**Introduction**

On 5 March 2018, the Government announced funding of $84.3 million over four years for the introduction of new early intervention services for carers. The implementation of the Integrated Carer Support Service (ICSS) is the third and final stage of the Government’s 2015-16 Budget commitment to develop an Integrated Plan for Carer Support Services.

The ICSS will be rolled out in two key stages:

From **October 2018**, new services for carers will be designed, tested and rolled out through the Carer Gateway website, including digital counselling, online peer support and coaching and online education resources.

The online services will be implemented in-line with the Australian Government [Digital Service Standard](https://www.dta.gov.au/standard/), which aims to ensure the services meet the needs of users. This involves a phased rollout commencing with the design and testing of a prototype service with a small group of carers in October 2018, followed by the release and continued testing of a refined service in January 2019, and a finalised, publicly available service in September 2019.

Post announcement of the Grant assessment outcomes, a network of Carer Gateway service providers will commence nationally, providing carers with access to the full suite of Carer Gateway supports and services.

**Implementation Approach**

The department’s approach to implementation encompasses the following principles:

1. ***Ensuring continuity of services for existing clients and minimising the impact of business as usual activities during transition.***

A key factor in implementing this major reform is the inclusion of a transition timeframe to the new service system, for both carers and service providers.

This will ensure carers and the sector have time to understand the changes and are supported to transition to the new service system.

1. ***Engaging with stakeholders throughout the transition.***

The department will support service providers and carersto understand the changes and engage with the new services. This includes equipping current and future providers (and related sector organisations) with resources to assist carers.

The department will be engaging with stakeholders, and ensuring the sector and carers are informed throughout the transitionvia a number of mediums including webinars, targeted emails, web updates and direct consultation forums. The department will also undertake national communications activities aimed at promoting the new services.

The department will also continue to consult with the National Disability & Carers Advisory Council (NDCAC) and their Carer Reform Working Group (CRWG) who provide high-level strategic advice to the Assistant Minister for Social Services on implementation issues for carer reform that impact on carers and the carer sector.

1. ***Supporting carer service providers to transition to the new arrangements.***

The department will provide ongoing support to service providersto transition to the new arrangements. The department will undertake a program of establishment and decommissioning activities for service providers in the lead up to the new model going live as well as post go-live support.

1. ***Continuously monitor and refine the transition process.***

The department will continuously monitor the transition processand refine transition activities where required through regular consultation with the sector to gauge the effectiveness of implementation.

**Implementation**

The following table describes the major phases planned for the implementation of the ICSS.

| Phase Description | Timing |
| --- | --- |
| **Pre-Grant Preparation Period**   * The pre-grant preparation period is primarily focussed on engaging with sector providers to aid preparation for the upcoming Carer Gateway Regional Delivery Partner (RDP) Grant Opportunity. * This phase also sees the commencement of the design and implementation of the new online services – Online Peer Support, Digital Counselling, Self-Guided Coaching program and Education Resources. | August to November 2018 |
| **Grant Opportunity Period**   * This period is focussed on the release of the RDP grant opportunity – a formal, open market approach for the selection of the Carer Gateway service providers. * Following the closure of the application period, the Department will undertake a formal, merit-based assessment process to select the Carer gateway service provider grant recipients. | November 2018 to present (as at July 2019) |
| **Carer Gateway Service Provider Establishment Period**   * Following the grant selection process, Carer Gateway service providers will officially commence their grant agreements with the Department and undertake operational set-up and participate in training and education activities delivered by the Department. This will occur prior to the Carer Gateway service providers ‘going-live’. * During this period, the Department and providers will be communicating with carers to inform them of the upcoming changes to carer services. | Future implementation activities |
| **Carer Gateway Service Provider Commencement Period**   * This period sees the formal commencement of services delivered by the Carer Gateway service providers and the go-live of the enhanced Carer Gateway website. * By this stage, the network of new Carer Gateway service providers will be fully operational, existing clients will receive services from their relevant Carer Gateway service provider and carers contacting the carer gateway 1800 number will be diverted to their nearest Carer Gateway service provider. * Existing service providers will commence a transition-out period until funding arrangements cease at the end of November 2019. * National communication activities promoting the Carer Gateway will also occur during this period. |