Digital Industry Mentor Service

Final Evaluation Report

June 2020

Evaluation Department,
Strategy, Impact and Policy Division

Authors:

Koki Miyazaki, Nic Telford, Dr Stephen Carbone, Professor Debra Rickwood

Disclaimer:

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this Evaluation Project is thanks to the support of many individuals and organisations.

The Evaluation Project team would like to thank all young people who participated in the Digital Industry Mentor Service, young people who also gave up their valuable time to provide in-depth information during the telephone interviews, all industry professionals from partner organisations (including ANZ, NBN Co., Funlab, REST Industry Super, Jellis Craig, Viva Energy Australia, and Kmart Australia), who volunteered as industry mentors, and mentors who also provided their valuable time to participate in telephone interviews.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the headspace staff as part of the Digital Industry Mentor Service for their guidance, knowledge and time in providing in-depth information during interviews.

Executive Summary

In Australia, youth unemployment and underemployment are significant issues. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years is 11.8 per cent, which is more than twice that of the overall population (at 5.1 per cent). Young people who experience mental ill-health face additional challenges in gaining employment and may require extra support to maintain employment. Recent data show that almost one quarter of young people between the ages of 17-25 years who accessed headspace services were not engaged in employment, training or education. In some regional areas and for specific groups of young people, engagement in education and employment is even worse.

The headspace Digital Industry Mentor Service (DIMS) is a pilot program funded as part of the Department of Jobs and Small Business's "Empowering YOUth Initiative" and was funded for a two year period from mid-2017 to mid-2019[*]. As the first of its kind in Australia, DIMS aimed to provide an opportunity for young people living with mental health challenges to engage online with industry professionals in a supportive mentoring relationship. While mentoring has traditionally been provided via face-to-face exchanges, the provision of employment mentoring via a digital platform has gained momentum as an engaging and effective way to increase service accessibility for young people. DIMS links young people, as mentees, with experienced industry professionals, as mentors. The service aims to enhance a young person's employment opportunities and achieve more sustainable employment outcomes.

The headspace Research and Evaluation team undertook a process and outcome evaluation of the DIMS pilot. A mixed-methods evaluation design was utilised to explore service implementation, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability. Data sources included the DIMS Minimum Data Set, mentee and mentor experience surveys, and individual interviews with mentees, mentors and headspace staff.

Key findings regarding service **implementation** revealed:

- The service was implemented as planned, with 182 young people being matched with a mentor and receiving at least one mentoring session during the evaluation period, thus meeting the service target of 180 participants.
- Partner organisations allowed for adequate recruitment of volunteer industry professionals to deliver mentoring activities, although a limited variety of industry sectors were represented.
- The service supported a disadvantaged group of young people who were experiencing high levels of un-employment or under-employment. At registration, more than half (53%) of young people reported that they were not employed and were looking for work, and 80 per cent not engaged with an Employment Agency.
- Demographic characteristics showed a larger proportion of young people were female, aged 20 years or older, and lived in a metropolitan area.

Findings around service **appropriateness** highlighted the relevance of the service for young people:

- Both mentees and mentors expressed strong satisfaction with DIMS, both from a value and enjoyment standpoint, demonstrating the service appropriateness in meeting young people's needs. Almost all young people were satisfied with their mentor (98%), would recommend the service (96%), and found the service useful (96%) and valuable for their work future (93%).
- The Mental Health First Aid[1] training and mentoring workshop were highlighted as key enablers for mentors in providing appropriate work and study mentoring to young people with mental health issues.
- Mentees and mentors highlighted the relevance and practical nature of the sessions, which included assistance with drafting résumés and cover letters, interview preparation, and identifying existing strengths and skills.

---

[*] Note: Since the conclusion of this evaluation DIMS has been renamed as the headspace Career Mentoring service and is now funded by the Department of Health and Corporate Partners. Given the service was named DIMS during the evaluation period it has been referred to as this throughout this report.

We covered my résumé *and cover letter and interview practice and what kind of jobs are out there. Yeah, that sort of stuff… like getting my* résumé *and cover letter together and then just the process of applying for other jobs.* (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)
So she had a couple of job interviews, and before each of those we did practice interview questions, and I also helped her with her cover letters, and with her tailoring her CV. So that was very hands-on practical stuff. (Mentor)

- Data across all sources suggested that there was strong support for the concept of digital mentoring was appropriate and relevant to their needs and communication preferences. Benefits highlighted include increased access for young people in diverse geographical locations; young people's familiarity with online communication; increased potential for sharing different information; and increased flexibility in delivering and receiving mentoring.

    It just gives you so much flexibility and reach. So - and be easier on time as well. So I think they were definitely the best aspects for being online. (Mentor)

- While 62 per cent of mentees reported that the DIMS digital platform was user friendly, mentors were less positive with less than 40 percent reporting it was reliable and less than 20% finding it easy to schedule appointments.

The **effectiveness** of the service was evident through positive employment outcomes and perceived work-related impacts of the mentoring sessions:

- Six out of every ten young people (59%) who identified being unemployed at the time of registration indicated they gained employment during their time with the service.
- Most young people agreed that through their mentoring experience they were now more confident in applying for (92.3%) and starting employment (90.4%), had developed new skills (93.3%), and were more optimistic about their work future (92.5%).

    I definitely feel more confident in my ability to apply for jobs and also my techniques for job searching are stronger. I also realised further study was something that would really benefit me in my future and I have commenced so for the following year (Mentee)

    I have become so much more confident about applying for work. I have gained knowledge on how to effectively look through job applications as well as some great pointers about interviewing and things to build in a résumé *too! (Mentee)*

- Mentors also reported their perceptions of program impact on young people, highlighting increases in their mentee's understanding of career pathways and options (93.5%), work related self-confidence (90.3%), and development of new skills to help them find and maintain work (90.0%).
- Mentors also highlighted the impact the service had on increasing their own professional satisfaction and improving workplace culture.

    So from a personal development or what reflected back or could be kind of echoed back in the workplace, so some of the things that we've spoken about with the EQ or communications or just coaching and those different pieces, understanding others, empathising, all of those things that just focuses on them, they were hugely beneficial. (Mentor)

    Yes, I think it is very valuable as it gave me a lot of professional wellbeing and job satisfaction outside of my normal responsibilities. (Mentor)

The evaluation has found that DIMS was implemented as planned and provided an appropriate service to facilitate the recruitment of young people and mentors. The service was largely appropriate and effective for young people, achieving positive outcomes in terms of employment, as well as increased confidence, knowledge, skills and optimism for the future. Although the findings were generally positive and provide strong support for the continuation of DIMS, there were several areas identified to achieve service improvement and **sustainability**. The following recommendations are provided for consideration.

1. **Expansion of industry partner organisations to include a broader range of sectors, notably in the healthcare and community services sectors.**

The evaluation clearly highlighted young people's desire to work with mentors from specific industry sectors and their preferences to focus on industry insights during the sessions. There was a noticeable absence of

mentors from the scientific, healthcare and community services sectors. Broadening the range of sectors amongst headspace partner organisations would enable the service to better meet the mentoring needs of a wider range of young people.

2. **Enhanced service promotion and referral pathways through other** headspace **programs, the** headspace **centre network, and other external vocational organisations.**

Despite the service reaching its target number of 180 commencements across the two-year program lifespan, there was a clear underrepresentation of young people discovering DIMS through the eheadspace program, the headspace centre network, and employment service providers. A review of these referral avenues may increase the accessibility for different cohorts of young people requiring vocational and educational support.

3. **Consider methods to further attract young people from key demographic groups, such as young people from regional and remote areas, young men, and young people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.**

Young people from some demographic groups appeared to be under-represented; specifically, those who live outside major cities, young men, and those who identify as either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Consequently, DIMS may benefit from reviewing current referral and recruitment strategies to increase the accessibility of the service.

4. **Review the software used to provide digital mentoring.**

The usability and reliability of the digital platform software was a major barrier to participation for both mentees and mentors. Providing mentoring using a digital platform requires the software to be simple, reliable and able to provide a variety of communication options. During the development of this evaluation report, headspace staff transitioned the software to Zoom Video Conferencing. While this new software seemed to overcome some of the concerns raised, further review is required to ensure the ongoing suitability of the new software.

5. **Retain Mental Health First Aid training activities for prospective mentors.**

The Mental Health First Aid training was identified as a major enabler for volunteer industry professionals to build their confidence in working with young people who are clients of a youth mental health organisation. The training was relevant and ameliorated concerns held by many industry professionals around topics that may be covered during the sessions and how to navigate a range of work, study and mental health related themes.

6. **Consider limiting future data collection and streamlining existing processes (i.e. the volume of data collected, timing of collection and the items collected).**

Much of the data collected throughout the evaluation was required to measure effectiveness of the pilot program and meet contractual obligations. Given the recent changes in funding arrangements and feedback received by program participants regarding data burden, data collection tools and items could be reduced or streamlined and collected less frequently and at more appropriate time-points.

7. **Incorporate research and evaluation activities into future program plans and deliverables to further guide continuous improvement.**

Findings from this process and outcome evaluation provide important insights into the implementation, appropriateness, and effectiveness of DIMS and give directions for service improvement and sustainability. It is recommended that ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities are implemented to guide the continuous quality improvement of the service and ensure information is available to meet reporting requirements, promote the service, contribute to the limited evidence base for online mentoring, and to enable the program team to advocate for future funding or service expansion.

evaluation of the headspace Career Mentoring service

headspace

1. what is the headspace Career Mentoring service?

A free service that connects young people aged 17-24 years living with mental health challenges, with industry professionals in a supportive mentoring relationship. All contact between young people (mentees) and their mentors is via video conferencing and/or the phone. Mentors and mentees typically meet approximately five times over a three month period. The key aim of the service is to enhance a young person's employment opportunities and outcomes.

2. how was it evaluated?

The headspace Strategy, Impact and Policy team undertook a process and outcome evaluation of the Career Mentoring service across its first two years of operation (2017-19 pilot). This explored the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the service. Surveys and interviews were undertaken with mentees and mentors, and routine data collected by the service were analysed.

"I felt like it was exactly what I needed, to have someone in the professional industry dedicated to talking to me about my career." (Mentee, Male, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

3. key findings

most mentors and mentees indicated the 'digital' nature of the service worked well (i.e. all contact via video conferencing and phone)

182 young people received mentoring support during the evaluation period (mentees)

98% of mentees were satisfied with their mentor

59% of mentees who weren't working, gained a job during their time with the service
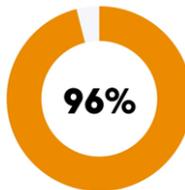
96% of mentees would recommend the Career Mentoring service

100% of mentors said they gained skills and knowledge

81% of mentors said they would apply the skills and knowledge they gained to their work
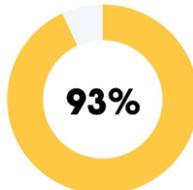
93% of mentees said the service helped them feel more optimistic about their work future

of mentees said they gained new skills
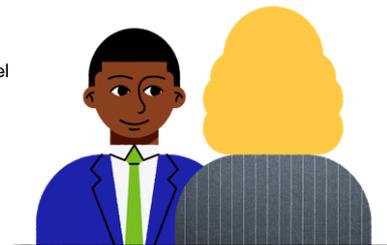
4. evaluation conclusion

The evaluation found that the Career Mentoring service was implemented as planned and largely appropriate and effective for young people, helping them to achieve positive outcomes in terms of employment, as well as increased confidence, knowledge, skills and optimism for the future.

headspace

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In Australia, youth unemployment and underemployment are significant issues within a volatile employment landscape. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years is 11.8 per cent, which is more than twice that of the overall population (at 5.1 per cent)[2]. Underemployment is another aspect of the labour market where workers report they are unable to obtain as many hours of employment as they would like[3]. For young people aged 15 to 24 years, almost 20 per cent report being underemployed[4]. This phenomenon of labour under-utilisation has economic impacts in lost productivity, decreased tax revenues, and higher social and healthcare costs[5]. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of participation, job search and mobility highlighted key challenges for the unemployed in finding work[6]. These challenges included insufficient work experience, ill-health or disability, lacking skills or education, and challenges with travel/transport[5].

