

headspace Good Care Framework

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A resource for headspace

Good care is whole of person centred, effective, safe, equitable and responsive. Good care shapes how we engage and support each young person who reaches out for help. It guides how we hear their story, understand their strengths and difficulties, and work alongside them, their family and community with hope and optimism to improve their social and emotional wellbeing and support them to live a full and engaged life.

Purpose

This headspace Good Care Framework articulates what constitutes good care in the headspace context and is applicable to all disciplines and areas of practice. This document provides a framework to guide all staff including Clinical Leads, Clinicians and other practice leaders as they support service delivery across the headspace network. The headspace Good Care Framework aligns with the headspace Model and is reflected in the headspace Model Integrity Framework and practice guidance from headspace National



Practice Foundations

Evidence-informed

headspace services are developed and supported to embed and deliver evidence informed practice. These practices are guided by scientific evidence, lived experience, the young person's context, First Nations led approaches, and practice wisdom. headspace staff are supported to engage in reflective practice, supervision, deep listening, peer support, and other learning and development opportunities to continuously grow their practice and deliver responsive, measurement based care. Data capture is prioritised and valued as essential to monitoring and shaping best practice approaches. As practice leaders, headspace staff also contribute to the evidence base through developing and sharing practice innovation and wisdom, utilising data driven approaches, and being involved in research and evaluation activities.

Robust Governance

Robust governance provides the leadership, culture, systems and processes that support safe, high-quality, culturally safe and continuously improving care. It is supported by governance frameworks, defined responsibilities, supervision, clear decision-making processes, and a workforce with the capability to deliver safe and responsive care. Robust governance requires clinical, corporate and cultural governance to work together and to be embedded through roles, systems and continuous improvement. Across headspace National, PHNs, Lead Agencies and headspace services, governance is put into practice through clear roles, incident and risk management, data use, workforce governance, participation and quality improvement.

Positive Risk Culture

At headspace, care is grounded in a positive risk culture that underlies how services are designed, governed and delivered. A positive risk culture guides how risks are understood, reflected on, and responded to. System and service risks that shape care, are recognised and considered, alongside the multiple, changing risks experienced by young people and family, and those that impact staff. Risks are positioned as inevitable, shared, dynamic, and manageable. The potential harm caused by overly risk averse approaches is recognised, and services actively work to mitigate this. When embedded in practice, a positive risk culture reduces barriers to care, strengthens safety and autonomy, promotes workforce wellbeing, sustainable practice, and better outcomes for young people and family.

Practice Principles

The following principles describe approaches that inform all practice with young people and family and are supported across all levels of each headspace service.

Family inclusive

Care is delivered in a way that values the significance of family in a young person's life. This approach actively supports a young person's family and facilitates their involvement in and contribution to the care and support of the young person. Family is defined uniquely by each young person and may include parents, caregivers, siblings, partners, Elders, kin, mentors, community members or others that the young person views as playing a significant role in their care.

Culturally safe and responsive

headspace services strive to create an environment where people of all cultures feel safe. Cultural responsiveness means that young people and their family are confident that their cultural identity will be respected, and their care needs will be met in a holistic and culturally responsive way. All staff endeavour to recognise, respond to and address racism, and all forms of discrimination and the inherent inequities in the health system. Services actively work to acknowledge and reduce the colonial load that disproportionately impacts First Nations workers, and the cultural load carried by multicultural workers, and those from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Identity affirming

Care provided is respectful and affirming of a young person's gender, cultural identity, faith, neurotype and sexuality, and the ways these may intersect. headspace staff work alongside young people in a way that is curious and open minded, acknowledging all intersectional parts of their identity and the strengths and connections these can provide.

Trauma informed

Care provided at headspace recognises the widespread impact of trauma and understands the potential pathways to recovery. A trauma informed approach informs every level of service delivery. All workers are appropriately skilled to recognise the effects of trauma on young people and family and communities, and the diverse ways these may present. Staff recognise and acknowledge the strengths and adaptive skills of young people impacted by trauma and work with hope and optimism to support them to meet their goals. Service policies and procedures enable appropriate clinical responses to trauma related difficulties. Services work to identify and actively resist potential re-traumatisation that may occur as a result of engaging in care.

Relational

A relational approach supports the development of a collaborative and supportive therapeutic relationship. headspace staff use warmth and attentiveness in their interactions to build and maintain rapport. There is awareness that the therapeutic relationship is reflective of other relationships, and that dynamics established in other relationships can play out in the therapeutic space. Relational care recognises the importance of providing a positive experience of care and of not repeating previously harmful relational patterns. Staff have the skills to identify and thoughtfully manage the therapeutic alliance and use supervision and reflective practice to develop and support relational care.

Young person centred

Care is provided in a way that promotes choice and autonomy and respects the agency of young people to articulate and determine their preferences regarding their care. headspace staff work collaboratively with young people and families to ensure the available care pathways are clear; as well as to facilitate informed decisions and active participation in their care. headspace staff partner with young people throughout their care pathway and regularly discuss the young person's preferences regarding the focus of care, goals of care, and duration of care.

Clinically responsive

headspace staff are alert and responsive to the signs and symptoms of a range of mental health presentations. All aspects of care provided are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the young person. This includes the approach to engagement, assessment, care planning, informed consent, and family engagement. Services seek to provide early intervention and are responsive to early stages of mental health difficulties. There is recognition that a young person's chronological age and developmental stage are often not aligned, and care is tailored accordingly.

Staff have appropriate training and support to identify and address mental health needs and facilitate timely access to appropriate care pathways. Staff engage with all young people seeking help, and those who have more severe mental health presentations are identified and supported to access timely and appropriate specialist care.

Integrated & Holistic

headspace staff provide a positive care experience to all young people who seek assistance but may not be able to meet all the needs of all young people. Care is integrated ensuring everyone involved in a young person and family's care (including a team of care providers, the young person and their family) works together towards agreed outcomes, and to avoid duplication or siloing of care. Care considers the holistic needs of young people including their engagement with work and study, physical and sexual health needs, AOD usage, issues relating to finance and housing, building social connections and skills. Psychosocial support is provided to young people acknowledging the essential role this plays in enabling young people to thrive. Different care modalities are considered and offered to meet each young person's needs, including online, telehealth, group, or community options. Care is integrated both within headspace and with external providers.

Issue date	Version	Summary of changes	Approved by and date
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June 2026	01.1	Small changes for language & edit tracking	N/A