



# Review of Children and Young People in the ACT Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing



## ***Acknowledgment of Country***

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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# Foreword

The ACT Government is committed to supporting the needs of children and young people within our community to ensure they are provided with the support, safety and wellbeing to grow and learn to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. With the onset of mental illness early in a person's life, it is crucial we focus our attention on children and young people, to ensure they are provided with the education and support to maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing made a commitment to understanding the landscape for the children and young people in the ACT and undertook a review to hear from young community members in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. The engagement from the community, including young people, enabled further understanding on the challenges and issues they are currently facing. This report provides an overview of the feedback and recommendations from the community.

The ACT Government is undertaking the key initiatives as a result of this review, including making services more accessible, increasing education and awareness of mental health and supporting those individuals experiencing moderate to severe mental illness. We are committed to supporting the children and young people in our community including their families and will continue to work with the community to strive towards a better experience for all.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this review. Your contribution to our community will help to make a positive change for the children and young people in the ACT.



**Shane Rattenbury MLA**  
Minister for Mental Health



**Dr Elizabeth Moore**  
Coordinator-General  
Office for Mental Health  
and Wellbeing

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank the people who have contributed to this review. Their involvement and expert advice have helped to create an understanding of the issues and challenges facing children and young people in the ACT in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.

We would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations:

- Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT)
- Capital Health Network (CHN)
- ACT Education Directorate
- ACT Mental Health and Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Services (MHJHADS)
- ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD)
- ACT Human Rights Commission
- ACT Community Services Directorate
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Families ACT
- Batyr
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Youth Advisory Council
- A Gender Agenda

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the contribution from over 800 members of the community and other organisations that contributed to this review. The information and feedback provided has been incorporated into this review and has contributed to the recommendations provided in this report.

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# Executive Summary

The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is a focus of ACT Government and the community. With 50% of all mental health conditions arising before the age of 14 years, and 75% before the age of 25<sup>1</sup> it is imperative that we focus on the challenges and issues facing children and young people and look towards strategies and evidence to enhance their mental health and wellbeing.

The recent draft report from the Productivity Commission on Mental Health highlighted the needs of children and young people. The report makes several recommendations, including improving the early detection of risk factors for mental illness, expanding early intervention and enhancing the prevention and promotion for children and young people<sup>2</sup>. We know the importance of the early years and the critical development period within the first 1000 days<sup>3</sup> and are committed to advocating for more support to be provided to children and families from the perinatal period through to adulthood.

This review of children and young people was a key priority from ACT Government and the community for the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (the Office). We wanted to ensure we heard from children and young people, their parents and carers, and from service providers to understand why mental health conditions remain a high concern for young people in the ACT.

The support from the community and the engagement from young people to assist with this review was remarkable and a true reflection of community collaboration. With over 800 people engaged through the online surveys, the co-design workshops, youth reference groups and individual meetings, we have a clear understanding of the challenges and issues facing children and young people here in the ACT.

Throughout the consultation we heard that children and young people want to understand what they are experiencing and want the skills and knowledge to assist not only themselves but also their peers. We heard that young adults want to be able to access the right services at the right time, and that services need to be affordable and well resourced. As a result of this review and the recommendations from our community, we are committed to undertake the necessary steps in order to support children and young people in the ACT to enhance their mental health and wellbeing and prevent more severe illness.

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1 WHO, Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

2 Productivity Commission., Mental Health Draft Report., 2019

3 Moore, T.G., Arefadib, N., Deery, A., & West, S., (2017) The First Thousand Days: An Evidence Paper. Parkville, Victoria; Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

# Introduction

The Office commenced a mental health and wellbeing review of children and young people following the recommendation by the community in the development of the Office Work Plan. The project sits under the Office Work Plan theme of 'Mentally Healthy Communities and Workplaces'.

Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) were engaged to partner with the Office and to facilitate the community co-design required to undertake the review. MIEACT were chosen as the preferred provider due to their experience in providing mental health and wellbeing programs in schools across the ACT, and for their participatory and narrative co-design approach to undertake community consultation, with lived experience at the centre.

