

evidence for the headspace model

The headspace model is designed to provide an accessible and effective service for young people

headspace was established in 2006 as a model that is nationally consistent and locally relevant, and is designed to:

- Respond to the high prevalence of mental health problems among young people; and the low level of mental health service use
- Provide a more accessible service offering for young people to enhance help-seeking and early intervention
- Support navigation of the service system and maximise support provided by offering a 'no wrong door' approach
- Provide a welcoming, youth-friendly service environment for young people from a range of backgrounds
- Involve family in the care of young people and in the broader development, delivery and evaluation of services
- Offer integrated, multi-disciplinary care across four holistic domains – mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs, and work and study.

The headspace centre model comprises 16 components, 10 of which are core service provision components and 6 of which are enabling system components.



Independent evaluation of headspace continues to reinforce the model and its outcomes

The headspace model has been developed and refined over nearly 20 years of practice and evaluation, to allow for innovation and continuous quality improvement. Informing model innovation are a number of evidence-driven inputs, including:

- Three major external evaluations commissioned by the Department of Health and Aged Care
- Regular internal evaluation
- Ongoing consultation and continuous quality improvement activities, including the 2021 Cultural Safety and Practice review.

headspace continues to evolve the model over time to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of all young people. For example, there is significant work underway to ensure that headspace services are appropriate and safe for First Nations young people and communities. headspace will continue to work with government to respond to the recommendations of the independent evaluation.

The most recent independent evaluation by KPMG concluded that the headspace model is appropriate, effective, and aligned to the mental health needs of young people. Findings included that headspace:

- is **cost-effective** when compared to thresholds for other similar healthcare services, and not accounting for significant cost avoidance in tertiary and specialist services achieved through prevention and early intervention delivered at headspace
- is **well-designed**, in line with international standards for the provision of youth-friendly care, and **appropriate to meet its objectives and intended outcomes**
- provides an **appropriate, comprehensive, and complete set of components** to address mental health needs of young people with **mild-to-moderate, high prevalence conditions**
- has seen **improvements in its reach and uptake in line with demand**, aligned to the population size for young people in Australia
- **successfully supports the participation of young people** in the design and delivery of headspace services, which is associated with a strong, positive user experience.

headspace data demonstrates impact across several domains

headspace data, collected routinely and through dedicated research and evaluation projects, further demonstrates the breadth of impact of the model.

Increasing access and reach

Since establishment in 2006, headspace has supported more than **770,000** young people, providing 4.5 million services¹

3 in 4  young people (15-25 years) in Australia are aware of headspace as a mental health organisation when prompted – making headspace the most recalled youth mental health organisation in Australia

Supporting priority groups

9%  of headspace clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander¹

41%  live in regional/remote areas

30%  identify as LGBTIQ+¹

11%  identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse¹

Delivering high levels of satisfaction

86%  of young people reported being satisfied with headspace¹

89%  would recommend headspace to another young person¹

87%  of families would recommend headspace¹

“The 16 components of the headspace model, as set out in the hMIF, all operate well and are each important to the overall program logic of the headspace model.

Through investment and activities in mental health literacy and stigma reduction, early help seeking and increased access to support is encouraged. Through headspace, young people are supported into pathways of care which seamlessly

integrated with other services to meet the young person's needs, without the young person being required to know how to navigate the service system themselves.

Engaging in youth friendly, welcoming and inclusive supports across a range of psychosocial domains helps young people improve their mental health and wellbeing outcomes.”

[KPMG, 2022]

Improving psycho-social outcomes for young people

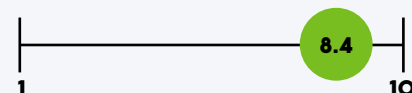
71% 

of headspace mental health clients show significant improvement in outcome measures across their time with headspace.²

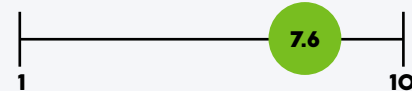
Longer-term follow up has shown that changes in psychological distress were maintained for up to two years after leaving headspace.³

Young people report positive experiences at headspace, including:

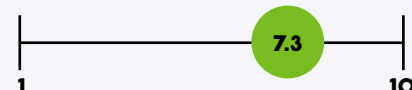
Feeling listened to and understood



Working on things that are important to them



Feeling more hopeful for the future⁴



78%  of young people report reduced impact of mental health issues on their work and study situation.³

76%  of young people report increased confidence to better manage their work and study situation in the future.³



“I’ve learned a lot. It’s been good since then... like the strategies they give you at headspace. I just want to thank headspace for changing my life and I still continue to grow. I still take what I learnt from headspace every day.”

headspace user
(KPMG evaluation 2022)



“I think it’s solely because of headspace that I got better. I would’ve never gotten better if I hadn’t gone.”

headspace user
(KPMG evaluation 2022)

1. headspace (2022). helping young people get through challenging times: headspace year in review 2021-22. https://headspace.org.au/assets/Headspace-Year-in-Review-2022_RGB.pdf.

2. Rickwood, McEachran, Saw, Telford, Trethowan, McGorry (2023). Sixteen years of innovation in youth mental healthcare: Outcomes for young people attending Australia's headspace centre services. PLoS One. 18(6).

3. headspace (2019). headspace centre young person follow up study. <https://headspace.org.au/assets/headspace-centre-young-person-follow-up-study-Sept-2019.PDF>

4. headspace (2022). Young people's experience at headspace: Evaluation in focus. <https://headspace.org.au/assets/HSTC184-Young-People-Snapshot-Report-FA.pdf>.