

# Paediatric outpatient models of care – Advanced Health Practitioner

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## Background:

In recent years managing timely access to public hospital outpatient services has become problematic. A state-wide whole-of-system (adult and children's) demand management strategy has aimed at reducing the pressures on Queensland hospitals through the use of innovative systems including prevention, substitution and streamlining patient flows. The Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) completed a Paediatric Outpatient Service Delivery Model of Care Project which identified the need for an Allied Health Advanced Health Practitioner (AHP). The introduction of an AHP in 2014 was designed to provide a specialist level of clinical consultancy and high level multidisciplinary clinical decision making to assist in reducing waiting times for families as well as reducing the load on specialist medical practitioners.

## Methods:

Children referred to the Paediatric Outpatient Department, SCHHS with identified concerns about challenging behaviour, learning difficulties and developmental concerns were deemed appropriate for AHP input. A number of procedures were developed including multidisciplinary triaging processes, increasing front of house services to address children and families needs at intake, assessment of children with an allied health clinician and case conferencing with a Paediatrician to determine if the child required any further Paediatric follow up.

## Results:

Significant results were achieved with a reduction in the waitlist by 258 clients and the long wait list was reduced by 200 clients over 6 months. Positive feedback has been obtained from General Practitioners, Paediatricians and clients and their families. Furthermore, financial cost-benefit summaries were positive (medical vs allied health).

## Discussion:

The use of information from this research is far reaching, with the potential utilisation of the model in Paediatric Outpatient Departments beyond the SCHHS. Benefits for other Outpatient Departments include:

- The clients will benefit from having a co-ordinated service across allied health and medical services
- Improved access to community services
- Enhanced patient flows and timeliness of service provision
- Increased consumer and staff satisfaction with services
- Increased ability for early identification of client needs
- Reduced wait lists
- Improved cost/benefit ratios