Young people who experience mental ill-health face additional challenges in gaining employment and may require extra support to maintain employment[7]. Recent data from headspace, National Youth Mental Health Foundation supports the view that young people with mental health issues are over-represented in unemployment statistics, reporting that one in four young people between the ages of 17-25 years who visited a headspace centre were not engaged in employment, training or education[8]. In some regional areas and for specific groups of young people engagement in education and employment is even worse.

Also impacting employment outcomes, young people who have experienced disadvantage such as intergenerational unemployment, live regionally, or have experienced social isolation due to their mental health, can also have limited social and/or professional networks[9]. These networks can provide young people with vocational support, information about work and particular career paths, and introductions to job opportunities. Without these networks young people can be at greater risk of long term unemployment and welfare dependency[10].

In the Australian context, two employment programs assist job seekers to gain employment and receive financial assistance. The first is the *jobactive* program, delivered by the Department of Jobs and Small Business. This program provides a broad level of assistance, such as helping people to overcome personal and work-related barriers, assisting people into work experience and training courses, assisting with résumés and interview techniques, and connecting job seekers with employment[11]. Results from the most recent Employment Services Outcomes report (April 2017 to March 2018) showed that 49.2 per cent of job seekers participating in the *jobactive* program (between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018) were in employment three months later. *jobactive* also classifies job seekers into three streams that are based on an assessment of their vocational barriers. Stream C indicates job seekers who are most disadvantaged, with multiple and complex barriers such as mental health challenges. The report highlights this group as having the lowest employment outcomes, with 26.4 per cent attaining employment three months after participation in *jobactive*[12].

The second program is Disability Employment Services (DES), which provides services specifically for job seekers who live with a disability, injury or health conditions. DES is divided into two program streams: Disability Management Service, for job seekers with disability, injury or health conditions that are not expected to require long-term workplace assistance; and Employment Support Service, for job seekers with permanent disability and an assessed need for long-term support in the workplace. There are both for-profit and not-for-profit DES providers of varying sizes. According to the latest Employment Services Outcomes report, the DES Disability Management Services recorded an employment outcome rate of 30.8 per cent (for job seekers who were assisted between 1 October 2017 and 30 September 2018). The DES Employment Services Support recorded an employment outcome rate of 29.8 per cent (for job seekers who were assisted in the same time period)[13].

One area of service related to education and employment that has the potential to ameliorate the effects of youth unemployment and underemployment is career mentoring. Mentoring is recognised as a valuable technique for overcoming barriers and engaging young people into the workforce[14]. In the short term, mentoring may encourage young people to identify their own strengths and skill-sets, envisage a career pathway that will have a long term and sustainable interest, set realistic and achievable objectives, and contemplate aspects or areas of work and study that are important to them[5]. Mentoring also has the potential to foster a range of positive outcomes including active engagement in employment programs, increasing confidence and self-esteem, creating positive perceptions of work, enabling better informed career choices, and in some cases obtaining employment[5]. Mentoring can also assist young people to build more robust professional networks which they may not have previously had access to[15].

While mentoring has traditionally been provided via face-to-face exchanges, the provision of employment mentoring via a digital platform has gained momentum as a practical and effective way to engage young people[16]. Online mentoring can overcome several challenges inherent in face-to-face mentoring initiatives such as expense, demanding time/travel commitments and geographical reach[16] Online approaches may also ameliorate personality and social interaction challenges experienced by some young people, especially those with mental health challenges, which may potentially undermine participation[14]. Despite some evidence of its effectiveness, digital mentoring is recognised as an area in need of further investigation due to its status as a relatively new and emerging mentoring technique[14].

headspace provides comprehensive and holistic assistance to young people aged 12-25 years through four core service delivery avenues: headspace centres, the headspace Early Psychosis Program, eheadspace, and Vocational services. While vocational and educational support is an integral element of the headspace centre model, the use of a digital approach allows headspace to reach young people across Australia outside the areas where centres are located, as well as to target key audiences, including young people living in regional or remote areas of Australia and those in areas of high youth unemployment.

1.2   The headspace Digital Industry Mentor Service

The headspace Digital Industry Mentor Service (DIMS)[*] is the latest addition to the headspace suite of programs for young people, and is one of two vocational programs offered by headspace**. The first of these programs is the Digital Work and Study Service (DWSS), which provides young people (aged 15 to 24 years) across Australia with work and study support through a headspace work and study specialist staff member via a digital platform (synchronous chat, asynchronous email, telephone assistance, and video conferencing). These specialists provide young people with work and study support including: résumé writing, career planning, strengths and skills assessments, job search and application assistance, interview preparations, exploration of suitable study pathways, and managing vocational/non-vocational barriers that may impact on young people's capacity to achieve their work and study goals[17]. Both DWSS and DIMS were initially funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, Department of Jobs and Small Business.

DIMS is a pilot program funded as part of the Department's "Empowering YOUth Initiative" Round 2, 2017 – 2019, with a service start date of 5th June 2017 and end date of 4th June 2019. As the first of its kind in Australia, DIMS aimed to provide an opportunity for young people living with mental health challenges to engage online with industry professionals in a supportive mentoring relationship.

This service is an online based mentoring program (delivered through online software with video-chat, teleconferencing, email and file sharing capabilities) that links vulnerable young people with experienced

---

[*] Note: Since the conclusion of this evaluation DIMS has been renamed as the headspace Career Mentoring service and is now funded by the Department of Health and Corporate Partners. Given the service was named DIMS during the evaluation period it has been referred to as this throughout this report.

industry professionals. It aims to enhance a young person's employment opportunities and achieve more sustainable employment outcomes.

The overarching objective of DIMS is to help young people increase their ability to gain or maintain sustainable employment by:

- Addressing and overcoming barriers to employment
- Building young people's professional networks, networking ability, confidence and self-efficacy regarding employment and employability
- Increasing access to opportunities for young people in regional locations through the use of a digital platform
- Developing resources, such as mentoring guides, to assist Employment Service Providers or other organisations to deliver effective mentoring programmes to vulnerable young people.

This service focuses on five core themes to prepare young people for employment:

1. **Clarifying realistic career expectations and pathways:**
   Discussions around career trajectories, progressions and overall expectations.
2. **Providing insider knowledge about recruitment practices:**
   Accessing job markets and insight into job applications and interview expectations.
3. **Opening doors to new and existing networks:**
   Exploring mentors' networks and professional contacts.
4. **Clarifying employer expectations and workplace etiquette:**
   Preparing to transition into new workplace/roles.
5. **Offering practical guidance and support during the early weeks of employment:**
   Overview of communications skills, dispute resolutions, and rights/responsibilities.

As a result of participation in DIMS, it is anticipated that a young person will experience some or all of the following benefits:

- Clarity of chosen field and an understanding of the realities of the role and profession enabling them to make informed choices and find pathways to long term sustainable employment.
- Industry exposure by learning from real life experiences, reducing the impact of the unexpected when starting a job and the ability to make better decisions around work through knowledge and awareness of industry.
- Having greater confidence and self-efficacy around employability and capability in a particular role.
- An increase in professional networks in their chosen field by understanding existing networks and leveraging new networks through the mentor relationship.
- Learning to seek and accept support during challenging times at work, especially at high-risk times such as the initial period of employment.
- Having a valued sounding board in the industry/workforce.
- Having a valued role model in the industry/workforce.
- Sustainable employment.

To be eligible for DIMS, young people must be aged 17-24 years (at the time of registration), and be identified at that time by headspace or the referring organisation as: a) displaying symptoms of a mental illness; or b) coming from a disadvantaged background or an area of high youth unemployment.

Upon expressing interest, young people complete a pre-commencement form to confirm eligibility, and a commencement form which includes information used to match them to appropriate industry professionals. Young people who receive mentoring activities are referred to as "mentees". Industry professionals meeting the eligibility criteria for the service who provide mentoring activities are referred to as "mentors". The mentoring relationship between mentee and mentor is expected to last a maximum of six months, with headspace encouraging at least fortnightly contact between each mentor and mentee via the digital platform (through software that is capable of video-chat, teleconferencing, file sharing, and email).

2. Evaluation Project Overview

All major headspace programs are evaluated to enhance service delivery and advance the knowledge and evidence-base on effective service approaches that improve young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Coupled with routine internal service monitoring activities, the headspace Research and Evaluation team undertook a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation of DIMS throughout the duration of the Empowering YOUth Initiative pilot. The evaluation was undertaken between 2017 and 2019.

2.1 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the **process evaluation** component were to assess the overall implementation and appropriateness of the service and its components. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Assess whether DIMS was implemented as planned.
- Determine the levels of reach, adoption of, and engagement by young people and industry professionals with DIMS.
- Investigate the utility of a digital platform to deliver mentoring services.
- Examine the overall accessibility, useability, and acceptability of DIMS.

The objectives of the **outcome evaluation** component were to determine the overall effectiveness of the service. Specifically, it aimed to:

- Examine the effectiveness of DIMS by documenting any short to medium term benefits experienced by mentees and mentors.
- Identify the resource requirements and key learnings which can be used to inform sustainable service delivery as well as future policy and program design.

This process and outcome evaluation aimed to answer several key evaluation questions themed around service implementation, appropriateness, effectiveness and sustainability. Evaluation findings are grouped by these domains along with a response to each of the key evaluation questions and presented in Section 4: Findings.

3. Evaluation Methodology

A mixed-methods process and outcomes evaluation design was chosen. This design leveraged existing service data combined with additional data collection methods.

3.1 Data Sources

Six key data sources were utilised for this project:

1. The Digital Industry Mentor Service Minimum Data Set (MDS)
2. Mentee service experience survey
3. Mentor service experience survey
4. Telephone interview with mentees
5. Telephone interview with mentors
6. Face-to-face interview with headspace DIMS staff

a) The Minimum Data Set (MDS)

The MDS is a service specific data set that is used to collect registration data, identify work and study preferences, monitor service activity, and record general outcomes and satisfaction. The Service's MDS is made up of questions from four unique forms (outlined below), and data is collected at various time-points along the mentoring journey.

Data from the MDS is captured and managed on the Dynamic Health 3 (DH3) platform. Data for this evaluation project was extracted using Tableau Data Visualisation software which is linked to DH3. This evaluation project utilised MDS data collected from service inception until 30th April 2019.

1. **Pre-Commencement form:**

This service registration form captures data related to client demographic characteristics, work and study circumstances at presentation, and the industry sector of most interest. Data is collected via a telephone call between a headspace staff member and the young person immediately upon referral or expression of interest for DIMS.

2. **Commencement form:**

This secondary registration form captures additional data around mentoring preferences. This includes information on vocational/non-vocational barriers experienced by the young person, and aspects of work and study the young person is most interested in working through with their mentor. This form is collected via telephone at service commencement.

3. **Mentoring form:**

Completed by the mentor after each planned and/or completed mentoring session, the mentoring form captures data on what was generally covered during the session and its duration, as well as session satisfaction as perceived by the mentor.

4. **Change of Circumstance/Closure/Follow-up form:**

Mentoring forms that indicate a change in a young person's circumstances are flagged by headspace staff prompting completion of the Change of Circumstance form. This form repeats key questions from the Pre-Commencement form.

The Closure form is completed for several reasons, including: when a mentoring relationship concludes due to the planned end-date, when new work or study commitments arise warranting the completion of the mentoring relationship, or when staff are no longer able to make contact with the young person.

b) Experience surveys

As part of routinely collected data to inform service activity and gauge service satisfaction the headspace DIMS team sent surveys to all mentees at their half-way point and again at completion, and to mentors when they complete a mentoring relationship with their assigned young person. These surveys are housed on the Survey Monkey platform and are managed by the Coordinator and Project Officer of the service. Data were extracted for all participants who provided consent for their information to be used for evaluation purposes on the 30th April 2019.

c) Interviews

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with mentees and mentors, and face-to-face interviews with headspace DIMS staff.