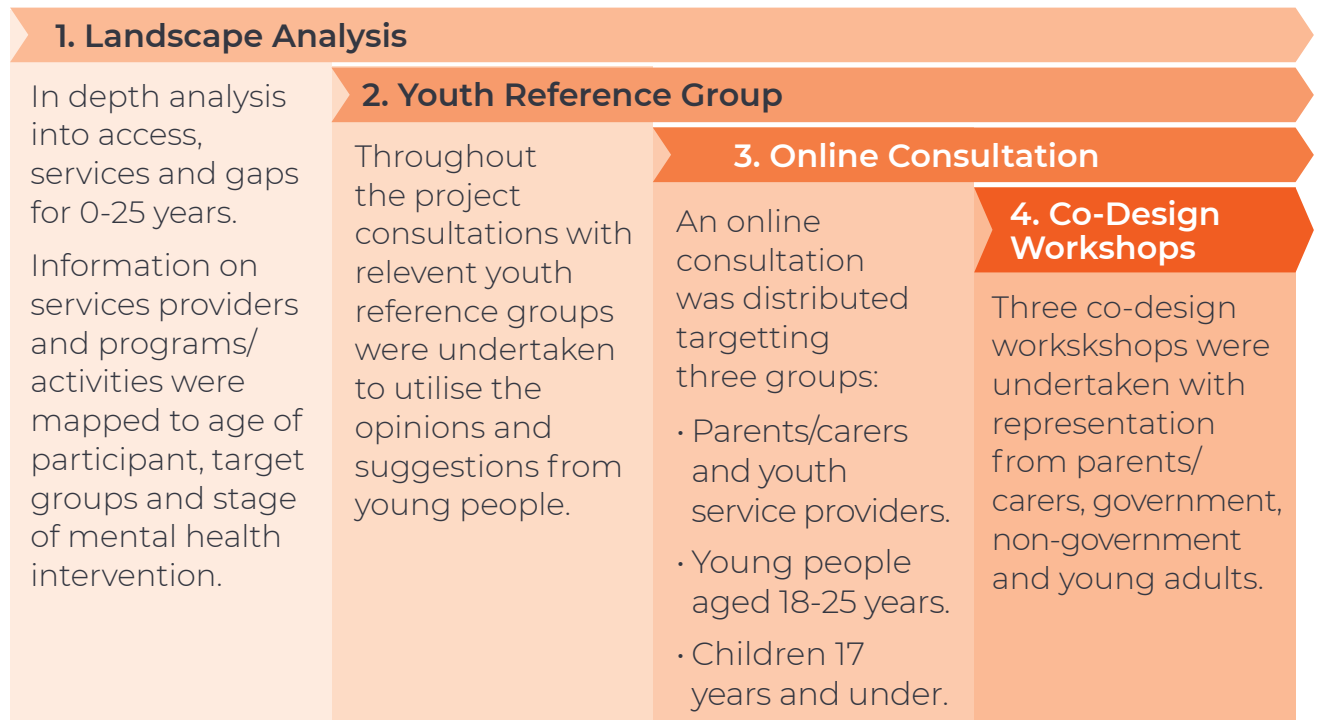
The purpose of the project was to undertake a review of children and young people in the ACT from birth to 25 years of age, looking at the continuum from mental health promotion and prevention, early intervention, treatment through to recovery. The objectives were to:

- Understand the current landscape for 0-25 years.
- Engage with children, young people, parents, carers, non-government organisations and government to understand the current challenges facing our younger community.
- Identify gaps and potential solutions to recommend for implementation.



# Process

The process involved four phases and was overseen by the Office and the Children and Young Person Committee which involved representatives from government and non-government organisations.



# Participant Profile

Throughout the co-design process we made a commitment to hear from as many children, young people and parents to ensure we understood the issues and obstacles they have experienced. This included utilising youth groups, existing mental health programs, school bulletins and social media.

## Online consultation

The headspace Youth Reference Group were consulted to co-design the online survey to ensure the questions were applicable to children and young people. A total of 729 people responded to the online surveys through Survey Monkey or the ACT Government YourSay website. Of these respondents:

- 88% live in the ACT.
- 64% identified as female.
- 10% identified as having a disability.
- 3% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

A total of 314 respondents were under the age of 25 with:

- 77% of young people working or studying (18-25 years).
- 70% attending a public school (under 17 years).
- 48% under the age of 13.

The results of these surveys provided the direction for the co-design workshops.

## Co-design workshops

A total of 162 people attended the co-design workshops, with representatives from non-government organisations, government, family members and carers and people with lived experience.

<b>Total registered</b>	<b>162</b>
Government organisations	55
Non-Government	43
Family members & carers	16
People with lived experience	3
Youth reference groups	45

The workshops were an opportunity to understand the challenges facing our community and to problem solve. Each session was designed to understand the feedback and data from the online surveys, discuss the key themes and work together to identify potential solutions. In addition, participants had an opportunity to focus on a particular issue about which they were concerned and to design a response for consideration. Participants were highly engaged throughout the workshops and were committed to providing potential solutions for action.

Throughout this process, the Office and MIEACT staff held a range of individual meetings with people unable to attend one of the workshops but wanted to share their story and give their opinion to ensure it was included in the review.

