



**Waitemata**  
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone



# Welcome to Early Psychosis Intervention Team (EPI)

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*Information for service users and their family/whanau*

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# Welcome to the Early Psychosis Intervention Team (EPI)

The EPI Team is part of the Waitemata District Health Board's District Mental Health Services. We support people aged 16-25 who are experiencing their first episode of psychosis, and provide support for families/whanau.

The EPI team uses a model called Early Intervention. This involves giving support, information and treatment to people as soon as possible after their first experience of psychosis. This model has been shown to be very effective at helping people to recover more quickly.

The EPI service is free to New Zealand residents and we are happy to see you in our offices or at any other place you feel comfortable, eg, home, school or work.

## So what is psychosis?

Psychosis is a condition that affects a person's mind, and can change the way someone thinks, feels or behaves. Someone experiencing psychosis may:

- see, hear, feel, taste or smell things that other people can't. In medical terms these experiences are called 'hallucinations'
- develop beliefs that other people would say are very strange or unusual. These beliefs can be called 'delusions'
- have muddled-up thinking, which can make it difficult to concentrate, to put words together and even make sense to other people. This is sometimes referred to as 'disorganised thinking'.

Psychosis is more common than most people realise. Three in every hundred people experience a psychotic episode some time in their lives, which makes it more common than diabetes. Almost anyone can have a psychotic episode, but it's generally accepted that:

- some people are more vulnerable to psychosis, and
- stressful or traumatic events make it more likely to happen.

For some people, psychosis happens only once, for others it happens for short periods of time throughout their lives, and some people live with psychosis as an ongoing issue. The good thing is that there are lots of things that can be done to help you manage these experiences and there's no reason why psychosis needs to stop you moving towards your goals.

## Who works at EPI?

EPI is a multi-disciplinary team of professionals from a variety of backgrounds, including social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists/psychiatric registrars.

Once you've been referred to EPI, you will be allocated a keyworker from one of these professional groups (apart from the psychiatrist/psychiatric registrar). Your keyworker is the person you have most contact with and who organises and oversees your care. At first they might see you quite regularly (once or twice a week) but this may change over time. As well as your keyworker, you will also be seen by a psychiatrist or psychiatric registrar. Psychiatrists or psychiatric registrars are doctors who have specialist training in mental health and who oversee your care. At first they will see you about once a month to get to know you, check how things are going and review any medication you may be prescribed to reduce and get rid of the symptoms of psychosis. Once things have improved they will usually see you once every three months.

There may be times where, to help you achieve your goals, other members of the team become involved in supporting you, ie, to do functional, neurological or sensory assessments, physical health screens or specific types of talking therapies. Cultural support may also be an important part of your care, and EPI works alongside Maori, Pacific Island and Asian Mental Health services to offer this.



## So what sorts of things will you do with your keyworker?

One of the biggest roles of your keyworker is to support you to become an expert at helping yourself to manage psychosis and lead a fulfilling life. Some of the ways your keyworker can support you do this include:

- talking with you and your family/whanau about what psychosis is, how to understand more about your experience, how to manage symptoms, what to do if you start becoming unwell and what may help to reduce the chance of it happening again
- talking with you about any medication you may be taking and providing information about possible side effects
- supporting you to work out solutions to problems that may be contributing to psychosis (eg, stress, alcohol and drugs)
- supporting you and your family/whanau with developing a plan of what to do in case you notice psychosis coming back.

### Keyworkers can also help by:

- keeping in contact with other people you identify as your main supports (with your permission) and your family doctor
- being available for you and your family/whanau and to organise family/whanau meetings (when appropriate)
- helping you to organise WINZ (Work and Income New Zealand) benefits if needed
- giving advice on how you can live a more healthy lifestyle
- introducing you to other people in the team who may become involved in your care
- referring you to other services that may be helpful
- assisting and supporting you during particularly stressful and difficult times.

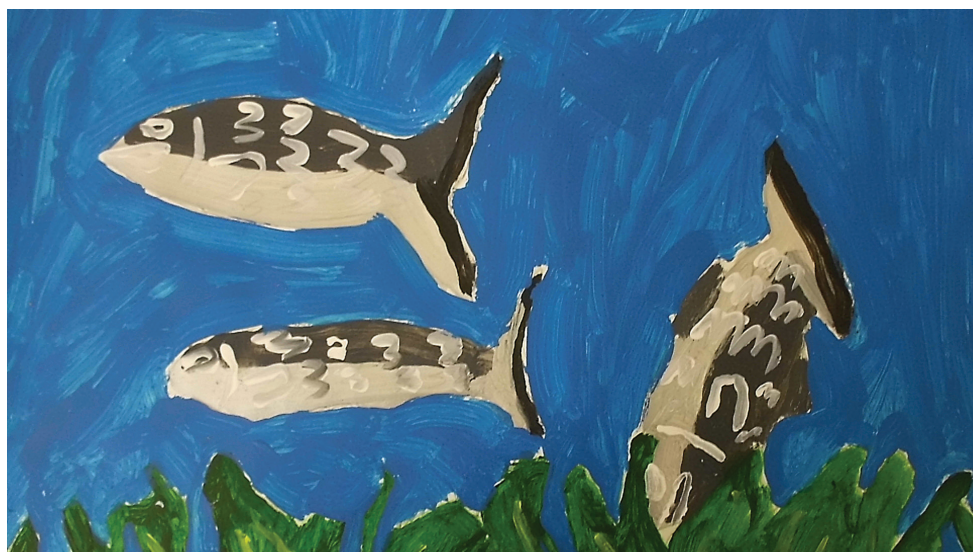
## What is Cultural Support?