- Mentees were invited to participate in an interview if they had consented to participate in optional evaluation activities, had completed their mentoring journey as indicated by a recorded MDS Closure form, and had participated in the service for at least three months.
- Mentors were eligible for recruitment if they completed at least one mentoring relationship (either for the maximum six month term or less if their mentees reached a desired work or study circumstance/outcome).
- All headspace staff members involved in the administration of the service (either in program design, participant recruitment, service maintenance, coordination and/or management) were eligible for interview recruitment. Staff members were invited to an individual face-to-face interview via email.

For each interview group, a pre-developed interview guide was used to guide the content and structure of questions during the interview. These guides can be found for mentees, mentors and headspace staff in Appendix A to C, respectively.

Verbal consent to audio record the interviews was obtained at the start of the interview. These interviews were then transcribed by headspace R&E staff and an external transcription service company.

Interview recruitment for all three participant groups occurred over a six month period between November 2018 and April 2019.

3.2   Participants

Table 1 provides participant details within each key data source used for this evaluation. As outlined, participant numbers within the MDS differ. This is because while many young people commence with DIMS through the registration form, not all progress to the mentor-matching and active mentoring phases. Furthermore, completion of the forms (other than the Mentor form, which is filled out by the mentor), is

dependent on headspace staff successfully contacting the young person. Hence the discrepancies seen between those who have received active mentoring and those who have completed the Closure form are due to those who are still active in the service or who were not able to be contacted.

Participant data from the experience surveys are from mentees and mentors who provided consent for their information to be used for evaluation purposes.

Table 1: Overview of evaluation data sources and participant numbers

Data source		Participant numbers	Data Inclusion Period
Minimum Data Set (MDS)	**Pre-Commencement form**	n (client) = **317**	Up to 30th April 2019
	Commencement form	n (client) = **316**	
	Mentor form	n (client) = **182**	
		n (session) = **798**	
	Closure form	n (client) = **103**	
Experience surveys	**Mentee survey**	n (survey) = **31**	Up to 30th April 2019
	Mentor survey	n (survey) = **31**	
Individual interviews	**Mentee telephone interviews**	n (interviewee) = **10**	November 2018 – April 2019
	Mentor telephone interviews	n (interviewee) = **10**	
	headspace staff face-to-face interviews	n (interviewee) = **3**	

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive analyses were undertaken for quantitative data sourced from the MDS and experience surveys. These were frequencies for categorical data and mean/standard deviations (or median/interquartile range) for continuous data. Further cross-tabulations were performed for comparisons between categorical variables.

All quantitative data analyses were performed only with valid response options (i.e. responses of Not Applicable, Not Provided, Unknown, or Missing were excluded). Additionally, quantitative data analyses of survey questions are presented as proportions of those who selected the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' response options. Tableau data visualisation software, Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 were used for analyses.

For qualitative data from interviews, inductive and deductive techniques were adopted using open, axial and selective coding to perform thematic analysis. Open coding captured initial concepts from participants. Axial coding was used to make connections to related ideas. Selective coding was then used to unify core categories into central themes. Qualitative data analysis for open-ended survey questions was performed in a similar manner. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo version 11.

3.4 Ethical Approval

The headspace Research and Evaluation team sought and obtained ethical approval for the mentee, mentor and headspace staff individual interviews components of this evaluation through a Quality Assurance application to the Melbourne Health Office for Research. Approval was obtained on the 3rd October 2018, with approval reference QA2018096.

4. Findings

4.1 Implementation

The first key objective of this evaluation was to determine if and to what extent DIMS was implemented as planned. This section provides evaluation findings for the key evaluation questions on service implementation and explores service inputs and uptake, and the demographic, work, and study characteristics of participants. This section utilised existing program documents, supplementary information provided by the Service Coordinator and Manager of Vocational Services, and service activity data captured through the DIMS MDS.

a) Service inputs and uptake

This domain describes the key inputs for DIMS that were involved to facilitate service setup and delivery of activities. Inputs described are both tangible (e.g. I.T platform, training and workshop sessions, and the DIMS workforce) and conceptual (e.g. the headspace strategic direction and staff knowledge) in nature.

This section focuses on the establishment of DIMS and answering key evaluation questions around program inputs and activities/outputs, and specifically explores industry partnerships, referral pathways, and program uptake.

Alignment to headspace's strategic direction:

The development and delivery of DIMS was designed to support a number of headspace's strategic aims. These include reducing barriers to access, innovative use of online technology, building mental health literacy, and fostering collaborative partnerships for change. DIMS has also strengthened the organisation's commitment and focus on the core service delivery stream of work and study. Using a digital platform uniquely situates headspace at the forefront of innovative mentoring support and opens access to some of headspace's key target audiences, including young people living in regional and remote areas of Australia and those in areas of high youth unemployment.

Digital Infrastructure:

This service utilised an existing data management platform, Dynamic Health 3 (DH3) to collect and store registration and service activity information from young people. The DH3 platform is currently shared between existing services—eheadspace and the Digital Work and Study Service—and allows client's profile information (i.e. key demographics) to be accessed across different services to avoid duplication.

Adobe Connect web conferencing software was selected as the platform for hosting the mentoring sessions between the young person and volunteer industry professional.

Industry partnerships:

During the initial stages of tender design and service development, several industry organisations were nominated as partner organisations based on their existing corporate partner relationships with headspace. Other organisations were approached during the lifespan of DIMS by the Manager of Vocational Services. This was done through directly approaching organisations as well as warm referrals from existing organisations. During these stakeholder engagement activities, the DIMS team worked closely with the headspace Corporate Partnerships and Fundraising team to establish expectations, due diligence, and overall partnership support. Each industry partner organisation also identified an internal staff member as an Industry Lead to help champion the service and coordinate their volunteer mentors with headspace. Industry Leads across partner organisations formed part of the Industry Advisory Committee.

The service currently has 7 industry organisations as partners, who collectively provided 146 volunteer staff members as industry mentors. These partner organisations are listed below.

- ANZ Banking Group
- Funlab
- Jellis Craig
- Kmart Australia
- NBN Co
- REST Industry Super
- Viva Energy Australia

These organisations and their volunteer mentors provided expertise largely in the finance, real estate, retail, energy, and information technology industries. Although these partner organisations allowed for adequate recruitment of volunteer industry professionals to deliver mentoring activities for service participants, the variety of industry sectors represented was limited.

Referral sources:

Two employment service provider organisations (Campbell Page and Ostara Australia) were engaged to assist with referrals of young people into the service.

DIMS also used existing headspace services as an internal referral pathway to recruit young people. These included the Digital Work and Study Service, eheadspace and headspace Centres.

Finally, advertising and communications resources were developed, in conjunction with the headspace Strategic Communications department, to recruit young people via online and social media. These resources were implemented through Facebook advertisements, Instagram and Twitter posts, and material posted on the headspace website.

Mentors were recruited through Industry Leads using promotional materials such as e-flyers, newsletters, and website updates developed by headspace.

headspace workforce:

Three headspace staff members (the Service Coordinator and Project Officer each at 1.0 EFT and the Manager of Vocational Services at approximately 0.7 EFT with 0.3 EFT provided in-kind) were involved with service development, delivery and maintenance. The Manager of Vocational Services provided service oversight and was instrumental in the initial stages of service inception and design, writing applications to the Department of Jobs and Small Business, and establishing the network of industry partner organisations. Subsequently, a Service Coordinator was employed to lead the development of the service as outlined in the tender and contract documents; assist with the design of service governance, policy and procedures; manage stakeholders; set up participant recruitment, screening and training mechanisms; and provide oversight of the Project Officer.

The Project Officer was appointed to assist with the recruitment and registration of both mentees and mentors, and to provide overall follow-up and support for mentees and mentors throughout the mentoring journey. An Administrative Support Officer was also appointed in 2019 to assist with day-to-day service administration and monitoring.

Mental Health First Aid training and mentoring workshop:

All mentors successfully completed two specific training activities prior to being matched and commencing their mentoring relationship with a young person.

Mentors completed a Mental Health First Aid Australia[18] accredited 'Youth Mental Health First Aid Qualification'. This two-day evidence-based training course equipped mentors to provide guidance around a young person's mental health circumstances if required. However, mentors were not expected to provide

clinical mental health support, but rather raise any concerns with a DIMS staff member (who would escalate through established clinical pathways outlined in the service's Clinical Governance Framework), or provide mentees with information on services or organisations that are specific to mental health (e.g. eheadspace, Lifeline, Suicide Call Back Service).

Mentors also completed a Youth Mentor Training day delivered by headspace staff. Training material and curriculum were developed based on the Australian Youth Mentoring Network (AYMN)[19] organisation and from evidence-based best practice programs on youth mentoring.

Clinical Governance Framework:

In collaboration with the headspace Clinical Practice department, the DIMS Clinical Governance Framework was created to ensure the delivery of a high quality and clinically safe program through effective structures and processes. Despite DIMS not providing clinical care itself, this Framework was created to ensure that the service operated within established headspace policies and procedures regarding clinical escalation, risk management and mitigation, and incident management and reporting. In collaboration with the headspace Clinical Practice team, the Senior Clinical Advisor consulted on reported issues in the first instance, with the Head of Clinical Practice providing further advice if clarification and support was required.

Program participants:

During the data reporting period for this evaluation (from service inception to 30th April 2019), DIMS exceeded its target of engaging 180 young people. Table 2 provides an overview of service participant numbers across key stages of service delivery. It is important to note that of the 182 unique young people who received at least one mentoring session at the time of data extraction, a proportion were still active and yet to have completed their mentoring journey (indicated by the recording of a Closure form).

Table 2: Summary of participant numbers

Service Measure	MDS Data source	Frequency
Registration for Service[a]	Pre-commencement	317
	Commencement	316
Serviced Young People[b]	Mentoring form	182
Services[c]	Mentoring form	798
Completions[d]	Closure	103

a. Young people who have completed a registration form over the phone with headspace staff
b. Young people who were matched with a mentor and received at least one mentoring session
c. Mentoring sessions that went ahead
d. Young people who have completed a mentoring relationship and have recorded a Closure form

Across the seven industry partner organisations, 146 volunteer industry professionals underwent training, with 119 advancing to providing mentoring session(s) to young people (27 volunteers who completed the training were unable to proceed due to work and other commitments).

