



Guiding Principles

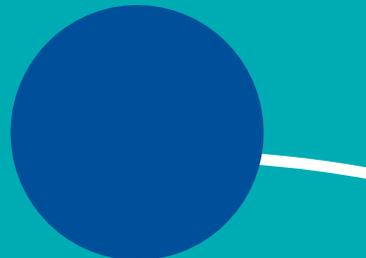
2021



In 2020, Youth Focus embarked on a project to form an agreed definition of safe and high-quality services - our own guiding principles.

To define this, we started a process of co-design, to compile the perspectives of young people with lived experience of accessing mental health services, the family and carers supporting them, and the professionals providing services.

At the end of the co-design process, the group defined a set of guiding principles to underpin all objectives, activities, and services undertaken by Youth Focus.





We have come together to shape how support should be delivered to young people, family and friends and our communities.

We are a collective of young people and family members with lived experience of mental health challenges and accessing support.

We are mental health professionals and staff from Youth Focus and headspace. We are from Albany, Geraldton, Midland, and Northam in Western Australia.



PART 1

Young people, family and friends and community.

WHAT WE NEED.

We recognise that many young people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences seek help from Youth Focus and headspace. It takes a lot of courage to admit we need some help. When we meet you, either walking through the door, online, or over the phone, we need to be seen, heard, and respected for who we are. The following are principles we have co-designed to help guide you.

Treat us as individuals.

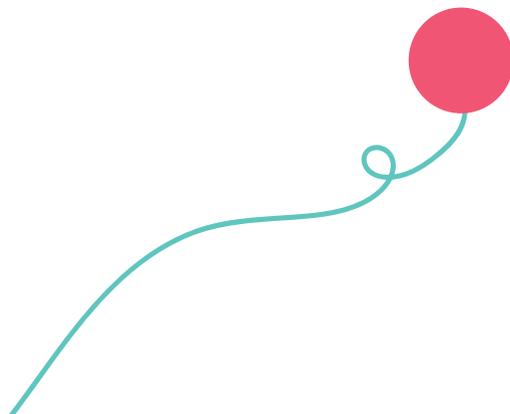


WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT.

We all have our own strengths and ways of coping. If you build on our strengths, we can better deal with stuff in the future.

We are more than meets the eye. Don't make judgement about us based on the way we look or act. Be interested in who we are and listen to our own story.

While a diagnosis is a part of our mental health, how it affects us is different because no two of us are the same.



Provide us with choices and share making decisions about us, with us.

GIVE US CHOICES AND OPTIONS.

Make sure we know that we can choose and change our mental health professional.

Talk us through different treatments so we can choose what's right for us. Or let us try out different approaches to see what's best.

Before you share anything about us or our treatment with others, please ask for our permission. If you have to share it, talk to us and explain why.



We are the experts in our own lives.



WE RECOGNISE YOU HAVE PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE. HOWEVER, WE ASK THAT AT YOU NEVER ASSUME THAT YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR US.

It takes time to trust someone with our experiences. Take the time to listen and be interested in who we are.

Ask us what we want and need now, and understand that this might change over time.

Don't tell us what we have to do. Instead, find ways we can work together to make shared decisions about tools, approaches and our treatment.



Do everything you can to make us feel safe, welcomed and respected.

ASKING FOR HELP ISN'T EASY, ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE GOING THROUGH A CRISIS.

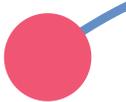
Making us feel safe and comfortable starts with how the service looks, sounds, and feels. Being inclusive of all young people includes facilities like gender-neutral bathrooms and accessible entry into the building.

Feeling welcomed and respected involves how we are spoken to by all staff. From reception to clinicians, use kind, friendly, clear, plain, accessible and inclusive language. This includes the forms we fill out.

For us, it is most important to have a good connection with you. Then we will trust and feel comfortable enough to talk about what's going on in our lives. Clinical support comes second.



Include and support our family or friends we've chosen to be there for us.



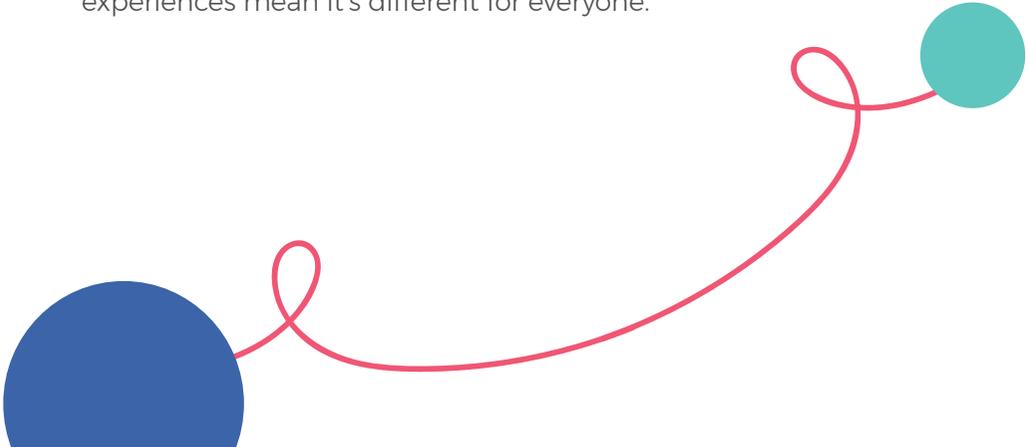
WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE. WE NEED OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO SUPPORT US.

