Government recognises the importance of continuity of care for all patients. From 1 July 2021, patients involved in the trial can continue to receive care for their chronic conditions under the normal Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) arrangements through their current general practice or ACCHS. This includes the MBS Chronic Disease Management and Telehealth items, as well as continuing access to allied health services through General Practitioner (GP) Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements.

Is there anything replacing HCH?

The Government is currently undertaking a body of work to reform Primary Health Care in Australia including through the development of a Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan. A focus of these reforms will be to put patients at the centre of care and provide structures to enable person-centred and team-based care, building on valuable learnings from the HCH program. The Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan is expected to be finalised in late 2021.

What will the HCH evaluation findings be used for?

The evaluation findings will document the lessons learned and deliver practical recommendations to inform potential future primary care reforms.

Do we need to advise enrolled patients or will the Department of Health be advising them of the program cessation?

You will need to advise enrolled patients of the program cessation. The Department of Health is providing resources and information to assist with your communication with your patients. You are encouraged to discuss ongoing care arrangements with your patients.

Does our practice or ACCHS have to withdraw patients manually when the program ceases?

Once the program ceases on 30 June 2021, your patients will automatically be withdrawn from the program. You can choose to withdraw your patients earlier than this however bundled payments will be calculated up to the date of patient withdrawal.

Is there anything else our practice or ACCHS will need to do when the program ends?

It is a requirement of the program that your practice or ACCHS submits a Statement of Completion, which is due by 30 September 2021. This will involve the completion of a Financial Declaration which specifies that the grant funds provided were spent for the agreed purpose and there are no unspent funds remaining. The Department will be making these available in the coming weeks.

How can our practice or ACCHS continue the HCH model of care after the program ceases?

Your practice and ACCHS can continue the care arrangements you have put in place as part of the program by using the chronic disease related MBS items under the following Groups:

- Group A14 - Health Assessments
- Group A15 - GP Management Plans, Team Care Arrangements, Multidisciplinary Care Plans
- Group A20 - GP Mental Health Treatment
- Group M12 - Services Provided by a Practice Nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner on Behalf of a Medical Practitioner

Your practice and ACCHS can also continue to provide enhanced access to care by using telehealth MBS items.

As well, your practice or ACCHS can continue to use Shared Care Planning tools once the program has ceased. Please contact your software provider, or your local PHN if they originally set this up for you, for more information on how to do this.

What will happen to the Shared Care Plans created for enrolled patients under the program?

Your practice or ACCHS will need to decide if you wish to continue using the Shared Care Planning software supported under the program, use an alternative, or stop using electronic

Shared Care Plans altogether. Please contact your current software provider for advice on any potential issues accessing Shared Care Plans upon discontinuing your use of the software.

What will happen to the Shared Care Planning software my practice or ACCHS is using under the Program?

Your practice or ACCHS can continue to use Shared Care Planning tools once the program has ceased. Please contact your software provider for more information on how to do this.

Who owns the Shared Care Plan record?

The information contained within the electronic Shared Care Plan is held by your practice and also within the Shared Care Planning software. Your practice will need to discuss with your software provider any continuing access or other controls on the Shared Care Plan records created for your patients.

If the Shared Care Planning software does not integrate with my practice or ACCHS software, who is responsible for transferring the data out of the Shared Care Planning software into the practice software?

Your practice should discuss with your software provider how best to extract shared care plans into your practice software.

Can patients continue to access their Shared Care Plan once they have been withdrawn from the program?

This will depend on any arrangement you have with the provider of the Shared Care Planning software. Please contact your software provider.

Once the program ceases, can my enrolled patients still access MBS-funded allied health services triggered by the development of their HCH Shared Care Plan?

Health Care Homes patients will still be eligible for MBS-funded allied health services after the cessation of the HCH Program. Access to MBS-funded allied health is reliant on a patient having a valid referral made by a medical practitioner. If the referral has been made as part of a HCH shared care plan, the shared care plan must have been prepared on or before 30 June 2021. If the referral remains valid, Health Care Homes patients will be eligible for the same services as non-health care home patients which would otherwise be triggered by a Chronic Disease Management Plan, including individual and group allied health services.

Billing of MBS item 10997- follow-up services provided by a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner

The use of MBS item 10997 item is reliant on a patient having a GP Management Plan (GPMP), Team Care Arrangement (TCA) or Multidisciplinary Care Plan (MCP) in place.

Patients who do not have a GPMP, TCA or MCP are not eligible to receive follow-up services provided by a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner, and MBS item 10997 cannot be claimed.

As there is no other MBS item for this purpose, if practices wish to bill MBS item 10997, they should arrange for their former HCH patients to have a GPMP, TCA or MCP undertaken as soon as possible. Please note that these consultations can now be undertaken via telehealth using the temporary COVID-19 telehealth MBS items. Services may only be provided by telehealth where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so.

How do I bill for after-hours care now that the HCH Program has ended?

The HCH bundled payments covered after-hours services where they were provided in the practice rooms and related to the management of a patient's chronic condition/s. All after-hours services, regardless of whether they are provided in or outside of the practice rooms or via telehealth, should be billed to the MBS after the HCH program ceases.

When will the final bundled payments be made?

Final bundled payments will be made to your practice or ACCHS in July 2021 for services provided in June 2021.

Where can I find assistance and support to help me transition our practice or ACCHS business processes and care models?

A number of resources will be provided to assist your practice or ACCHS and patients during this transition period.

These resources will be available on the Department's Health Care Homes website at <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-care-homes-resources> or can be requested by emailing the Department at healthcarehomes@health.gov.au.

Additionally, your local PHN will be able to provide advice and support.

What is the Voluntary Patient Enrolment (VPE) measure, when is it commencing and will my HCH patients be eligible to register?

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Government announced a voluntary patient registration initiative for patients aged 70 and over. In the 2019-20 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook this initiative was extended to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 50 and over. As a result of COVID-19 and the introduction of the temporary MBS telehealth items, the initiative did not commence on 1 July 2020.

The Government remains committed to implementing a revised patient registration model with associated investment in primary health care. The Government is working with health and system experts, including the Primary Health Reform Steering Group, on a revised patient registration model as part of the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, which is expected to be finalised in late 2021.

Who can practices talk to if they have further questions?

For more questions around the program and its cessation, please contact healthcarehomes@health.gov.au.

Resources will also be made available on the Department's Health Care Homes website at <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/more-about-health-care-homes-professional>.