The number of young people registering with the service varied considerably across the 18 month period (see Figure 1). An average of 17.6 young people registered per month. Figure 2 highlights that peaks in registrations appeared to be largely attributed to the two major pathways in how young people had heard about the service: young people finding DIMS online (in blue), and through the Digital Work and Study Service (in orange), with only limited numbers accessing from other sources. Increases in young people finding the DIMS online over specific periods may largely be attributed to an increased social media presence coordinated by headspace service staff in collaboration with the headspace Strategic Communications department. One in ten registrations were attributed to young people hearing about DIMS through other headspace avenues (i.e. centre services and eheadspace) (see Figure 3).
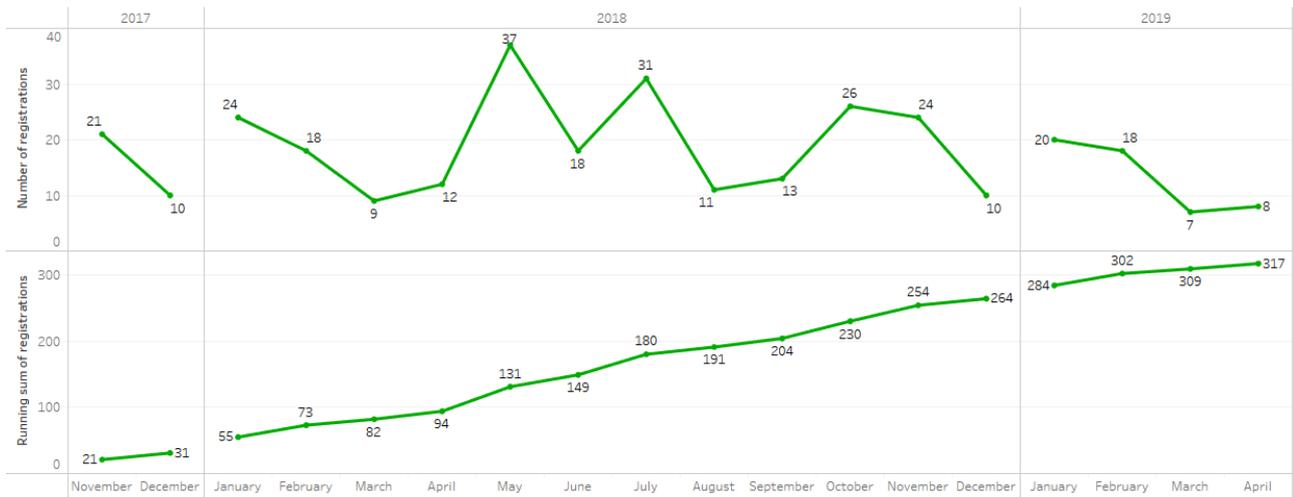
Figure 1: Timeline of service registrations (by month and running sum)
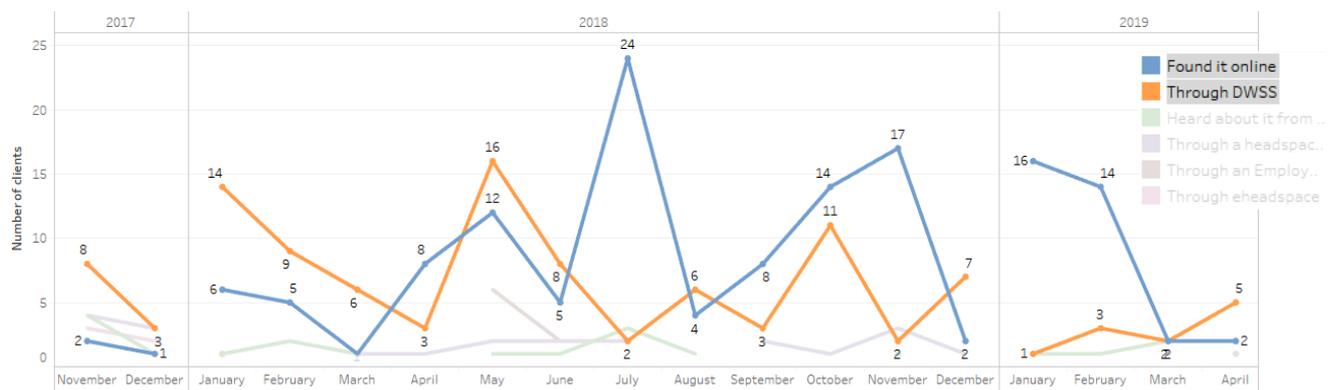
Figure 2: Timeline of service registrations by main referral pathways
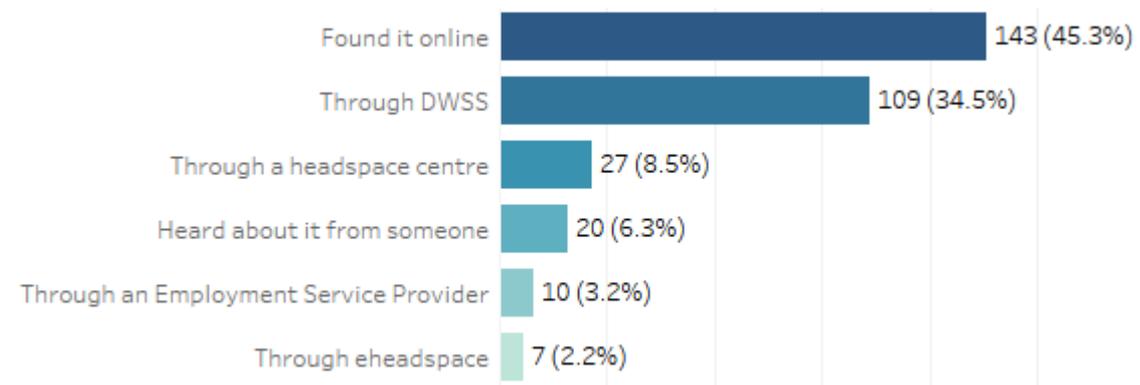
Figure 3: Proportion of registrations by referral pathway

b) Demographic, work and study characteristics

This section presents the work and study characteristics of DIMS participants at the time of registration. The findings in this section explored the key evaluation question of whether the service reached its intended audience. The service had a broad inclusion criteria targeting young people aged 17 to 24 who had symptoms of mental illness or who were from a disadvantaged background or an area of high unemployment

Table 3 details the demographic characteristics of all young people who registered during the evaluation data inclusion period. The data revealed that most were female (60%), aged 20 years or older (68%), and lived in a

metropolitan area (80%). Despite DIMS being able to reach young people in every Australian state and territory, there was a significantly lower representation of young people in the country's central, northern and western states and territories.

Young people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander represented 2.9 per cent of all registrations. The large majority of registered young people were born in Australia (74%) and three-quarters indicated they did not speak a language other than English at home.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics

Key Demographic Characteristics*		Frequency N (%)
Gender	Female	175 (59.7%)
	Male	110 (37.5%)
	Another gender	5 (1.7%)
	Trans**	3 (1.0%)
Age (categorical)	17 years or under	30 (10.0%)
	18 to 19 years	66 (22.0%)
	20 to 21 years	88 (29.3%)
	22 to 23 years	67 (22.3%)
	24 years or over	49 (16.3%)
Age (numerical)	Mean = 20.8 years, Standard Deviation = 2.3 years	
State/Territory of residence	Victoria	90 (30.7%)
	Queensland	64 (21.8%)
	New South Wales	59 (20.1%)
	Western Australia	37 (12.6%)
	South Australia	30 (10.2%)
	Australian Capital Territory	8 (2.7%)
	Tasmania	4 (1.4%)
	Northern Territory	1 (0.3%)
Rurality	Major Cities of Australia	234 (79.9%)
	Inner Regional Australia	42 (14.3%)
	Outer Regional Australia	17 (5.8%)
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity	Yes	9 (2.9%)
	No	306 (97.1%)
Country of Birth	Australia	235 (74.1%)
	England	10 (3.2%)
	New Zealand	6 (1.9%)
	South Africa	3 (0.9%)
	Other	63 (19.9%)
Language Other Than English at home	Yes	79 (25.0%)
	No	237 (75.0%)

* Demographic characteristics presented are only for valid responses. Missing responses may be due to certain MDS items being optional to answer (e.g. young people only providing a state or postcode rather than a full residential address).
** The Trans response option includes Transgender identities.

Table 4 outlines key work related characteristics of young people who registered with DIMS. While just over 40 per cent reported they were employed at registration, the majority were employed on a casual or part-time basis, with only three per cent employed full-time. Over half (53%) indicated they were not employed at the time of registration and were looking for work.

Of the young people who registered with DIMS, males were more likely to be unemployed and looking for work (58% versus 50%), and females were more likely to be participating in some form of employment (46% versus 37%). Young males were also more likely to be supported financially by family/carer/partner than their female counterparts.

For those not employed or engaged in unpaid/voluntary work who also provided income information (n=155), the main income source was divided predominantly between Australian Government Income Support Payments (50.3%) and the young person being supported by family/carer/partner (43.9%). In addition, most young people (80%), were not registered with an Employment Agency, however, of those who were and who provided further details (n=51), young people were primarily registered with *jobactive* (84.3%).

Almost one third (30.5%) of registered young people were not engaged in any form of education, employment or training (NEET). These numbers were considerably higher for males than females (42% versus 23%, respectively), and were above the disengagement rates of one in four reported across headspace centres[7]. The prevalence of NEET was lower than for young people accessing DWSS, where a recent evaluation report found a NEET rate of 41 per cent[16].

These results generally indicate that the service was working with a disadvantaged group of young people who were experiencing high levels of un-employment or under-employment.

Table 4: Work characteristics

Work characteristics	Female N (%)	Male N (%)	Total * N (%)
Current labour force status			
Not employed but looking for work	87 (49.7%)	64 (58.2%)	151 (53.0%)
Employed casually	51 (29.1%)	24 (21.8%)	75 (26.3%)
Employed part-time	21 (12.0%)	14 (12.7%)	35 (12.3%)
Unpaid or voluntary work	8 (4.6%)	3 (2.7%)	11 (3.9%)
Employed full-time	7 (4.0%)	1 (0.9%)	8 (2.8%)
Employed in seasonal work	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.8%)	3 (1.1%)
Not employed nor looking for work	N/A	2 (1.8%)	2 (0.7%)
Main income source			
Australian Government Income Support payments	59 (34.7%)	33 (31.4%)	92 (33.5%)
Wages/salary	64 (37.6%)	28 (26.7%)	92 (33.5%)
Supported by family/carer/partner (dependent)	43 (25.3%)	39 (37.1%)	82 (29.8%)
Other	4 (2.4%)	5 (4.8%)	9 (3.3%)
Registration with Employment Agency			
Yes	34 (19.8%)	21 (19.4%)	55 (19.6%)
No	138 (80.2%)	87 (80.6%)	225 (80.4%)

* This table provides frequencies on work characteristics for female and male genders only. Non-binary genders were removed due to the small representation in the data. Young people who did not identify as either female or male during registration, and those who did not provide gender details, have not been counted in this table. Therefore, the total does not reflect the total number of young people who provided information on their work characteristics.

Analysis of the educational status and background of young people who registered with DIMS (see Table 5) revealed most had completed year 12 or higher (87.7%). A quarter had obtained a Certificate or Diploma and one in five had a Bachelor Degree. Almost half (47.0%) of registered young people were currently studying and of these most (63.8%) were aged 20 years or older.

Table 5: Study characteristics

Key Study Characteristics		Frequency N (%)
Highest level of education	Year 12 completed	133 (42.1%)
	Bachelor Degree	64 (20.3%)
	Certificate III/IV	47 (14.9%)
	Year 10/11 completed	39 (12.3%)
	Diploma or Advanced Diploma	19 (6.0%)
	Certificate I/II	10 (3.2%)
	Graduate Certificate or Diploma	3 (0.9%)
	Masters Degree	1 (0.3%)
Currently undertaking educational activities (Yes)	17 years and under	20 (6.7%)
	18 – 19 years	31 (10.3%)
	20 – 21 years	48 (16.0%)
	22 – 23 years	22 (7.3%)
	24 years and older	20 (6.7%)
Currently undertaking educational activities (No)		159 (53%)

4.2 Appropriateness

This section presents data on the appropriateness of service components and the content covered during the mentoring sessions. It provides service appropriateness in terms of: young people's work and study needs; the mentoring sessions; the digital platform; mentor training and resources; and the general concept of the mentoring service. The enablers and barriers to service participation are also explored.

a) Appropriateness of service for work and study needs

Before exploring the appropriateness of mentoring sessions provided, it is important to outline young people's work and study needs and areas of interest identified during the registration phase. While this information was captured to enable the mentoring sessions to be needs-based and appropriate for young people's overall objectives, it can also help to assess whether DIMS was providing an appropriate service that met young people's needs and expectations.