Maori cultural assessment and support may involve providing:

- programmes that are based upon the four interacting dimensions of 'Te Whare Tapa Wha' (the traditional Maori health system):
  - Taha wairua (spiritual health)
  - Taha hinengaro (mental health)
  - Taha tinana (physical health)
  - Taha whanau (family health)
- an understanding of what it means to be Maori
- assistance accessing traditional Maori healing, cultural assessments, customary remedies and using Maori language in treatment if requested
- family/whanau interventions in an environment based on Maori cultural values, customs and beliefs.

EPI also works alongside Asian Mental Health and Pacific Island cultural support services.





# Groups

The main group run by EPI is the RAP group, which happens once a week, with some breaks in the year.

RAP stands for Recovery After Psychosis, and recovering from psychosis can present all sorts of challenges. So this group is for people who would like the opportunity to have fun, discover new interests, develop personal strengths and identity, learn more about health issues and get to know other people who have had similar experiences. Typical examples of activities include:

ten-pin bowling	mini-golf	laser strike
walks	BBQs/picnics	art

We also run some talking sessions that cover relevant topics, eg, stress management. Activities are usually free or low-cost (under \$4).

Transport is usually provided, though we do encourage you to meet at EPI offices if you are able to do so.

## Guidelines for RAP

- Be aware of other group members, respect different stages of where people are at in their recovery.
- Respect other’s – no put-downs.
- Don’t use drugs or alcohol during the group or come to the group intoxicated.
- If you do use substances outside of the group, please don’t talk about this with other group members.
- Only EPI clients can attend.
- People will be dropped off where they were picked up.

As well as RAP, there may be other groups available which your keyworker will inform you about, such as family/whanau information and strategies sessions, and service user education groups.



## What if I don't want my keyworker to talk to my family/whanau or support person?

If at all possible we like to get to know and spend time with the people who are significant in your life. However, it's your choice. This is often a difficult time for your family/whanau and support people, as they may have questions and need some support themselves.

It is important to know that we can't talk to your family about the things you tell us without your permission, except if:

- we are concerned that you might hurt yourself or someone else
- we know someone is hurting you.

If we need to talk to somebody about any of these things we will always try to discuss it with you first.

## We welcome feedback

Feedback is really important in helping us to deliver a better service. If you would like to give a compliment, make a complaint or discuss any concerns you may have, please feel free to contact your keyworker, the team manager or the consumer advisor at the relevant EPI office. You can also contact the Waitemata DHB customer services officer on (09) 486 1491 if you prefer.

# Where is EPI based and when is EPI open?

## EPI has two offices:

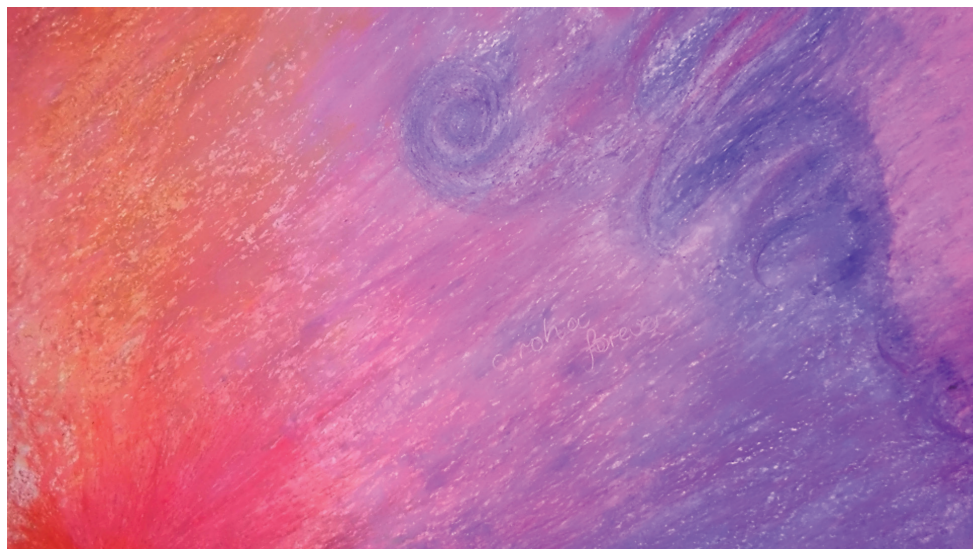
North Office	West Office
Phone: (09) 489 0555 or 0800 489555	Phone: (09) 822 8666
Pupuke Building, North Shore Hospital	Waimarino, 33 Paramount Drive, Henderson
Postal address: Private Bag 93503, Takapuna	Postal address: Private Bag 93115, Henderson

EPI services are open Monday to Friday 8am- 4:30pm, but not on public holidays. If you can't make an appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so we can make another time which will suit you better.

## What to do if you're going through a difficult time

1. First, try some of the strategies that you've discussed with your keyworker (eg, do something relaxing and enjoyable, spend some time problem solving the stressful situation, talk with and spend some time with people you find supportive). It may be helpful to look at your Early Warning Signs and Relapse Prevention Plan.
2. Talk to your keyworker and if they are away speak with the EPI duty clinician.
3. For **urgent help outside of EPI's working hours**, please contact the number for your area below and ask to speak with the **Mental Health Crisis team**:  
**Waitakere**      (09) 822 8500  
**North Shore**    (09) 486 1491  
**Rodney**        (09) 427 0360

**or if there are any immediate safety concerns, contact the police (111).**





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