

# 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**

# ehedspace 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](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)

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