

Child and youth mental health

Mental Health

One in seven young people aged 4 to 17 years, experience mental illness in any given year¹. Three quarters of all mental illness manifests itself in people under the age of 25². Intervention early in life and at an early stage of illness can reduce the duration and impact of mental illness. Primary mental health care services have a significant role to play in addressing signs of mental illness in children and young people³.

WAPHA's role

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) commissions primary mental health care services for children and young people with, or at risk of, mental illness⁴.

This includes the provision of headspace centres in Western Australia.

WAPHA is listening to and working with service providers and peak bodies to build a sustainable future for children and young people that will include support services that are adapted to their needs including telehealth and digital platforms.

WAPHA commissions the following services for children and young people:

headspace

headspace provides early intervention mental health services for 12-25 year olds. The service is free and designed to provide early access for young people and their families to receive the help they need for problems affecting their wellbeing.

headspace offers a holistic approach to supporting young people through four core areas:

- mental health
- physical (including sexual) health
- alcohol and other drug services
- work and study support.

WAPHA has commissioned Western Australia's 17 headspace services, including centres in Albany, Armadale, Broome, Bunbury, Fremantle, Geraldton, Joondalup, Kalgoorlie, Mandurah, Midland, Osborne Park and Rockingham, the Pilbara Outreach Trial and four satellites in Margaret River, Busselton, Northam and Esperance. Four new centres (Cannington, Kununurra, Port Hedland and Karratha) will be opening in 2021. The new services will increase young people's access to youth mental health services as well as supports for parents/ families.

To increase access to headspace services, WAPHA is working with the headspace network within a communities of practice approach, by increasing collaboration and integration, sharing of resources, and improving workforce capacity and capability.

In regional areas, WAPHA is supporting service providers to transition to telehealth and digital platforms to ensure the continuity of service provision.

headspace Early Psychosis Service

Building on the existing headspace model, the headspace Early Psychosis Service delivers specialist treatment and care to young people aged 12 to 25 years who are experiencing a psychotic episode for the first time. The service, that aims to provide seamless and integrated early intervention, also targets young people who are exhibiting symptoms warranting a diagnosis of psychosis or who have been assessed as ultra-high risk of developing a psychotic disorder.

- 1 Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR. *The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health*
- 2 Kessler, RD et al. *Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62: p. 593-602.2005.*
- 3 Department of Health and Ageing. *National Mental Health Report 2013: tracking progress of mental health reform in Australia 1993 – 2011. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.2013.*
- 4 Australian Government Department of Health. *PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Implementation Guidance - Low Intensity Mental Health Services for Early Intervention.2019*

Early Psychosis Youth Service

This service is for young people aged 12-25 in the Perth South region who have experienced a first episode of psychosis to support them in their recovery. This service centres on evidence-based, recovery-oriented practices which recognise that young peoples' self-determination is a vital part of successful treatment and recovery. The service is provided to young people referred from Health Service Providers and is complementary to the care they receive from them.

Child and Adolescent Brief Intervention Service

WAPHA commissions the Child and Adolescent Brief Intervention Service, a service providing psychological therapies for children and young people 4 to 15 years of age, experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues. Short term support is provided for up to 6 sessions. Referral by a GP is necessary.

Services for young people experiencing severe mental illness

WAPHA commissions early intervention activities across Western Australia for young people aged 12-25 years with, or at risk of, severe mental illness. The services utilise early intervention strategies with the aim of preventing hospitalisation and the need for ongoing engagement with adult mental health services. Services include assertive outreach support and psychological therapies.

Youth Mental Health Outreach Service

The Youth Mental Health Outreach Service is a newly commissioned service that aims to reduce the risk and/or impact of severe and complex mental illness amongst 12-25 year olds, whose needs can be effectively managed in primary care, and are not being effectively serviced by existing services. The service addresses these young people's health (including mental health) needs through engaging youth mental health professionals and other staff who will work in tandem with existing local youth outreach / community / education services, providing high-quality care to young people where they already are, outside of a clinic environment, in the context of their existing relationships and familiar environments.