Figure 4 reveals the priority areas of vocational support that were identified by young people. The largest proportion (44.1%) identified that they required help with their career vision and pathways, with less emphasis placed on workplace etiquette and discussions around professional skills (6.0%).
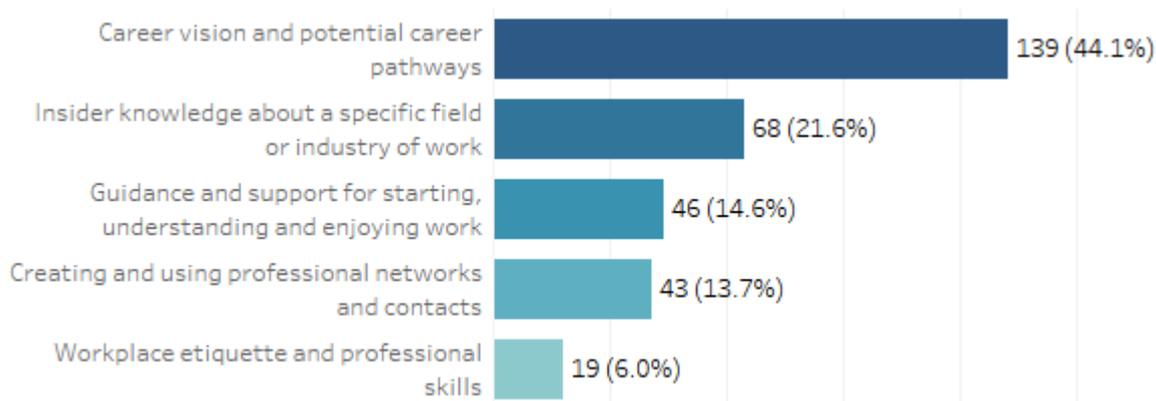

Figure 4: Priority areas for assistance (for all registrations)

Table 6 highlights the top 10 industry sectors of interest, by gender. While many young people reported interest in the retail, administrative/support and information technology sectors, the largest proportion (34%) selected 'Other'. For those who selected 'Other', the most commonly noted sectors of interests were science/engineering, community services and the legal sector. Gender differences were evident with males more likely to express an interest in the information technology and financial services sectors and females more interested in the retail and administrative sectors.

Table 6: Industry sector of most interest

Industry type	Female N (%)	Male N (%)	Total N (%)
Other (please specify)	59 (35.1%)	34 (32.7%)	93 (34.2%)
Retail/sales	23 (13.7%)	6 (5.8%)	29 (10.7%)
Administrative and support services	18 (10.7%)	1 (1.0%)	19 (7.0%)
Information technology	3 (1.8%)	14 (13.5%)	17 (6.3%)
Financial services	8 (4.8%)	9 (8.7%)	17 (6.3%)
Hospitality	10 (6.0%)	6 (5.8%)	16 (5.9%)
Healthcare/Social assistance	11 (6.5%)	4 (3.8%)	15 (5.5%)
Communication/Marketing	11 (6.5%)	3 (2.9%)	14 (5.1%)
Customer service	6 (3.6%)	6 (5.8%)	12 (4.4%)
Scientific services	6 (3.6%)	2 (1.9%)	8 (2.9%)
(Industries outside top 10)	13 (7.7%)	19 (18.3%)	32 (11.8%)

Young people also reported barriers they faced in achieving their work and study objectives. Barriers experienced that were vocational in nature are shown in Figure 5. Over 75 per cent of vocational barriers were related to the young person's work history; that is, either having limited experience or no experience at all. Young people were able to select multiple barriers in this question and 30 per cent reported experiencing more than one vocational barrier.
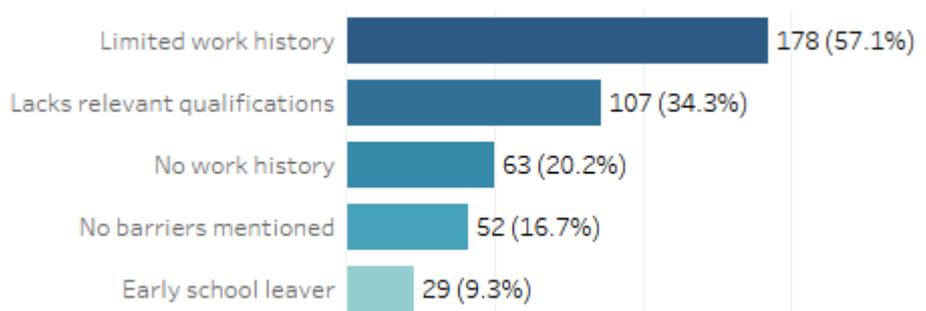
Figure 5: Vocational barriers experienced by young people

Young people were also asked about their non-vocational barriers (see Figure 6) and almost half of young people reported that their mental health issues were a barrier to achieving their work and study objectives. Of the 146 young people who identified mental health challenges, 64 (43.8%) also identified additional non-vocational barriers, the most common of which was a lack of transport options. A quarter (77) of the 310 young people who provided details about non-vocational barriers, experienced more than one barrier.
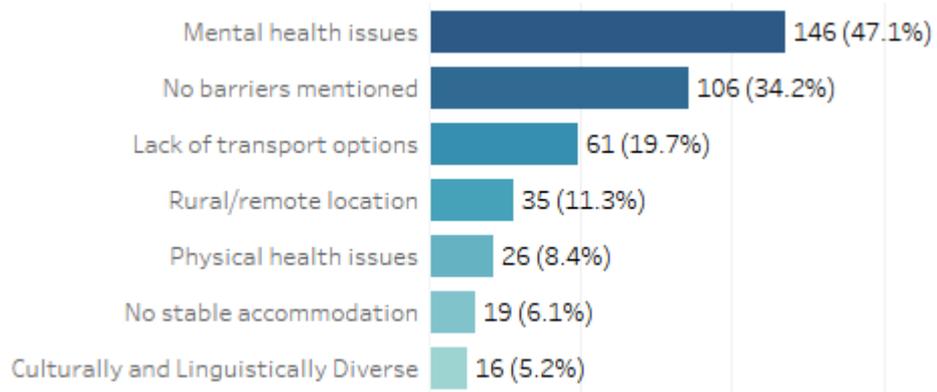
Figure 6: Non-vocational barriers experienced by young people

More than half (55.4%) of young people who provided information on barriers (n=305) identified that both vocational and non-vocational barriers were impacting on their abilities to achieve their work and study objectives.

b) Appropriateness of mentoring sessions

To shed light on the appropriateness of the mentoring sessions, administrative data was analysed from the DIMS MDS to explore the number, type, length and content covered during the mentoring sessions. Interviews with mentors also provided an additional perspective on the content, structure and emphasis of the sessions.

As detailed in Table 2, 798 mentoring sessions were delivered to 182 unique mentees. Analysis of these sessions revealed that the majority were between 31 – 60 minutes in duration, and a quarter of sessions lasted over an hour (see Figure 7).

A closer look at mentees who had completed their mentoring journey (103 young people who received at least one session who also had a recorded Closure form), showed mentees received an average of 4.8 sessions.
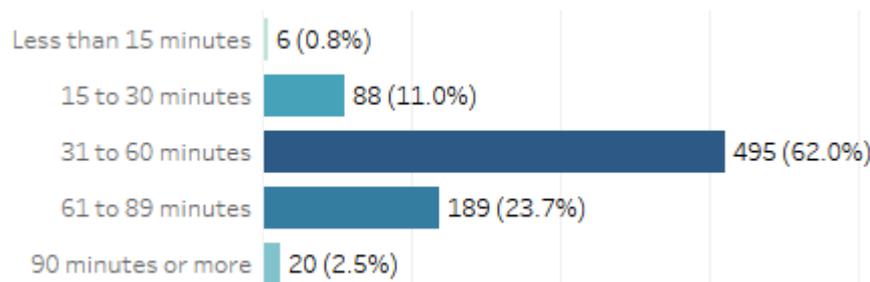
**Figure 7: Distribution of session durations**

Figure 8 provides further analysis of the duration of mentee-mentor relationships for this cohort. It is notable that half of mentoring relationships were longer than 3 months in duration. For young people who completed their mentoring journey in three months or less, the main reason was due to a change in the young person's personal circumstances.
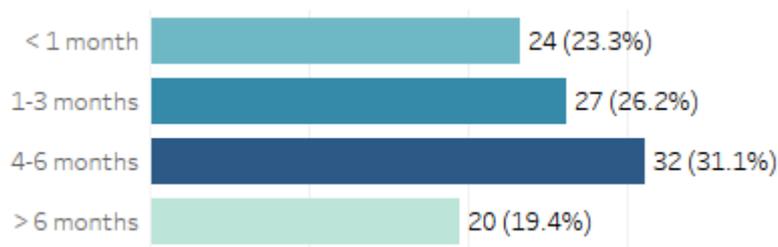
Figure 8: Distribution of mentee-mentor relationship length

Figure 9 provides a breakdown of the main focus across the 798 mentoring sessions that were delivered during the MDS data extraction time period. The main focus of over a third of all mentoring sessions was on discussing career vision and potential career pathways. This aligns with the main areas young people raised as needing assistance with when commencing with the service (see Figure 4). A large proportion of sessions also focussed on relationship building and guidance and support for starting, understanding and enjoying work. However, one area of assistance that was prioritised by young people at registration but was not often the main topic discussed, was providing insider knowledge about a specific field or industry of work. Despite almost 20 per cent of young people who received a mentoring session(s) identifying this as an area of need, only 6.8 per cent of all sessions focussed on this particular topic.
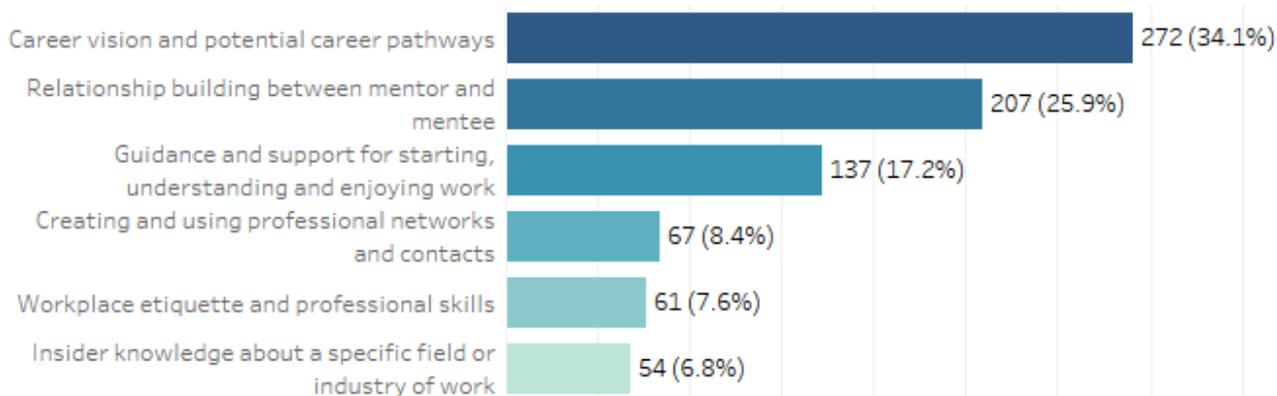
Figure 9: Main topic covered during mentoring sessions

Further exploration of the data recorded on other content discussed in the session indicated that mentors utilised the resources and discussion points in the mentor guidebook in 39 per cent of sessions. Vocational barriers (e.g. early school leaver, lack of relevant qualifications, and no/poor work history) were discussed in just over a third of sessions (34.5%), and mental health was discussed in a quarter of all sessions (25.4%).

Qualitative data from interviews with mentors and mentees supported the quantitative data, regarding the appropriateness of the mentoring sessions, highlighting the practical nature of support for young people, as well as providing an opportunity to identify and discuss the young person's key strengths and skills.

Providing practical support

Mentees commented on the practical nature of the mentoring sessions in supporting them with job seeking, including such things as writing cover letters and résumés, and interview preparation.