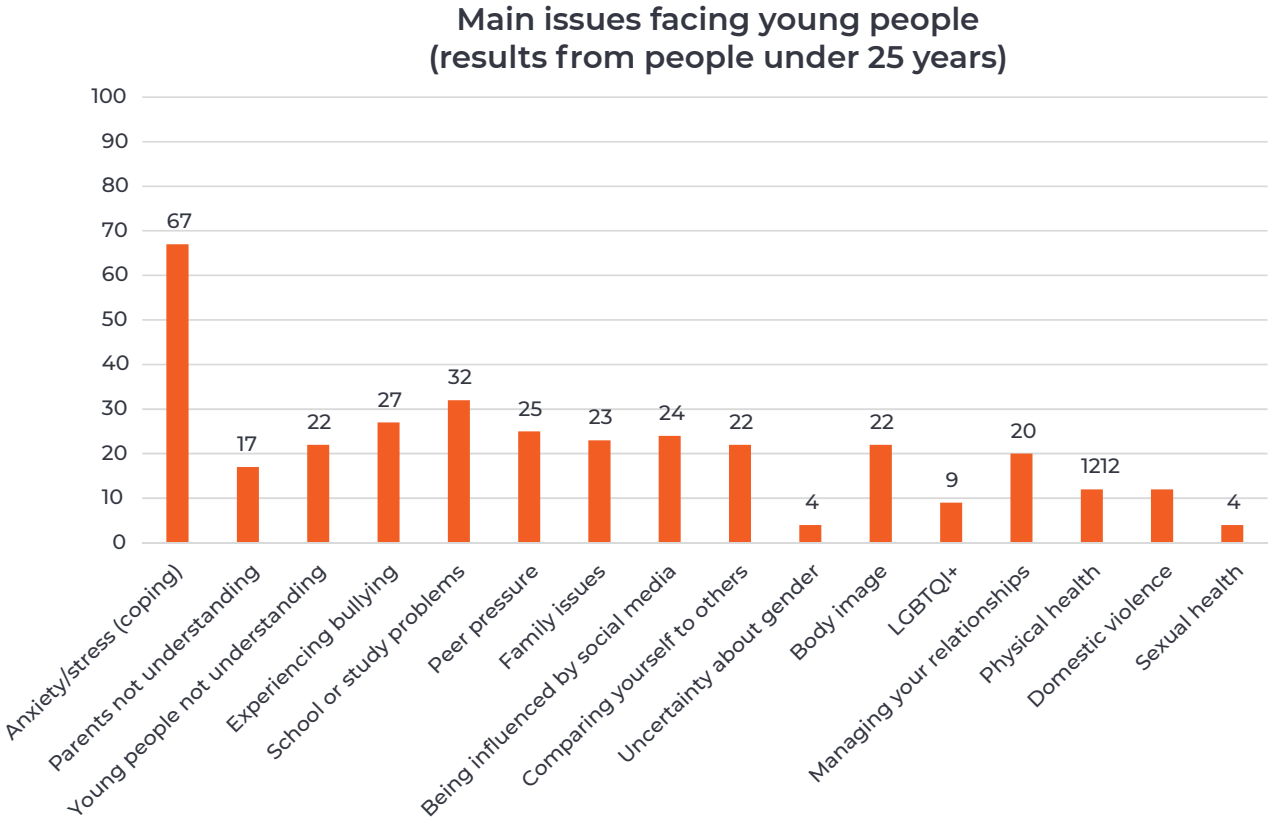


# Key Findings

# Main issues facing young people (results from people under 25 years)

The top three main issues:

- 1. **Anxiety/Stress (coping)** – 67%
- 2. **School or study problems** – 32%
- 3. **Experiencing bullying** – 27%



With ‘anxiety/stress (coping)’ as the highest issue identified by not only children and young people under the age of 25, but also for the Parent/Carer/Service Provider, it is critical for us to understand the demands placed on young people. We can see there are a range of issues that children and young people are dealing with, including experiencing bullying, peer pressure and family issues. We will continue to work with schools and post-secondary education providers to identify solutions to reduce the levels of stress and anxiety currently being experienced, including an analysis on the options available for alternative schooling where required.

*“LGBTIQ people are still an invisible population. Those who are gender diverse are the most at risk of bullying and being invalidated. How families treat their children often determines how well-adjusted children are. Having positive role models and a lack of abuse is critical. Kids are also not taught enough coping strategies by parents and school around managing anxiety.”*

*– Respondent, 18-25 Years*

*“Depression, isolation & loneliness (particularly for interstate & international students).”*

*– Respondent, 18 – 25 Years*

*“Having a course or people come into schools and teach kids about mental health and stress and how to cope with it.”*

*– Respondent, Under 18 Years*

In addition, ‘not understanding what you are going through’ was also a concern. Young people said they do not have the knowledge or understanding of mental health issues and how to manage what they are experiencing. They wanted to have more understanding to help themselves and their friends. Another key issue is the role of parents, their anxiety and their understanding of mental health issues and the services available when needed. The feedback and comments regarding this issue was highlighted through multiple forums, and not just by young people. Parents also identified they want the tools and knowledge of the services in order to support young people when they need it.