Suicide prevention programs

Suicide continues to be the leading cause of death for young Australians⁵. In 2018, suicide accounted for over one-third of deaths (38.4 per cent) among people aged 15-24 years⁶. For children between 5 and 17 years, suicide remains the leading cause of death, with 100 deaths occurring in this age group, at

a rate of 2.5 deaths per 100,000 children⁷. The rate of suicide among Indigenous young people is significantly higher than among non-Indigenous young people⁸.

WAPHA is leading three Suicide Prevention Trials in Western Australia, located in the Kimberley, the Midwest and the Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana regions. These locations have been chosen by the Australian Government due to the higher than average suicide rates experienced.

The trials aim to find the most effective approaches to suicide prevention for at-risk populations and share this knowledge across Australia. The trials also aim to build awareness and capacity in the community, so they can provide the relevant support to people locally.

Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana Trial

The Peel, Rockingham and Kwinana Trial specifically targets young people between the ages of 16 to 24. Activities that have been developed as part of the Trial include:

- suicide prevention training for community leaders
- a mentoring and leadership program for young people
- workshops for school students on resilience, identifying symptoms of depression, and how to access support;
- activities aimed at supporting young people to connect with community.

Programs are underpinned by the principles of Act-Belong-Commit: promoting positive mental health through community engagement. Visit the [Act-Belong-Commit website](#) for more information.

Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial

The Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial is helping to develop a model of suicide prevention that meets the unique and culturally sensitive needs of the region's Aboriginal communities, including young people.

The Empowered Young Leaders project is a vital component of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial. It aims to change the story for young Aboriginal people in the region and increase their uptake of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services.

Two Empowered Young Leaders forums were held in Broome and Kununurra in 2019 to build the skills, responsibility, confidence and capacity in young people.

Wot Na Wot Kine (a local saying meaning 'What's up, how are you going?') was a media campaign developed as part of the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial, to promote social

5 Australian Bureau of Statistics - Causes of Death, Australia, 2018: Intentional self-harm, key characteristics, cat. no. 3303.0. 2019. Retrieved 6 July 2020.

6 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Mental health services—in brief 2019. Cat. no. HSE 228. Canberra: AIHW.

7 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019)

8 Australian Bureau of Statistics. Causes of Death, Australia, 2018: Intentional self-harm in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Catalogue No. 3303. 2019 Retrieved 6 July 2020.

and emotional wellbeing for young people in the Kimberley.

Developed through extensive consultation with the Kimberley community, service providers and young people, The Wot Na Wot Kine campaign aimed to:

- decrease the stigma/shame associated with talking about mental health
- encourage young people to seek professional help, if required when they experience issues that impact their social and emotional wellbeing
- positively role model ways to stay strong and well, including the importance of community, Country and culture
- promote community ownership and confidence to tackle this issue
- reduce the risk of young people taking their own lives.

COVID-19 and young people

WAPHA is working closely with peak bodies, stakeholders, and service providers, including headspace National, the Telethon Kids Institute, the Department of Communities and the Youth

Affairs Council of Western Australia to:

- understand the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's physical and mental health
- identify facilitators and barriers of accessing digital/online and telephone support.

WAPHA seeks to improve service delivery, accessibility and engagement with digital and telephone services, during and beyond COVID-19.

WAPHA will continue to work closely with our partners to address the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. The COVID-19 environment is helping us to uncover new ways of supporting children, young people, consumers and carers. WAPHA plays an important part in ensuring that services are adequately supported to respond to consumers' needs during and beyond COVID-19.



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This is one of a series of factsheets regarding mental health and primary health care, developed by WAPHA. Further factsheets and other resources can be found at www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework. The information in this factsheet was accurate at December 2020.