> *We covered my* résumé *and cover letter and interview practice and what kind of jobs are out there. Yeah, that sort of stuff… like getting my* résumé *and cover letter together and then just the process of applying for other jobs.* (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

> *…also helped me get over the barriers in terms of maybe wording structure, not so much about the language but the cover letter and taking a glance over that and that also helped me apply for a few other places. And [name] helped me practice some potential interview questions, one of which came up so that,*

that in by itself was quite valuable because the question I didn't really consider. (Mentee, Male, Age 24 years or older, Major Cities)

Interviews with mentors highlighted similar perspectives on the practical nature of the sessions, with mentors focussing largely on supporting the young person to enter the workforce. This included reviewing résumés and cover letters and providing advice on interviews.

So she had a couple of job interviews, and before each of those we did practice interview questions, and I also helped her with her cover letters, and with her tailoring her CV. So that was very hands-on practical stuff. (Mentor)

Yeah, talked about CVs and we actually did some on cover letters. Talked about - done a bit about what they're trying to achieve, examples of things, all sort of standard stuff as well. (Mentor)

Identifying strengths and skills

Through the mentoring sessions, mentees felt they were supported to identify existing strengths and skill-sets that may have been otherwise difficult for them to recognise and translate to job relevant skills. Mentees also commented on this topic being beneficial as a source of encouragement and motivation.

One thing that I found that she did really well was when I was considering certain jobs I tell her you know I'm considering applying for this job and then I go through some of the key selection criteria that they want you to address and would go through them and she would you know point out things that I wouldn't necessarily I think that I would have as a skill but I do. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Inner Regional)

Sometimes when you just applying for jobs on your own you kind of feel like you're just repeating yourself with a lot that [inaudible] but you're discussing with someone who you've been you know talking about your experience is your volunteer work and everything you know they're able to point out a little bit more that you don't really see in yourself so she was very good at that so. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Inner Regional)

Aligned with what mentees experienced during the sessions, mentors spoke about the values in highlighting existing skills and resources that mentees possessed.

She really needed a bit of help trying to focus in on what she actually wanted to do, and more help with how to leverage her existing networks, so work experience and things. (Mentor)

So some of it was really that facilitating access I guess to resources that were just at her fingertips, she just hadn't actually engaged with them. (Mentor)

c) Appropriateness of the digital platform

Mentee and mentor experience surveys and individual interviews explored the appropriateness of the digital platform for both cohorts. This allowed the evaluation to answer key evaluation questions regarding the usability, reliability and accessibility of the digital platform, and perceptions around the concept of providing mentoring digitally.

Figure 10 provides data from surveys completed by mentees upon finishing their time with the service. Presented are the proportions of those who either agreed or strongly agreed to the survey's statements. Overall, more than half of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the user-friendly nature and reliability of the digital platform used during mentoring sessions.
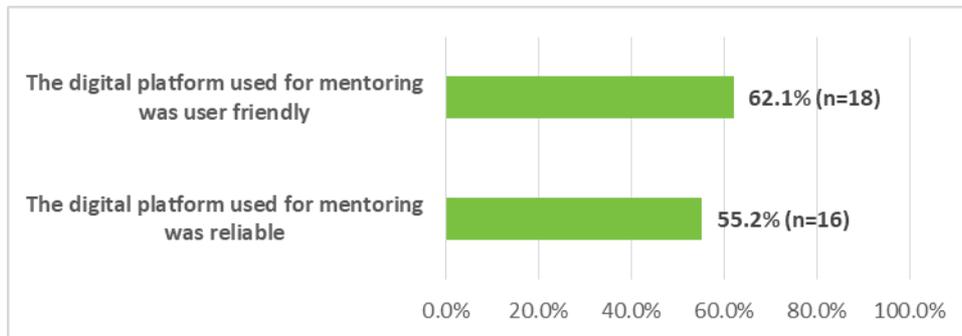
Figure 10: Proportion of mentees who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on digital platform usability/reliability

While mentees were generally positive about the usability of the digital platform, mentors were less so (see Figure 11). Less than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the digital platform was accessible for themselves and their mentee, and an even lower proportion felt that the platform was reliable and user friendly for their mentoring needs. Less than one-fifth of mentors surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the digital platform made it easy to schedule appointments. Qualitative data from mentee and mentor individual interviews revealed similar sentiments regarding the appropriateness of the digital platform.

These results are an important finding given much of the attractiveness of the service for mentors was the online nature, with more than three quarters (77%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the digital platform made the service more attractive in volunteering their time compared to face-to-face modes of mentoring (see Figure 12). This finding was supported by the qualitative data from both mentors and mentees.
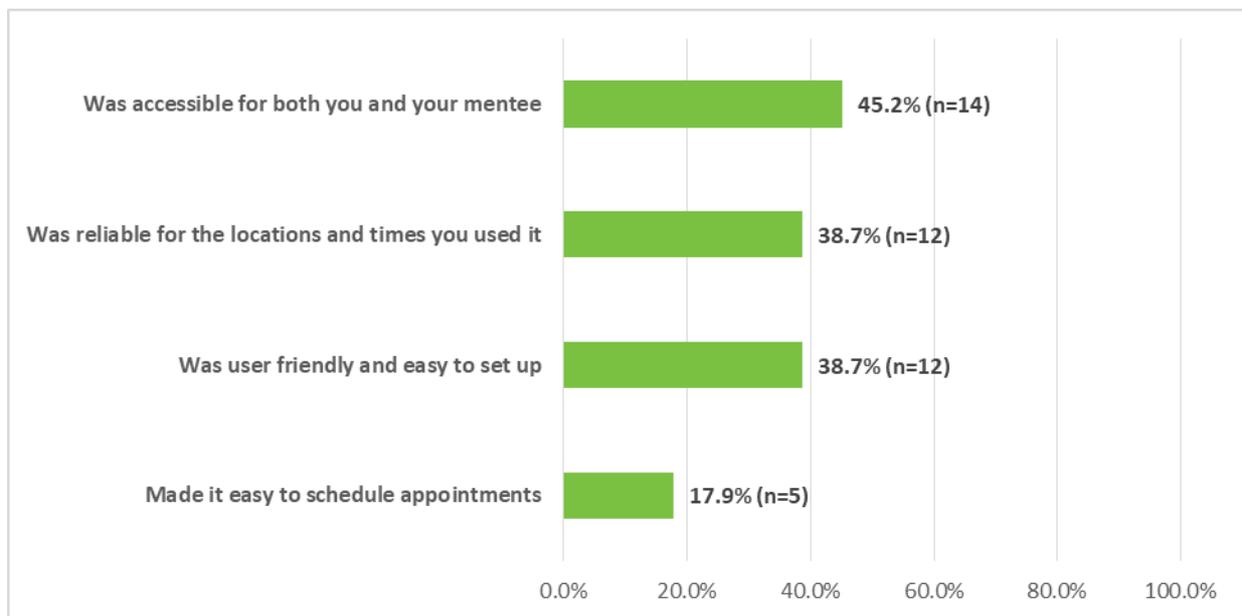

Figure 11: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on digital platform accessibility
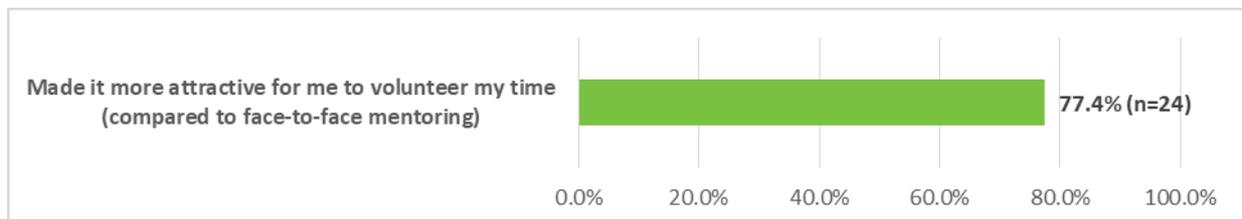

Figure 12: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statement on digital vs face to face mentoring

Appropriate mode for mentoring

A main theme emerging from the interview data was mentees and mentors acknowledged that the concept of online mentoring was appropriate and relevant to their needs and communication preferences. Specifically, mentees felt the communication channels from a digital platform allowed for a larger variety of information to be shared, which enriched their mentoring experience.

> *I personally did like the fact that it was online just because you could organise yourself a bit better in terms of communicating.* (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Inner Regional)

> *I thought it was really good. Because even when you go into the chat room even though we weren't always necessarily able to see each other, they would sometimes send me a link to certain jobs that they found while we're talking. So I thought it was quite, it had a lot of variety in terms of communicating.* (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Inner Regional)

Mentors were also eager to highlight the benefits of online mentoring as a service delivery model. These benefits were largely perceived as relating to: the increased access for young people in diverse geographical locations; young people's familiarity with online communication; the increased potential for sharing different information; and the increased flexibility in delivering and receiving mentoring.

> *I actually think you're looking at a generation who is used to digital platforms and I think it's the most comfortable that they'll be familiar with in terms of communication. The last thing that you'd want is to sit across from someone and that will be intimidating.* (Mentor)

> *It just gives you so much flexibility and reach. So - and be easier on time as well. So I think they were definitely the best aspects for being online.* (Mentor)

> *So, the online was good. I think that is kind of moving with the times really. Networking and being mentored is hard for both parties so actually the kind of digital - yeah, not actually having to meet them, I reckon it makes it a bit more accessible but at the same time you can still see them and you know, it's not all on the phone or all on email.* (Mentor)

Software limitations

Despite the perceived benefits of an online mode of mentoring, a large proportion of mentees highlighted the software itself as a major barrier to conducting sessions with their mentor. Several mentees spoke about experiencing various technical issues and troubles with setting up and accessing software features in a timely manner. This was perceived as taking time away from covering important content with the mentor. Mentees also discussed various ways in which they had overcome challenges with the digital platform.

> *The Adobe thing that we used to talk we stop using, it was really annoying to use so it just took so long to get into it and took like an extra 10 minutes to get going…so we just ended up calling on mobile.* (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

> *I think we tried to get onto the Adobe whatever it was, and trying to use that was a bit cumbersome. So we just decided to do it via phone call and whenever we were free we would just do that and organise a meeting.* (Mentee, Male, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

> *The Adobe system which I found incredibly clunky and difficult to communicate with. So we just chat via WhatsApp. It was really difficult to send files, because you don't get notifications of when files are sent...* (Mentee, Male, Age 24 years or older, Major Cities)

> *The method of communication is very non-user intuitive. So there's difficulties in getting the video and audio to sync sometimes with Adobe Connect. And that's a minor issue that happened sometimes. But the biggest one is the difficulty in actually communicating with them about times and sending files. Because unlike an inbox or unlike talking via SMS…you have to physically log into the system to see if there's talks about anything.* (Mentee, Male, Age 24 years or older, Major Cities)

Mentors appeared to share these sentiments with similar experiences with the digital platform. In particular, challenges were felt with the performance and functionality of the software itself. Several mentors provided

examples of technical issues experienced during sessions. This included navigating the virtual meeting room space, navigating logging in, instability with conference lines, and opening files using the software.

It was extremely difficult to re-establish contact because I guess everything was done via the - through the platform and via [name]. I'd join, if they weren't there, I'd wait for an hour or so just in case I had the time mixed up or whatever it might be and then I'd let [name] know that the session didn't go ahead. We'd email back and forth to try and work out another suitable time. That part of it was pretty difficult. (Mentor)

I found that enormously frustrating, it would've been so much easier just to be able to text her and say, hey can we just push this back half an hour, or could we do it at the same time tomorrow or whatever, rather than throwing a message out there, hoping she'd get in and look at it. I could always go via [name], and get him to relay a message to her, but that again just seemed pretty cumbersome. (Mentor)

I remember - because sometimes I'd be at work or I'd be working from home when we'd try to screen share for example, the whole system would just freeze and freeze and freeze and freeze. (Mentor)

Several mentors also mentioned digital platform challenges that affected key stages of their mentoring journey, such as during the initial relationship building between mentor and mentee.