During the community consultation, MIEACT were able to meet with a younger cohort of children, aged 12 years, and were able to conduct the survey for this age group only. The top issue for this group of children was ‘experiencing bullying’ with 60% noting this as the top issue in relation to their mental health and wellbeing, followed by ‘anxiety/stress’ – 52% and ‘peer pressure’ – 34%.

## Main issues by gender (results from people under 25 years)

Recent national data revealed the proportion of females with psychological distress has increased from 22.5% in 2012 to 30% in 2018 and males, from 12.7% in 2012 to 15.6% in 2018<sup>4</sup>.

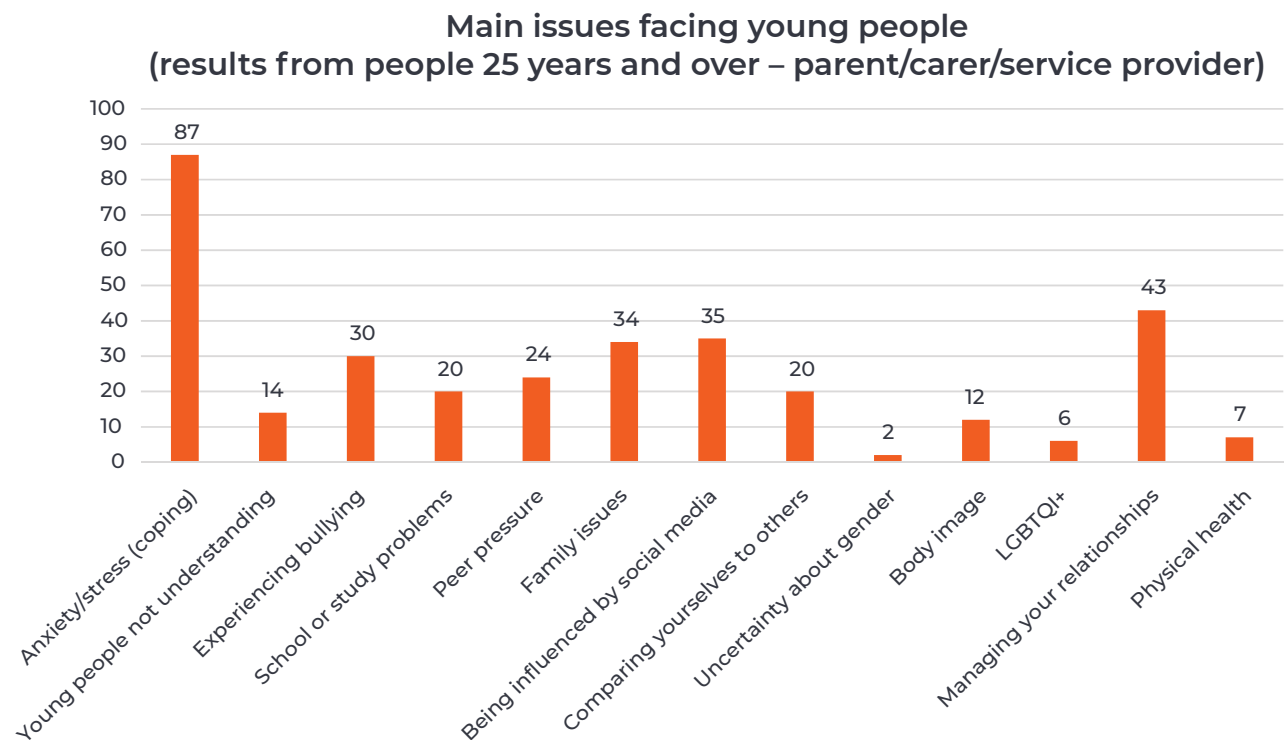
In our review 'Anxiety/Stress (coping)' and 'school or study problems' remain the top issues for both male and female respondents across all cohorts. There were some key gender differences, with females under the age of 18 acknowledging that 'being influenced by social media' was an issue compared with males at 25%. 'Physical health' was a key issue for 35% of males under 18 years of age compared with females at 2%. It is worth noting the larger percentage of females that responded to the online surveys (64%).

Further analysis of these issues is a key project currently in process through the Office for Women.

## Main issues facing young people (results from people 25 years and over – parent/carer/service provider)

The top three main issues:

1. **Anxiety/Stress (Coping)** – 87%
2. **Managing relationships and friends** – 43%
3. **Being influenced by social media** – 35%



<sup>4</sup> Mission Australia., Black Dog Institute., (2019) Can we Talk? Seven year youth mental health report 2012-2018 Youth Survey



Other top concerns from this cohort were 'family issues' with 34% of respondents indicating this as a main issue, followed by 'experiencing bullying' with 30% of total respondents.

*"There is a one size fits all education streams. Kids with mental illness need better school options and dedicated classroom support. Missed schooling hard to manage for a child."*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider*

*'Developing and using coping and resilience skills.'*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider*

As outlined in the issues facing young people under 25 years, the feedback from this cohort acknowledged the issues around their understanding of mental health issues and how they can help and support the children and young people in their care.

