

Evaluating the national implementation of early psychosis services on the headspace youth mental health care platform

headspace youth mental health foundation was initiated in 2006 as the Australian Government's response to high levels of need for mental health care and low levels of service use among adolescents and young adults aged 12-25 years. headspace represents an innovative reorientation of youth mental health service delivery, designed as highly accessible, youth-friendly, integrated service hubs and networks providing evidence-based interventions across the core streams of mental health and psychosocial support services. In 2013 the Australian Government provided funding to headspace to deliver a national program of early psychosis services by building on and enhancing the existing headspace platform. The initial roll-out will see the establishment of nine centres nationally which will deliver the 16 identified core components of the model of care developed and evaluated by Melbourne's Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC).

The development and implementation of early psychosis services on the headspace platform is a major investment by the Australian government that requires rigorous evaluation. A novel evaluation framework has been instigated at the outset, comprising complementary and overlapping components appropriate to the progressive national roll-out of the initiative. Each evaluation component has a distinct purpose and methodology relevant to the different stages of implementation. Components include: mapping the process of service development and implementation; assessing the level of implementation against the 16 EPPIC core components, and identifying barriers and facilitators to achieving full fidelity; determining level of attainment of service objectives according to headspace best practice principles; and achieving outcomes for young people and their families.

This presentation will provide a description of the first two components of the evaluation framework, focusing on the implementation process and the barriers and facilitators to achieving program fidelity. The evaluation is a world-first opportunity to build an evidence base to inform implementation of a national network of early psychosis services, and has the potential to influence the direction of future mental health reforms and scale-up of services both in Australia and internationally.