The one we probably struggled a little bit with initially and what worried me the most was the platform… It's always hard to start a mentoring relationship and I think dealing with technical issues at the same time makes that a little bit more difficult. (Mentor)

d) Appropriateness of training and resources

A key component of this evaluation was to investigate the appropriateness of the training provided and resources developed to support mentors during their sessions with young people. Survey and interview data from mentors enabled the exploration of key evaluation questions around the relevance of the Mental Health First Aid training, mentoring workshops and resources for engaging with young people.

Mentors were provided with two key training activities in preparation for engaging with a young person as an industry mentor. As mentioned in Section 4.1, mentors were provided with a one-day Mental Health First Aid training session, and a mentoring workshop day hosted by headspace staff. Survey results showed overwhelmingly positive feedback (see Figure 13), with 100 per cent of mentors either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the training provided during the service was adequate for the mentoring role. However, while still positive, a noticeably lower proportion of mentors (77%) felt that the resources provided to assist mentors during sessions were useful.
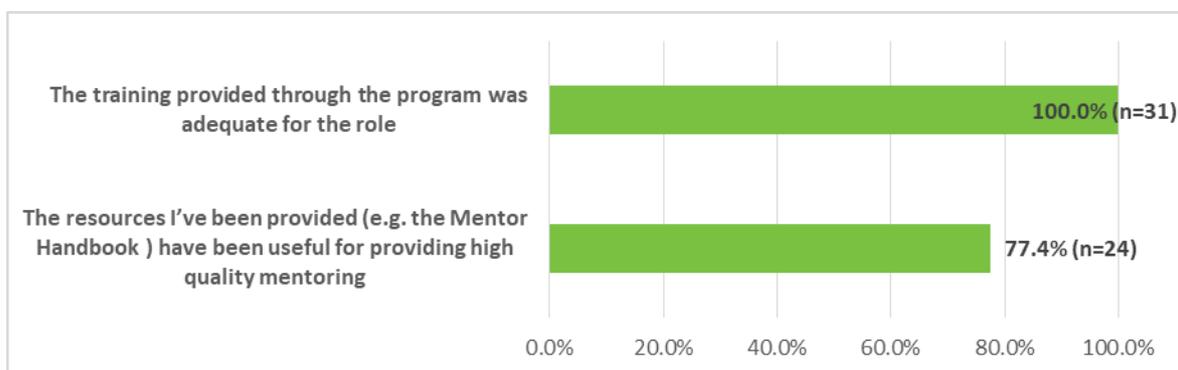
Figure 13: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on training and resources

Interview data from mentors provided further insight into the level of acceptability of the training and resources. Mentors highlighted some initial concerns over the nature of mentoring sessions, including uncertainties about being able to handle sessions that may focus on the young person's mental health issues. However, the Mental Health First Aid training was noted to be a key enabler for further participation in the service and an important aspect of preparation for the mentors.

It's more for myself, and probably more so for the other people, it just gave them confidence to go into levels of conversation. Have the confidence that if something left field came out they would have the tools or the education to be able to respond in an appropriate way. (Mentor)

Once I went through that first aid training, I learned so much about an area I knew little about I guess, because it wasn't something that I've been exposed to too much, or didn't know that I had been probably. Now, knowing what I do, it was something I guess came across with people but just wasn't aware and I've been a very strong advocate now in promoting a similar type of training. I think the more people who know and are aware, the better we'll be as a workplace and also just in general society. (Mentor)

The Mental Health First Aid training appeared to provide a much needed understanding of youth mental health prior to working with young people, and a level of confidence that allowed mentors to feel comfortable in engaging in such discussions if it were to arise during their session.

I think some of it was quite useful in terms of phrasing things and having that conversation, but we have touched on mental health topics, I think. It has helped quite a bit. (Mentor)

I felt pretty well-equipped to jump into the sessions. (Mentor)

People just didn't really know what mental health questions or mental health situations they'd get themselves into. Because they had this they were a percentage of the way confident that they could handle the next step. Whereas without the training people would have been going in blind and not really knowing and not really having any - well, not knowing what to expect I suppose would be the biggest thing. (Mentor)

Mentees provided insight into the appropriateness of the resources used during the sessions (e.g. handbook). Mentees felt these resources acted as a relevant guide to potential discussion topics and provided ideas for overall content. However, the sessions appeared largely directed by mentees and their work and study needs. Resources also appeared more essential for times during the mentoring relationship where other discussion topics were covered and mentees needed further information or activities.

We didn't really use the resources, we did flick through briefly, but in the end we did our own thing. I did give a read-through but I think I didn't really get to use it. I think I should have used it a bit more at the end. In the beginning it was all right because we had things to cover, but at the end when I didn't have anything, it would have been a good time to use that. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

e) Overall appropriateness of the mentoring service

This section presents findings from the MDS that highlights the general experience and overall satisfaction with DIMS. In addition, qualitative data from mentee and mentor interviews demonstrates the appropriateness of the mentoring service overall. The data sheds light on key evaluation questions around how important the concept of mentoring is perceived to be by participants.

In response to a range of optional questions within the Closure form, 53 mentees reported the extent that they agreed or disagreed to several satisfaction statements about their mentor and the service overall. Figure 14 shows the percentage who agreed or strongly agreed, with the overwhelming majority of mentees reporting that they were satisfied with their mentor, would recommend the service to others, and they found the service useful.
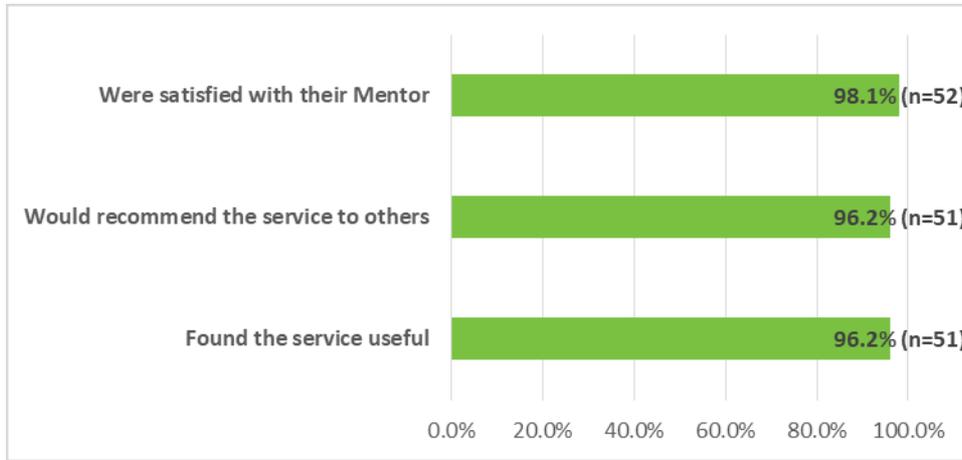
Figure 14: Proportion of mentees who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on overall satisfaction with DIMS

Similar levels of satisfaction were indicated by mentees who provided information as part of the Experience survey undertaken at service completion. Approximately 90 per cent of mentees enjoyed their sessions and were positive about the relationship they had established with their mentor. Positively, 93 per cent reported that the help they received from their mentor was valuable for their future work (see Figure 15).
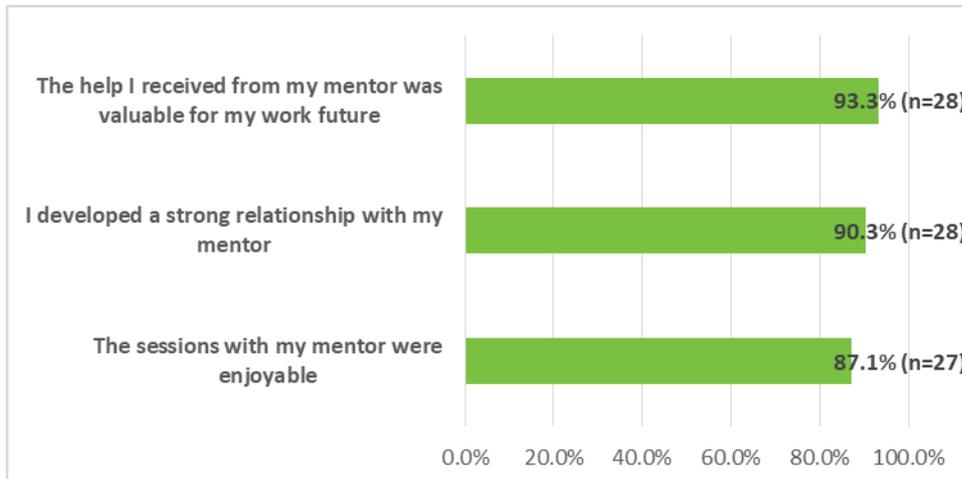
Figure 15: Proportion of mentees who agreed/strongly agreed to statements regarding their relationship with their mentor

Similar sentiments were expressed by mentors according to their survey results (see Figure 16), where over 90 per cent of industry professionals either agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were enjoyable and they had developed a strong relationship with their mentee.
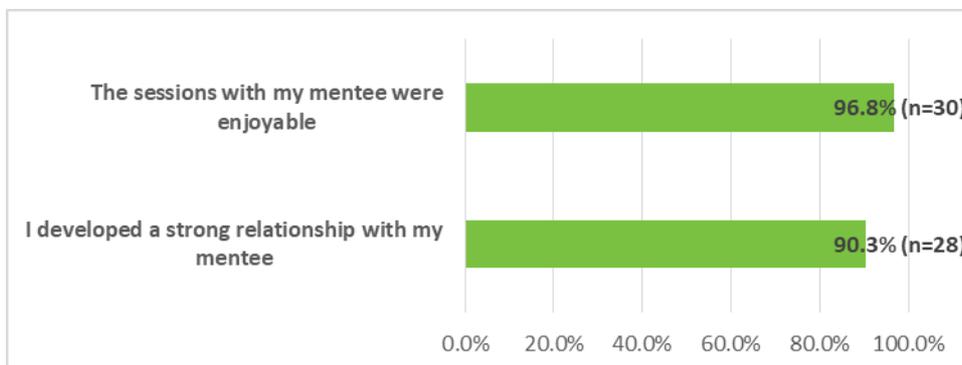
**Figure 16: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on overall satisfaction with mentee relationship**

Similarly, interviews with mentees revealed a high level of satisfaction with DIMS. In general, mentees indicated that the service provided them with an appropriate platform to discuss work and study issues with industry professionals. Mentees found it valuable to have someone to guide them through the process of job seeking and they appreciated the positive rapport they were able to build with their mentor.

> *I felt like it was exactly what I needed, to have someone in the professional industry dedicated to talking to me about my career. (Mentee, Male, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)*

> *I think it probably just helped just having just another person to have a whinge to about those kinds of things…that was probably the biggest thing that it was, that there was a third party that I could talk to them honestly about those kinds of things. (Mentee, Female, Age 22 to 23 years, Major Cities)*

> *It was a turbulent time for me in employment so it was really good to have that support while I was going through on the interview journey and résumé skills. And it was quite valuable…it was good to have extra support throughout my journey. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)*

> *And it was also important for me to talk to someone about how I felt about my career. Because I, I think about it a lot and usually I put myself down as well, so talking to someone who's gone through the experience and knows what it's like and tell you what's important and what's not important it was really good for me to stay on track. (Mentee, Male, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)*

A key theme emerging from the mentor interviews was the perceived importance of the service for young people. Many spoke of the benefits such mentoring relationships have had or would have had on their own careers during similar life stages as their mentee. Some mentors spoke of how they felt that by participating in DIMS they could reciprocate help that they had received in the past.