## Main obstacles facing young people in accessing care (results from all)

Respondents were asked to select obstacles to accessing care in the survey. Respondents were given the opportunity to identify other obstacles if they were missing from the selection.

### The top three main obstacles from all respondents:

1. **Wait for Access** (52%)
2. **Affordability** (52%)
3. **Stigma** (35%)

These obstacles are known issues within the sector more broadly and were included in the recent Productivity Commission draft report on Mental Health which recognised that more needs to be done to support children and young people.

*"People give up on treatment and trying to get help because it's difficult, costly and the waits are unrealistic."*

*– Respondent, 18/25 years.*

*"The number of services available so children and young people aren't waiting so long for support and care. Integration of public and private system. Regular wellbeing checks on children throughout their schooling year."*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider*

*"Better framework around cultural engagement and understanding community partnerships."*

*– Respondent, Under 18 Years*

*"More affordable psychologists and changing society's view on mental health and making 100% acceptable to talk about mental health and feelings."*

*– Respondent, Under 18 Years*

Stigma is a real concern and whilst there have been campaigns to address this, young people are requesting more to be done within the schools. Stigma and embarrassment were also identified in the top three barriers for young people seeking help in the recent Mission Australia report on youth mental health<sup>4</sup>.

There are prevention and early intervention programs available through schools, noting that schools have the choice of several mental health programs. Evidence of efficacy and consistency will be key if we are to ensure children and young people understand mental health issues and how to seek the help they need when they need it.

We also know that stigma is a real concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background and LGBTIQ communities and the impact mental health issues can have on these communities. We are committed to working with key services and government organisations to ensure there is a consistency in the way we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people of CALD background and anyone that identifies as LGBTIQ.

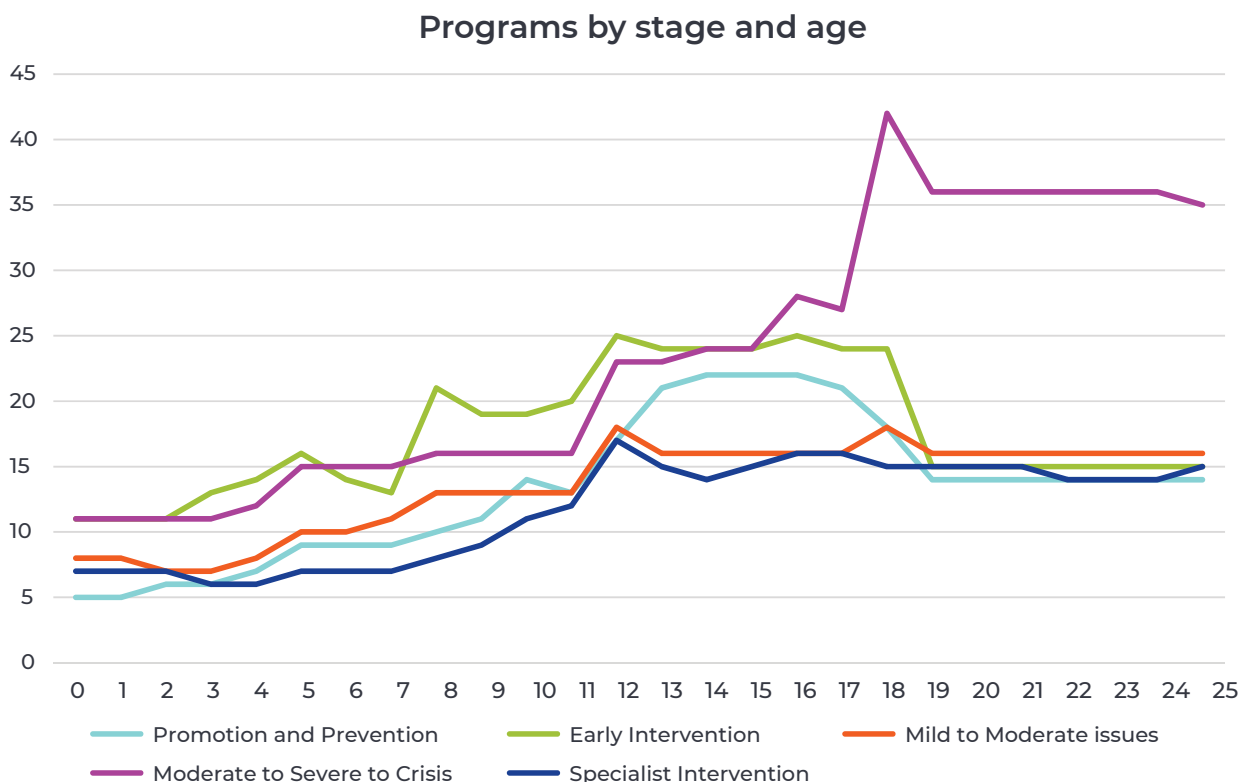


# Landscape Analysis

As part of the scope of the review a landscape analysis was undertaken by MIEACT to look at the services available from 0-25 years within the ACT. The feedback has indicated that young people and parents do not know which services are available or how to access them, which adds stress to an already challenging time.

