

eheadspace

Methodology for evaluating new technology services

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headspace



headspace is Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation

headspace provides mental and general health support, information & services to young people (12 – 25) and their families across Australia

The aim of **headspace** is to reduce the burden of disease amongst young people aged 12–25 caused by mental health and related substance use problems.

headspace commenced in 2006 and has since provided services to more than 72,000 young people

Why headspace?



Mental health problems and related problematic alcohol and substance use is the most important health issue affecting young people.

- Approximately 14% of 12-17 year olds and 27% of 18-25 year olds experience mental health problems each year (Sawyer 2000)
- 75% of mental health problems among adults commence before age 25 years, and up to 50% of substance use problems are preceded by mental health problems in youth (Kessler 2005)
- Currently only 1 in 4 young people experiencing mental health problems actually receives professional help

headspace centres



ACT

ACT

New South Wales

Central Coast
Central Sydney
Hunter
Illawarra
Campbelltown
Mid North Coast
Mt Druitt
NSW Central West
Riverina
Parramatta
Shoalhaven

Northern Territory

Central Australia
Top End

Queensland

Fraser Coast
Gold Coast
Southern Downs
Townsville
Brisbane South
Northside
Cairns

South Australia

Adelaide Northern
Murraylands
Riverland
Noarlunga

Tasmania

Northern Tasmania
Hobart

Victoria

Barwon
Central West Gippsland
Northern Melbourne
Southern Melbourne
Western Melbourne
Peninsula
South West Victoria
Bendigo
Collingwood

Western Australia

Fremantle
Great Southern
Kimberley
Perth

eheadspace



eheadspace is a free and confidential mental health service for young people aged 12-25.

Young people, their parents, carers or friends can use **eheadspace** to discuss their problems and receive information, support, treatment and referrals from qualified mental health professionals.

eheadspace provides a 'soft-entry' point into the face-to-face mental health system.

eheadspace aims



- Take the clinical expertise of youth mental health into new mediums (online and telephone)
- Increase the availability and geographic accessibility of **headspace** services across Australia
- Assist young people with referrals to **headspace** centres and other face to face mental health services and supports





eheadspace is a new technology approach that provides an unexplored area in terms of practice, research and evaluation

eheadspace Evaluation



Given that this is a new and innovative model the aim of the evaluation is to:

- Guide practice and inform the ongoing quality improvement of the model
- Build an evidence base around best practice in this emerging sector
- Establish the ongoing viability of online mental health service
- Report on the effectiveness of the model to government and other key stakeholders.



Evaluation Design

- Process and outcome evaluation that explores service accessibility, effectiveness & appropriateness
- A mixed method design utilising qualitative and quantitative elements
- Internal evaluation with external review and critique from e-health evaluation experts:
 - Professor Robert King
 - Professor Leonard Bickman

Methodology



The evaluation incorporates five key elements:

1. Demographic, service activity and clinical characteristics and outcome data
 - Self-report
 - Clinician end of session form
2. Online Focus Groups (drop-in and RSVP)



Methodology cont...

3. In-depth Client case studies
4. Web-based satisfaction survey
5. Stakeholder interviews





Pro's of new technology evaluation

- Participants are easy to access
- Conducting focus groups and interviews online eliminates the need for transcription
- A greater number of service users can participate for less resources, especially when evaluating a national program
- Service users may feel more comfortable to provide honest and open opinions online



Con's of new technology evaluation

- Young people may not accurately or honestly represent themselves and there is no way of quantifying the information provided
- Young people using eheadspace can choose to be anonymous making contact and follow-up problematic
- Reluctance of clinicians to interrupt clinical care for data collection or evaluation
- Technology restrictions - development of data systems within an online platform is expensive and time consuming



Challenges

- Multiple evaluation masters and agendas
 - Federal Government
 - headspace Executive
 - Program managers
 - Wider research environment
- Working with vulnerable young people
- Ethics processes
- Technical difficulties



Early findings

Generally, clinicians feel that eheadspace is an effective early intervention service that is giving young people a positive first experience of seeking help.

- clients are using eheadspace when they first experience a mental health problem
- eheadspace is often the first service they turn to
- clinicians are referring young people on to relevant face-to-face services, including headspace centres.

Thanks



www.eheadspace.org.au

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