

Minds Together summary

July – December 2024

Minds Together is a suite of programs and resources developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of family, friends and carers who support someone experiencing mental health concerns or suicidal distress.

Family, friends and carers supporting someone experiencing suicidal distress or following a suicide attempt

This *Minds Together* program is designed to address the unique needs of carers by building their skills, knowledge and confidence to provide support, as well as improve their own mental health, wellbeing and coping skills. The program has been co-designed and trialled in the Australian context, with participants finding it feasible, acceptable and safe to use.

Implementing *Minds Together* in NSW

Everymind has been engaged by the NSW Ministry of Health to implement this digital program in NSW aftercare services.

Implementing *Minds Together* in the ACT

Everymind has been engaged by the ACT Health Directorate to implement this program in ACT aftercare and other services and initiatives. The program will be delivered through a combined approach of digital and face-to-face options.

Achievements of the NSW and ACT projects



Updated the *Minds Together* program and portal, and developed a new module for family, friends and carers supporting someone experiencing suicidal distress. The new program went live in December 2024.



Created specific landing pages for NSW and the ACT on the *Minds Together* portal, each featuring a service directory, program access and a moderated online social forum.



Established a Family and Friends Reference Group to provide input, review and user testing for the updated program.



Commenced evaluation with brief survey questions embedded within the program.

Additional NSW project achievements

Piloted a consultation in the Hunter New England region before conducting a statewide consultation across NSW. A survey gathered insights from 98 staff from aftercare and other services about the practical and operational aspects of embedding the program.

95% of NSW survey respondents emphasised the importance of the *Minds Together* program for family, friends and carers, highlighting a critical support gap.

Additional ACT project achievements

Consulted 46 staff from aftercare and other services in the ACT via an online survey to explore perspectives on embedding the program from practical and operational viewpoints. Insights will inform strategies for seamless program integration across the territory.



“Family and carer inclusion is a critical standard of care that we need to consistently meet.”

- Consultation participant

Contributing to research

Published paper: *Mixed-Methods Consultation Study of Family and Friends Supporting a Paramedic Experiencing Mental Ill-Health or Suicidal Distress*

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore the experiences of family and friends who support the mental health of paramedics and their preferences for how support may be provided to them. The findings broaden our understanding of the informal paramedic support system, including the range of relationship roles, the geographical distance between carers and care recipients, the varied types of support provided, and the challenges experienced by carers.

The study highlights the necessity for accessible online interventions, ensuring confidentiality and equipping carers with tools to address paramedics' mental health needs while prioritising their own self-care.

Published paper: *Constructions of carer identity for people supporting someone with depressive or anxiety symptoms: a qualitative study*

This qualitative research investigates how carers of people with depressive or anxiety symptoms perceive their identity, interpret the label carer and how carers experience role ambiguity.

The research highlighted that carer identity is more than performing a role. It is a complex construction of experience and meaning-making, with deep consideration of oneself and the person they support.



Community engagement and knowledge sharing

87
family, friends and
carers were supported
through the *Minds
Together* online
programs

2,400+
users accessed
information and
resources through
the *Minds Together*
portal

- **Hunter New England Mental Health Service, Carer and Clinician Conference and the Family and Carer Open Day**

Everymind showcased the *Minds Together* program at both events, providing valuable information and resources for family, friends and carers supporting someone experiencing suicidal distress or following a suicide attempt. Carers and clinicians received updates on the NSW implementation of the program, including program access and referral processes.

- **Article in Manna Institute Trunkline newsletter**

In the October 2024 issue, *Minds Together* was featured in a one-page article celebrating Carers Week. The piece highlighted the vital role of carers in our communities and stressed the importance of including them in research to improve future support.

- **Submission to the Australian Government's National Carer Strategy**

Everymind provided a formal submission and seven key recommendations to inform the Australian Government's draft National Carer Strategy (2024) aimed at improving the lives of Australia's unpaid carers.

- **Input into the NSW Universal Aftercare Service Delivery Model**

Everymind contributed recommendations to the Agency for Clinical Innovation's development of a Universal Aftercare service model, advocating for the inclusion of carers and encouraging clinicians to refer them to the *Minds Together* program, where appropriate, as part of standard service provision.