The table below shows programs/activities/services mapped to the age of participant, and the stage of service access. Programs were further mapped to target groups (where appropriate) and service type.

Information was collected on 75 service providers and the 178 programs/activities/services they offer and currently deliver in the ACT or are accessible online. Service providers are predominantly Non-Government agencies (83%) and evenly based outside of the ACT (47%) or local to the ACT (53%).



We can see that there is a relative lack of promotion and prevention services, particularly in the early years and between 8-12 years, which is consistent with the national data. In addition, the programs available for moderate to severe to crisis significantly increase once a person reaches 18 years of age. The consultation found that more is required for anyone experiencing support for moderate to severe mental illness under the age of 18 years.

## Promotion and prevention

Currently there are 19 providers within the ACT that offer promotion and prevention programs/activities/services. These are delivered both face-to-face through targeted and universal education and via online resources. As noted throughout the co-design workshops and the online surveys, there is a lack of programs available for primary school age students. Limited, targeted programs are available for 8-12 years, with no programs under 7 years of age. Universal mental health awareness programs commence in secondary school and continue through to university programs.

All mental health education programs delivered in the ACT rely on individual school selection which can place additional pressure on the schools to research and implement right program. There is a lack of standardisation in the way our young people learn about the importance of mental health and wellbeing. The request for consistent messaging about mental health and wellbeing to young people and their parents and carers was a theme from the consultation.

## Mild to moderate mental disorders

Programs and services for children and young people with mild to moderate mental disorders include 20 providers delivering 25 programs including face-to-face and online options. Counselling is the most common delivered by headspace, Menslink, YWCA Canberra (Circles of Support) and through the University of Canberra, Psychology Clinic and Cool Kids – Anxiety programs. Targeted programs are available from Winunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and for men over 18 years MensLine Australai provides counselling 24/7 via online, phone and web chat.

Whilst there are providers within the ACT that cover a range of ages, the greatest gap and most significant impact at this stage is timely access, with wait times reported through community consultation from one to six months.

## Moderate to severe mental illness and crisis services

Services provided for children and young people with moderate to severe issues are offered by ACT Health and the Capital Health Network through Catholic Care. Feedback in relation to this includes navigation issues, eligibility criteria, and wait times. We know this an area of concern nationally, and one of the top three recommendations throughout the consultation process in relation to increasing the capacity of providers that offer this type of service. People reported that they were unaware of the services and did not know which were appropriate at times of crisis.

# Top three community recommendations for improvement

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for improvements both in the survey and during the co-design workshops. Discussions about how to improve the experiences of children and young people in the ACT was a focus of this review and gave people the opportunity to identify and think about what improvements could be made and how. The top three recommendations from the community were:

1. **Make access to services easier, affordable and increase capacity of current providers.**
2. **Increase the awareness and education addressing stigma and fear around mental health.**
3. **Need for new services targeting moderate to severe mental illness with 24/7 access.**

# Recommendations

## Recommendation 1: Make access to services easier, affordable and increase capacity of current providers



Throughout the review, there was a common theme around accessing services and the need for services to be affordable and available. This is consistent with the data received in the feedback through the development of the Office Work Plan and with national data on the issues facing young people in relation to mental health and wellbeing. More recently, this issue was also raised as a concern in the Draft Productivity Commission Report on Mental Health<sup>2</sup> and by Mission Australia<sup>4</sup>.

Whilst the issue around accessing mental health services is multifaceted, there is work that can be progressed to make the experience easier for young people, families and friends in need of support. One of the areas that can support this recommendation, is a better understanding of the services available, and how to access them. Through the landscape analysis, 178 services/programs were identified for 0-25 year olds within the ACT and online, which reinforces the feedback that identifying appropriate services is a challenge.

### What we heard

*“Lives are seriously threatened due to lack of accessibility to mental healthcare in the ACT. People give up on treatment and trying to get help because it’s difficult, costly, and the waits are unrealistic.”*

*– Respondent, 18-25 years.*

*“There are not enough service providers and those that do have long waitlists.”*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/service Provider.*

*“Have quicker access to things like headspace. When I was having problems I spoke to my mum about needing help but it took a month to get an appointment.”*

*– Respondent, U17 years.*

### What we will do

- Work with providers to ensure services are visible and easily accessible.
- Establish the demand for services including wait times within the ACT to inform the details for the Online Youth Navigation Portal including the potential for data linkages between the portal and providers.
- Work with government directorates, non-government organisations and the community to assist with challenges facing families in relation to accessing appropriate services.



