



⋮ Roslyn Hill,
⋮ Receptionist

Introduction

First Step has for many years been a beacon of hope for people living with mental illness and addiction. It has been a place where, treated as a real person with hopes, dreams, strengths and rights, vulnerable Victorians have found welcome, empathy and hope. But it hasn't been easy.

First Step has been an outlier, offering integrated service and whole-person care way ahead of its time. Integrated care is not the norm in general medicine, mental health, addiction, housing or legal services. Swimming against the current in terms of societal norms and funding structures has been hard work.

Now, with 'integrated care' the catchcry of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, First Step has risen to the fore as *the* example of multi-disciplinary teams in the Royal Commission's final report. We were the lead agency in the Department of Health's Integrated Care Pilot and are a go-to organisation for the local Primary Health Network looking to fund innovative and integrated models.

In that reform environment, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a worsening mental health crisis, increasing wait lists for drug and alcohol support and chronic GP shortages, we developed this strategic plan.

First Step Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Over six months First Step held numerous consultations and workshops with staff, the people we seek to help, partners and other stakeholders to develop its Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

Over the next four years First Step seeks to:

- › ensure operational and financial sustainability,
- › codify, document and evaluate its empowering model of care,
- › leverage our strong relationship, reputation and impact with government for consistent funding
- › engage with partners in community, health and business sectors to broaden our scope and impact,
- › maintain our role as a pioneer in multiple sectors (alcohol and other drugs, mental health, housing, legal services), leading cultural reform through education and innovation.

We believe that First Step has a significant leadership role to play during the reform of the mental health sector and are excited to influence positive change.

..... Mark Watt
..... First Step
..... Chairperson



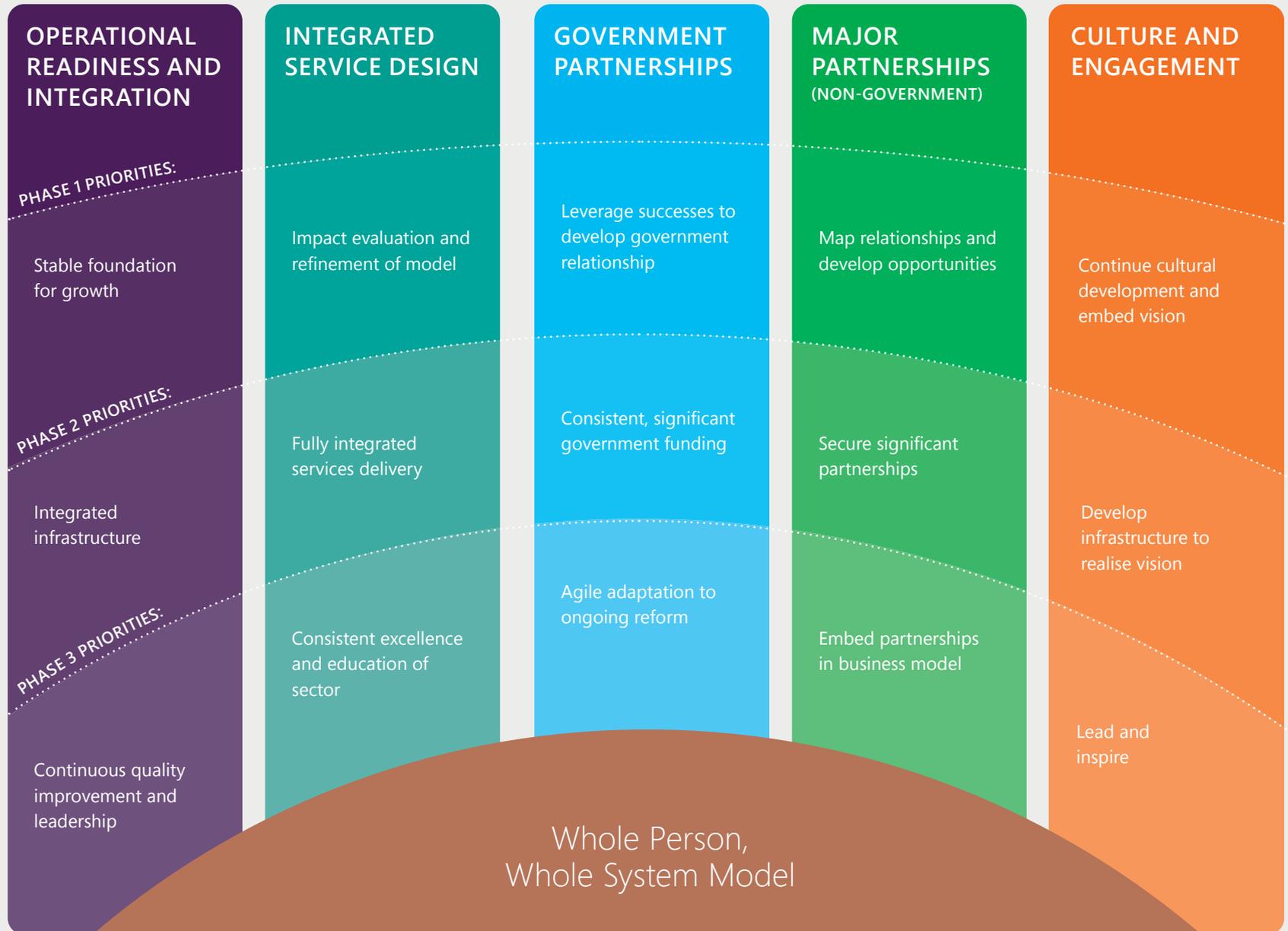
Our vision

A community free from the harms of addiction and mental illness.

Our mission

To ensure people with addiction and mental illness get all the help they want and need in a welcoming and hopeful environment.

To provide truly integrated care, maximising each person's resilience and self-agency.



Our Whole Person, Whole System model

First Step will build on its existing experience and strengths to develop a consistent and well-documented model of care. This is challenging, because the essence of care at First Step is that it is entirely individualised and developed in respectful consultation with each person (i.e., person-centred). Using the following guiding principles we will further integrate our teams of general medicine, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, wellbeing and legal services:

Person-centred and strength-based

– The individual is respected and empowered to engage with and lead their own treatment and support. People harnessing their own strength and resilience is key to their recovery.

Trauma-informed – We understand that adaptation to significant traumatic events, usually in childhood, is the typical origin of mental illness or harmful drug or alcohol use. This understanding is crucial to high quality care, whether or not it is addressed directly in an individual's care plan.

Recovery-oriented continuity of care

– Though survival might be the primary goal of initial treatment and teamwork, we aim to support health and wellbeing for as long as people benefit from the therapeutic relationship. We will protect and nurture that relationship at all times.

Integrated service delivery – Our highly collaborative, multi-disciplinary team will always strive to give people all the support they want and need from one team in one place. The team will plan and implement care in close partnership with each other and the people we are supporting.

Integrated systems – Culture, funding, management systems, policies and procedures, record keeping and communications systems must all serve the goals of whole person care and a well-supported workforce.

Partnership – Long term strategic partnerships will be developed with government, business, education and philanthropy to support the Whole Person, Whole System model. This will maintain sustainability, innovation, influence and an ever-improving culture of welcome, empathy and hope.