We need to pick the team to be there for us. And recognise that this can change over time.

Our family and friends need the tools to support us too.

Including our friends and family is important. But we always want to be involved in what is shared and how.

Take the time to listen and understand what family means to each of us. Our culture and lived experiences mean it's different for everyone.





Listen and be guided by how we experience our culture, language, identity, sexuality and ability.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND REALISE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPORTING ALL YOUNG PEOPLE.

How we experience our culture, language, identity, sexuality, and ability is different for every young person.

We need you to be humble, listen, and be aware that our culture, language, identity, sexuality, and ability affect us differently.

Let us decide how we want to talk about it. When we do, find ways to learn more about it without us having to explain it to you.



Make sure we get the care and support we need.

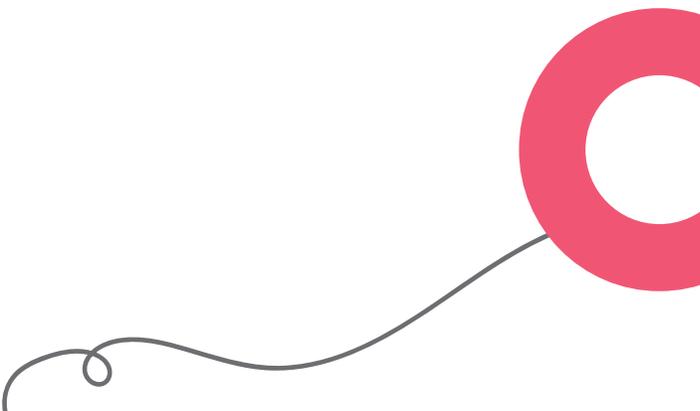


SUPPORT US TO DEAL WITH A COMPLICATED SYSTEM.

We know you can't do everything for every young person. If we need care that you can't give, help us to get it from someone you trust. And wherever you can, bring those services or people to where we are now.

Meet our needs by challenging the system or changing how you do things, not the other way around.

When you make decisions as a service, always honestly ask yourself, "How will this help young people and their family and friends?".



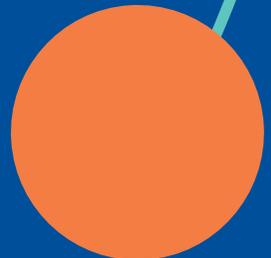


PART 2

Mental health professionals and our organisation.

HOW WE WORK.

Supporting young people's mental health needs, their family and friends and their communities in Western Australia is a big challenge for Youth Focus and headspace. Our co-design team has brought together our combined lived experience, professional expertise and passion for care centred around young people. We have developed principles to guide how we might design services, support, procedures, and policies through this process.



Collaborate and co-design how services are developed, delivered and evaluated with young people, family and friends and mental health professionals.

PROVIDE SERVICES THAT OUR COMMUNITIES NEED.

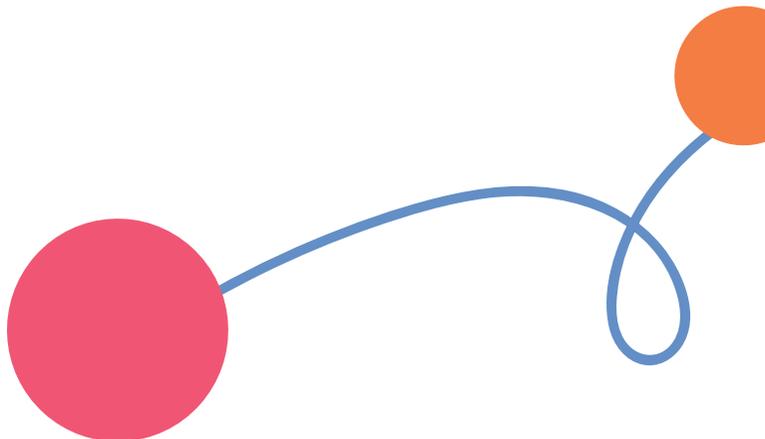
We recognise that different communities have unique challenges and needs. The young people, their family and friends, and professionals within these communities have first-hand knowledge, experiences and solutions for developing services that can meet their needs. By engaging them in the design, delivery and improvement of services, we are more likely to make a lasting impact on the young people and communities we operate in.



Actively support the rights of young people and advocate for change with funders and government.

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE DECISION-MAKING POWER ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEM.

To stand by young people, we must actively champion their right to decide about the support they want and need. This includes direct decision-making about the care they receive from mental health professionals and how services are designed and evaluated. And extends to challenging funders and government to back services young people and their local communities need.