## Key project

### **Develop and implement an Online Youth Navigation Portal for the ACT (*also a recommendation from the ACT Youth Advisory Council*)**

#### ***Objective***

The purpose of the project is to design, trial/implement and evaluate an online triage navigation portal specifically focused for young people in the ACT seeking mental health related support. The online portal will link directly to service providers within the ACT and will provide support for children, young people and their families through a consolidated and coordinated approach with options for online and phone support, face-to-face sessions, navigation assistance and online resources for ongoing mental health literacy.

#### ***Approach***

- Engagement with community, non-government organisations, government and youth reference groups to co-design the portal with the community.
- Co-design workshops with existing service providers within the ACT on the design & implementation of the portal.
- Review of current best-practice online portals.
- Procurement of service provider.

#### ***Timeline***

January 2020 – June 2022

#### ***What success looks like***

- Children, young people and their families are able to make better choices in relation to accessing services and be in a better position to match their need to the appropriate service.
- Mental health literacy increases, and young people and their parents have the knowledge and understanding of mental health and the support available.
- The system has a better understanding of the needs for young people in the ACT which leads to greater service planning and management.

## Recommendation 2: Increase the awareness and education addressing stigma and fear around mental health



Prevention and early intervention are key to ensure children and young people have the skills and support to manage themselves when mental health challenges arise. Empowering our young community to be able to identify their emotions and know that support is available to them, enables a stronger sense of community and resilience, and one that is supportive when further help is needed.

We understand that mental health challenges in childhood and adolescents can result in poorer academic outcomes, risky behaviours and poor relationship development. By focusing our efforts on the early support through schools, the community and for parents, we will be able to ensure children and young people have a consistent message of wellbeing and have a variety of ways to seek support. In addition, by focusing our attention on prevention and early intervention, we know that it will reduce the prevalence of mental ill health in Australian adults<sup>5</sup>.

Young people within our community want the skills and tools to be able to support not only themselves, but to support their friends when they need help. We know through this review that young people experiencing distress or concerns will go to their friends in the first instance, followed by their parents. Further awareness and education about strategies to support mental health and wellbeing were identified as key by parents and education providers as children transition through babyhood through school to young adulthood.

### What we heard

*“There needs to be more talk about it in schools and at home, so that there is a safe environment to have the conversation about needing help or struggling.”*  
– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider.

*“I think the main thing is just campaigns to destroy the stigma around mental health and asking for help. Awareness of mental health issues has increased significantly, but there is still stigma associated with it.”*  
– Respondent, 18-25 years.

*“Easier access to psychologists/counsellors even in schools. I know I have one at school but I have no idea how to get to her. I don’t want to ask other students because then they’ll have questions.”*  
– Respondent, U17 years.

<sup>5</sup> Young Mind Matters, The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents (2017).

## What we will do

- Work with the ACT Education Directorate and other education providers to support promotion, prevention and early intervention programs for schools, including culturally appropriate programs.
- Participate in the development of the Best Start for Canberra's Children; The First Thousand Days Framework.
- Contribute to research into perinatal programs to determine the support required to ensure there is a consistent approach to mental health and wellbeing from the perinatal period through to adulthood.
- Contribute to the gender analysis on young girls experiencing psychological distress in the ACT through the Office for Women and the Women's Centre for Health Matters.

## Key project

### Enhance evidence-informed mental health and wellbeing education programs

#### *Objective*

Work with the government directorates and non-government organisations to undertake an analysis of the existing programs currently available in schools, and advocate for evidence-informed programs that support children and young people. There are 2 components to the project:

1. Implement the Youth Aware of Mental Health Program (YAM) part of the Black Dog Institute's LifeSpan framework that is targeted at 14-16 year olds and has been shown to reduce suicide ideation and suicide attempts in adolescents.
2. Investigate appropriate evidence-based programs for 8-12 year olds.

#### *Inclusions*

- Analysis of current programs available to schools including evaluation data.
- Analysis of best-practice programs available in other states and jurisdictions.
- Co-design workshops with key stakeholders to develop guidance on mental health and wellbeing programs.

#### *Timeline*

January 2020 – June 2021

#### *What success looks like*

- Children and young people have the skills and tools to support themselves and their peers and feel comfortable seeking help.
- The stigma associated with mental illness has reduced and the community are supportive of anyone experiencing mental health issues.
- Schools and other education institutions are supported to make informed decisions about the options available for student mental health and wellbeing programs.

## Recommendation 3: Need for new services targeting moderate to severe mental illness with 24/7 access



This review has reinforced the issue that people find it hard to locate a service that provides the level of care required for those with moderate to severe mental illness.

As outlined in the Victorian Government's submission to the Mental Health Royal Commission, the 'missing middle' in the mental health system is a gap for people with moderate mental illness<sup>6</sup>. Children and young people requiring this level of service are not able to access the care they require through the primary mental health system and are not acutely unwell enough to access services for a severe mental illness<sup>7</sup>. Currently ACT Health and the Capital Health Network (through Catholic Care) provide some services in this space, and the feedback suggests more is needed.

