**Introduction**

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 is being rolled out in two key stages:

1. Carers can now access new online services:

* **Peer support** to assist you to connect with and learn from other carers. This online community forum will help carers share their stories, knowledge and experience with others.
* **Self-guided coaching** to support and teach you skills useful to your caring situation. The coaching modules will cover a range of topics and can be completed at your own pace online.
* A new phone-based **counselling service** to provide short term emotional and psychological support.
* Practical **skills courses** to improve your general skills and knowledge are being gradually rolled out. You can explore the first module, *Dealing with stress* now on [www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au).

1. From April 2020, a new Australia-wide network of Carer Gateway service providers will give carers access to tailored services in their own right, no matter who they are caring for, including:

* **Carer support planning** – to help you identify what areas of support will best help you in your caring role and to develop a simple plan for ongoing support and service.
* **Tailored financial packages** – to give carers practical assistance. The packages will be arranged by your service providers and might be a:
  + one-off practical support in the form of equipment or an item to assist in your caring role
  + range of ongoing practical supports, such as respite or transport, provided over a twelve-month period.
* **In-person counselling** – for one-on-one support with a professional counsellor if you feel stressed or overwhelmed.
* **In-person peer support** – where you can meet with people in similar caring situations and share your stories, knowledge and experience.
* **In-person coaching** – where you can work one-on-one with a qualified coach to gain skills and resilience to help you as a carer. You can reflect on how you are going, how you would like things to be, and how you might take steps towards making things happen.
* **Emergency respite care** – to make sure the person you care for will be looked after if an urgent or unplanned event stops you from being there.

**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.

Carers can continue to get support through their usual service providers and will be supported to access the new Carer Gateway service providers from April 2020.

Current services will be funded until 31 May 2020 to ensure continuity of support to carers during the important transition to the new Carer Gateway 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.

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 timeline**

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 was primarily focussed on engaging with sector providers to aid preparation for the upcoming Carer Gateway Regional Delivery Partner (RDP) Grant Opportunity. * This phase also saw 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 2018 to November 2018 |
| **Grant Opportunity Period**   * This period was 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 undertook a formal, merit-based assessment process to select the Carer gateway service provider grant recipients. The grant round was finalised and the successful Carer Gateway service providers were announced on 21 August 2019. | November 2018 to August 2019 |
| **Carer Gateway Service Provider Establishment Period**   * 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’ in April 2020. * During this period, the department and providers will be communicating with carers to inform them of the upcoming changes to carer services. | August 2019 to April 2020 |
| **Carer Gateway Service Provider Commencement Period**   * This period sees the formal commencement of services delivered by the Carer Gateway service providers. * 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. * Carers can continue to get support through their usual service providers and will be supported to access the new Carer Gateway service providers from April 2020. * Current services will be funded until 31 May 2020 to ensure continuity of support to carers during the important transition to the new Carer Gateway service providers. * Existing service providers will commence a transition-out period until funding arrangements cease at the end of May 2020. * National communication activities promoting the Carer Gateway will also occur during this period. | April 2020 to May 2020 |