Offer a variety of services beyond the clinical model that meets the diverse needs of young people.

NO TWO YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.

How we respond as a service should always start with what each young person needs right now. To do this, we need to offer a wide variety of approaches that include and go beyond the clinical model.

An essential part of being a youth-centred service is meeting young people where they are. This includes developmentally, emotionally, physically, culturally and where they are in their mental health journey as they define it.

To do this, we need to adapt systems, processes and procedures to the young person, rather than young people adapting to our services.



Combine clinical research with practice-based evidence to provide care that is effective across different situations and communities.

HELPFUL AND RESPONSIVE CARE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT WHAT HAS WORKED IN ONE SITUATION MAY NOT WORK IN ANOTHER.

Clinical best practice should balance evidence, expertise and the ability to learn from what is helpful or unhelpful for different young people, families and communities that we work in.

Doing this requires collecting evidence that our programs and approaches meet young people and their families where they are in their mental health journey, culture, language, life experiences, socio-economic background, identity and spirituality.

When evaluating services, benchmarks should move beyond existing best practice and ask young people and their family and friends, “Is this working for you?”





Ensure place-based co-design of services is undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

WE MUST FIRST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE NOT BEST PLACED TO DELIVER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO OUR FIRST NATION'S PEOPLES.

Always take opportunities for mental health support approaches to be led and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders on country. Where this is not possible, ensure services are co-designed with, and not for, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders.

Actively engage, develop and prioritise relationship building with elders of each country we currently operate on.

With permission, consider how we might learn from traditional ways of knowing and supporting all young people's mental health and wellbeing.

*Image elements from our Reconciliation Action Plan
by Tyrown Waigana*



Engage with schools, communities and where young people are to reduce stigma and promote self-care through education.

RAISING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO HELP COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE.

A part of our responsibility to young people and communities should include activities that aim to reduce stigma, increase mental health literacy and promote self-care.

There needs to be a balance of raising awareness of available supports and services with reducing the connection between mental health and medicalisation or illness.

In doing this, we should explore ways to employ, train, and empower young people to develop and deliver positive mental health messaging in their local communities.



Extend our care models to actively promote social justice and establish cultural safety through self-reflection and humility.

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE IMPACT OF BEING MARGINALISED.

For our services to be inclusive, we recognise that many young people have been disproportionately disadvantaged. Whether based on their culture, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, religion, or disability.

We understand that disadvantage can be invisible, such as inter-generational trauma for our First Nation's young people or when young people experience multiple forms of exclusion.

As an organisation, we listen and commit to ongoing learning about how systems and situations further impact marginalised young people. As mental health professionals, we acknowledge that we are not experts in their experiences. We commit to ongoing self-reflection to learn and understand the power we have to challenge inequality or further contribute to it.



Develop a diverse and community-connected workforce – including lived expertise – to reflect the needs of young people who access our services.

SUPPORTING THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITY STARTS WITH US.

Diversity of experiences, expertise, perspectives, identities, cultures, and world-views in our workforce provides an opportunity to share knowledge and meet our young people and communities' diverse needs.

Actively build relationships within communities and connect with people from diverse backgrounds to better understand young people's lived experiences and their family and friends.



Embed and nurture an internal culture of life-long learning to support the young people and communities we work with.

THE WORLD AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN IT ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING.

Engaging in life-long learning goes beyond formal or mandatory training. It's a passion for gaining knowledge and learning skills to grow as a professional and a person.

By actively fostering lifelong learning, we encourage our people to learn together, share knowledge, ask challenging questions and challenge the status quo. To nurture this, we provide the necessary resources and time for professional and personal development to meet our young people and communities needs.



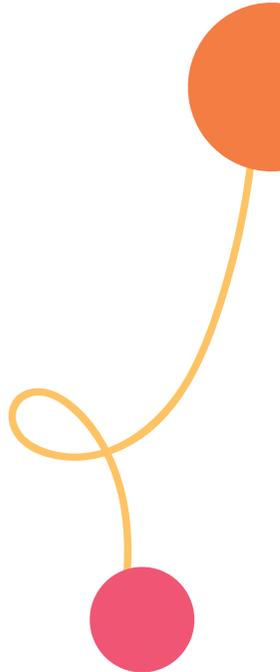
An ongoing commitment, at every level, to prioritise the wellbeing of our workforce.

BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, WE CAN BETTER SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE.

The work that mental health professionals undertake is demanding and often complex. If we are to model maintaining positive mental health for young people, it must start with how we look after the wellbeing of our workforce. To ensure continuity of care is maintained with young people at a practice level, looking after their mental health professional's wellbeing should be an ongoing priority.

It is essential that we support staff wellbeing at all levels (both direct and non-direct support). Every person within the organisation plays their role in supporting young people and their mental health journeys.

At an executive level, the strategic decision-making and development of new initiatives need to consider the cumulative effect on staff wellbeing.





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