### What we heard

*"More accessible frontline care to prevent young people from progressing from mild to moderate mental health issues to severe. School nurses and psychologists should be a part of the relationship network and have a key role in this area, and there needs to be something done to bridge the big mental healthcare gap between headspace and CAMHS. Perhaps some sort of program could be set up using final year psychologists from the University of Canberra as part of their placement requirements."*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider.*

*"Services for people in the moderate category of mental illness or psychological distress; need more DBT/other skills related programs, responses to trauma are not timely enough, no adolescent services especially for young people with eating disorders."*

*– Respondent, Parent/Carer/Service Provider.*

*"Lack of youth friendly inpatient care available in Canberra."*

*– Respondent, 18-25 years.*

<sup>6</sup> Victorian Government submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health (2019)

## What we will do

- Facilitate the change reform for mental health in the ACT, focusing on a system wide change in mental health services and supports.
- Work with community organisations to promote culturally appropriate services that support young people and their families.
- Support government and non-government organisations to deliver projects as a result of this review (e.g. enhancing the services for moderate to severe mental health).

## Key project

### **Support young people requiring moderate to severe mental health services**

#### *Objective*

Lead a co-design process in partnership with the Capital Health Network, key service providers and the community to identify potential solutions and additional support to ensure those experiencing moderate to severe mental illness have access to the support required.

#### *Inclusions*

- Analysis of the current demand for children and young people seeking support for moderate to severe mental illness.
- Co-design the approach with key service providers and community organisations.
- Recommendations for future funding and/or initiatives to support this cohort.

#### *Timeline*

April 2020–December 2020

#### *What success looks like*

- Children and young people are able to access services when experiencing moderate to severe mental health issues.
- Parents feel supported and confident that their child is able to access the right care at the right time.
- Assistance and support are available 24/7.
- The care is culturally safe and accepting of diversity.

## Deliverables—Timeframe

Deliverable	Timeframe			
	1 Jan–30 Jun 2020	1 Jul–31 Dec 2020	1 Jan–30 Jun 2021	1 Jul–31 Dec 2021
Develop and implement an Online Youth Navigation Portal for the ACT	Portal Design	Development of portal	Implementation	
Enhance evidence-informed mental health and wellbeing education programs	Implementation			
	Analysis of existing programs	Development of guidance material	Implementation	
Support young people requiring moderate to severe mental health services	Co-design process	Implementation		

As at January 2020

All projects will be undertaken through a co-design approach with consumers, carers, clinicians and the community as per the commitment in the Office Work Plan.

# Conclusion

It is evident through this review and through the national surveys, that more is required to support children and young people in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. We know that navigating the system can be difficult in an already vulnerable time of someone's life, and that understanding where to go and how to seek help is not commonly known or understood. We know that young people will go to their friends in the first instance, and that affordability is a real concern when seeking the support required.

We are committed to working with key stakeholders to ensure the young people in our community have access to services and information required to support their mental health and wellbeing. We will provide the knowledge and tools to support them and their friends through challenging times, and we will work with government and the community on current and future initiatives to support children, young people and their families.

We understand the current challenges facing those who are experiencing moderate to severe mental illness and the issues they are facing in relation to available services. We know this is an issue nationally but we will continue to work with service providers and key stakeholders to support this group to access services in a timely and appropriate manner.

The recommendations within this report and the commitment from the Office outlines the key projects we will undertake to work towards changing the experience for our younger community. It is critical that we work together to provide the support required for children and young people to ensure they are provided with the best possible start in life and through the transition to adulthood.



## Attachment A: Key ACT Government and Community Initiatives

The Office commits to contributing to the following ACT Government and community initiatives:

*Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing Work Plan 2019–2021*

*ACT Women's Plan 2016–2026*

*ACT Carers Strategy 2018–2028*

*Healthy Canberra – ACT Preventative Health Plan 2020–2025*

*ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028*

*Future of Education Strategy: An ACT Education Strategy for the Next Ten Years*

*LifeSpan*

*ACT Government Early Childhood Strategy*

*ACT Government Response to the 2018 ACT Youth Assembly Report*

*Youth Coalition: Submission to the Act Budget 2020–21; Preventing child and youth homelessness in the ACT*

*Capital of Equality: An ACT Government strategy to deliver equitable outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people 2019–2023*

*Best Start for Canberra's Children; The First Thousand Days (in development)*

*Capital Health Network – Trauma Informed Model of Care (in development)*

*ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (in development)*

The Office will utilise the results from the review to contribute to future ACT Government and community initiatives.



*A kind, connected and informed community  
working together to promote and protect  
the mental health and wellbeing of all.*



Office for Mental Health  
and Wellbeing