> *I looked at that and thought well if something like that was available when I was maybe starting out it would have been helpful. I've got young kids myself and I think hopefully when they're in need, there's someone else there. (Mentor)*

> *…willing to step in, not knowing how it's going to form, knowing that I will be kind of stretched and challenged in really healthy ways and that hopefully can lead to giving some support for someone that's at a point that they need that type of support and that's something that's - I would have loved as well at that age. (Mentor)*

Several mentors also mentioned their sense of value in receiving ongoing mentoring themselves, regardless of their own career stage or work experience. The value of ongoing personal and professional development in and out of the workplace was apparent.

> *One of the reasons why I also took part in it is because I've used mentors [in the past] before when I was at the beginning of my career. But also still now, and I think it's something that I'll continue to use. I don't think anyone gets to the stage where they say they know it all and can do anything. I don't think that's really - there's always new skills, there's always new things to learn. So I think it's quite an important thing. (Mentor)*

Mentors also commented on the importance of DIMS in providing them with an opportunity to work within the youth mental health space.

> *Yeah, so I did actually want to kind of give back and so that's what I was thinking about. The difference with this one was the mental health aspect obviously. Because I hadn't worked with that kind of area before, which is a bit of a passion of mine as well was why it was attractive to me. (Mentor)*

Mentors spoke highly of the headspace staff, highlighting the availability and responsiveness of staff for any queries. This appeared to alleviate any feelings of uncertainty experienced by mentors when commencing their mentoring relationships. Mentors also commented on the overall service as being challenging yet beneficial and found their involvement complemented their daily work environment.

> *I never felt like I was out there alone. I always felt like someone had my back if I needed it. (Mentor)*

You'll just be challenged in really awesome ways or rather than being challenged, you'll have the excitement of being - of stepping outside of your day-to-day outside of your comfort zone and I think that that's a big thing that will appeal to the right people, people that want to put the time and focus in. (Mentor)

4.3 Effectiveness

To understand the overall effectiveness of DIMS, analyses were performed to investigate employment outcomes for mentees. In addition, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews allowed a more in-depth look at the perceived impacts and outcomes of mentoring from the perspectives of both mentees and mentors.

a) Employment outcomes

Data recorded in the MDS Closure form was analysed to explore young people's employment outcomes. Young people were included if they were matched to a mentor, had at least one mentoring session, and recorded a completed Closure form.

While there were 103 mentees who recorded a Closure form and had met the above criteria, only 78 mentees had provided data regarding their employment outcomes. The following section refers to this cohort of mentees only.

Of the mentees who had answered this question, 60 per cent reported they had gained a job during their time with the service, half of which were full-time (see Table 7). Note however, that this represents the proportion of young people who indicated they gained a job while in the service, it does not take into account their work status prior to commencing the program. Thus they might have already been working and gained a new or better job or a more permanent job. For occupation type, the largest proportion of jobs were within retail/sales, followed by administrative and support services, and then hospitality sectors.

Table 7: Proportion of mentees achieving work outcomes

Work outcome	Frequency N (%)
Yes – Full-time	23 (29.5%)
Yes – Part-time	8 (10.3%)
Yes – Casual	16 (20.5%)
No	31 (39.7%)

It is also important to note these results are not comprehensive as many young people were still active clients and receiving mentoring services at the time of this evaluation's data extraction. Hence, work outcome data may be an over or under-estimation in the context of total number of serviced mentees. While these outcomes appear positive, it is important to acknowledge that despite this particular item recording whether the young person gained a job during their time with the service, it is not possible to ascertain the causal impact of the service on the positive work outcome.

Further analyses were undertaken focussing on the 49 young people who were not engaged with the workforce and their employment outcomes. As shown in Table 8, 59 per cent of these young people gained a job during their time with the Service.

Table 8: Proportion of mentees achieving work outcomes who were not engaged in the workforce when commencing the service

Work outcome	Frequency N (%)
Yes – Full-time	13 (26.5%)
Yes – Part-time	4 (8.2%)
Yes – Casual	12 (24.5%)
No	20 (40.8%)

The evaluation also examined the number of sessions recorded for the full 78 mentees who provided data on work outcomes. As shown in Table 9, mentees who reported gaining a job during their time with the service had an average of six sessions, slightly higher than those who did not gain employment.

Table 9: Work outcomes and number of mentoring sessions

Work outcome	Number of mentees N (%)	Average number of sessions
Yes (either permanent, full-time, part-time, or casual)	47 (60.3%)	6.0
No	31 (39.7%)	4.9

In addition, data were captured on the month and year the young person commenced employment and by calculating the difference in time between starting their job and the date of their first mentoring session that went ahead, this evaluation was able to approximate that it took, on average three months from the first mentoring session to commencing employment (see Table 10).

b) Perceived work and study impacts (Mentees)

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of DIMS in relation to employment outcomes gained by young people, this evaluation also examined how mentees perceived changes to their knowledge and attitudes towards employment seeking and their overall career. The following two sections focus on answering the key evaluation questions about the extent to which mentees increased their confidence and optimism as a result of the service; addressed barriers to employment, and were supported to pursue occupational goals and interests. Data from mentors was also used to supplement these findings from young people.

In response to a range of optional questions within the Closure form, 53 mentees reported the extent that they agreed or disagreed to several statements regarding employment confidence and hope for the future. Figure 17 shows the percentage who agreed or strongly agreed. Approximately 90% of participants felt they were more confident in applying for and starting employment and more optimistic about their work future.
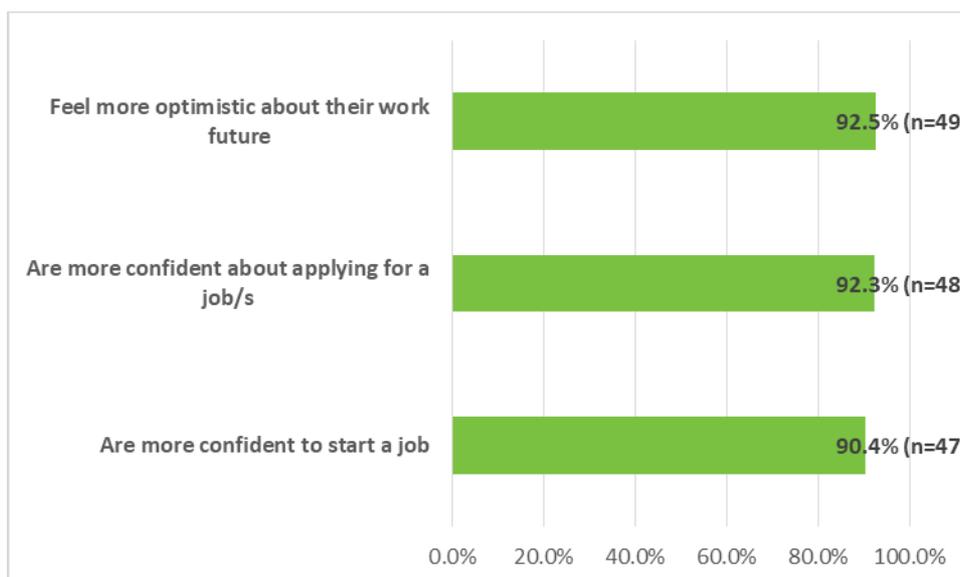
Figure 17: Proportion of mentees who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on employment activities

Supplementing the data on perceived impacts collected through the MDS closure survey, a proportion of mentees who had completed their mentoring journey also opted to complete a service experience survey collected via Survey Monkey after completion of their service. Thirty one mentees responded and the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements are shown in Figure 18. Similar to results

displayed in Figure 17, most participants felt that their mentoring experience had helped them to increase work related confidence, develop new skills, and be more optimistic about their work future.
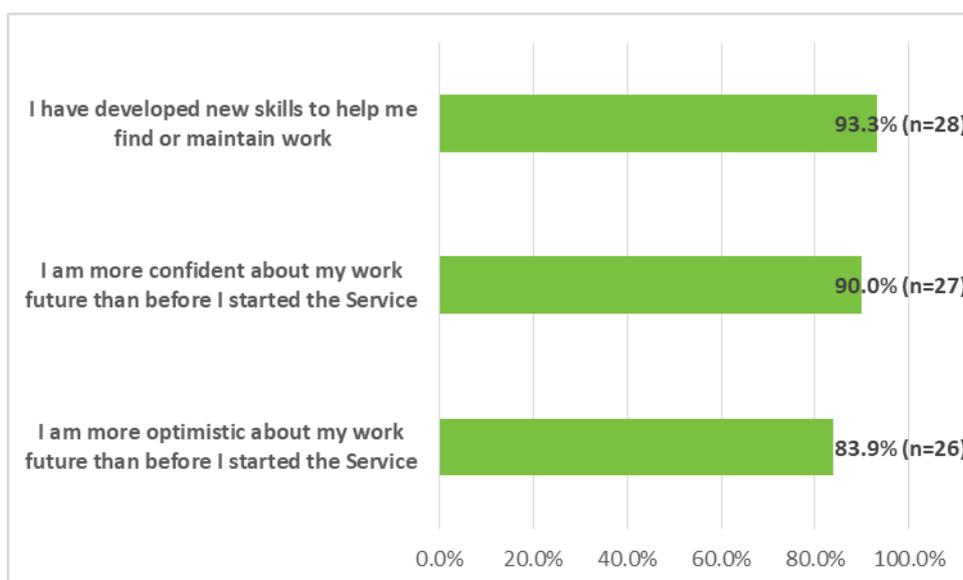
**Figure 18: Proportion of mentees who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on skills, confidence and optimism**

Additionally, a number of survey participants provided open-text comments on some of the changes or impacts they experienced, with a particular emphasis on their work future. Some comments included:

I definitely feel more confident in my ability to apply for jobs and also my techniques for job searching are stronger. I also realised further study was something that would really benefit me in my future and I have commenced so for the following year (Mentee)

My self-confidence has improved and I feel a lot more comfortable with my accomplishments rather than feeling like I have not achieved anything. (Mentee)

I have become so much more confident about applying for work. I have gained knowledge on how to effectively look through job applications as well as some great pointers about interviewing and things to build in a résumé too! (Mentee)

During the interviews with mentees, the perceived impacts of participation in DIMS became a major talking point, with many young people highlighting how their mentoring experience had helped them to recognise their strengths and abilities and increase their confidence in undertaking job-seeking activities. Mentees commented that past beliefs and attitudes about themselves had acted as a barrier to progress, which the service helped them to overcome.

I think the one thing that I noticed was with a change in my confidence in terms of applying for jobs and sourcing which ones I think are more for me. And I think after going through my strength maybe limit those things with them it's kind of helped me be a bit more selective but also broad in a way in terms of what I can search for if I ever wanted to change or look for more work…I think they definitely helped me progress and kind of build a bit more confidence in myself when it comes to job applications and interviews. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Inner Regional)

I change the way that I look at my own boundaries definitely because I realised a lot of them were just put on myself. I learnt a lot about overcoming that. (Mentee, Female, Age 18 to 19 years, Outer Regional)

[Mentor] was just sort of reinforcing the confidence that I was lacking and saying like if you love it then do it because I was being a bit self-sabotage like I'm not sure if I should do it. And I ended up enrolling. And I got accepted. (Mentee, Female, Age 18 to 19 years, Outer Regional)

Some mentees also commented on a change in how they viewed employment and the process of job-seeking.

The main message was that I'm still trying to convince myself that the career isn't like a rat race where you need to be sure now… it's all you know, you're free to make mistakes, you're free to change, I shouldn't be

comparing myself to other people, where they are in their career, this is where I am in my career. And that was really important. (Mentee, Male, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

c) Perceived work and study impacts (Mentors)

In addition to the results from young people highlighting their perceived impact of the service, mentors were asked about their perceptions on the impacts of the mentoring sessions on mentees. Figure 19 indicates that most mentors reported positive outcomes for young people, particularly for key areas such as understanding of workplace requirements/etiquette, understanding of career pathways, and perceived increases in their mentee's work related self-confidence and optimism. While still supported by most mentors, the level of agreement was lower regarding the perceived impacts on mentees' insider knowledge and expansion of professional networks.
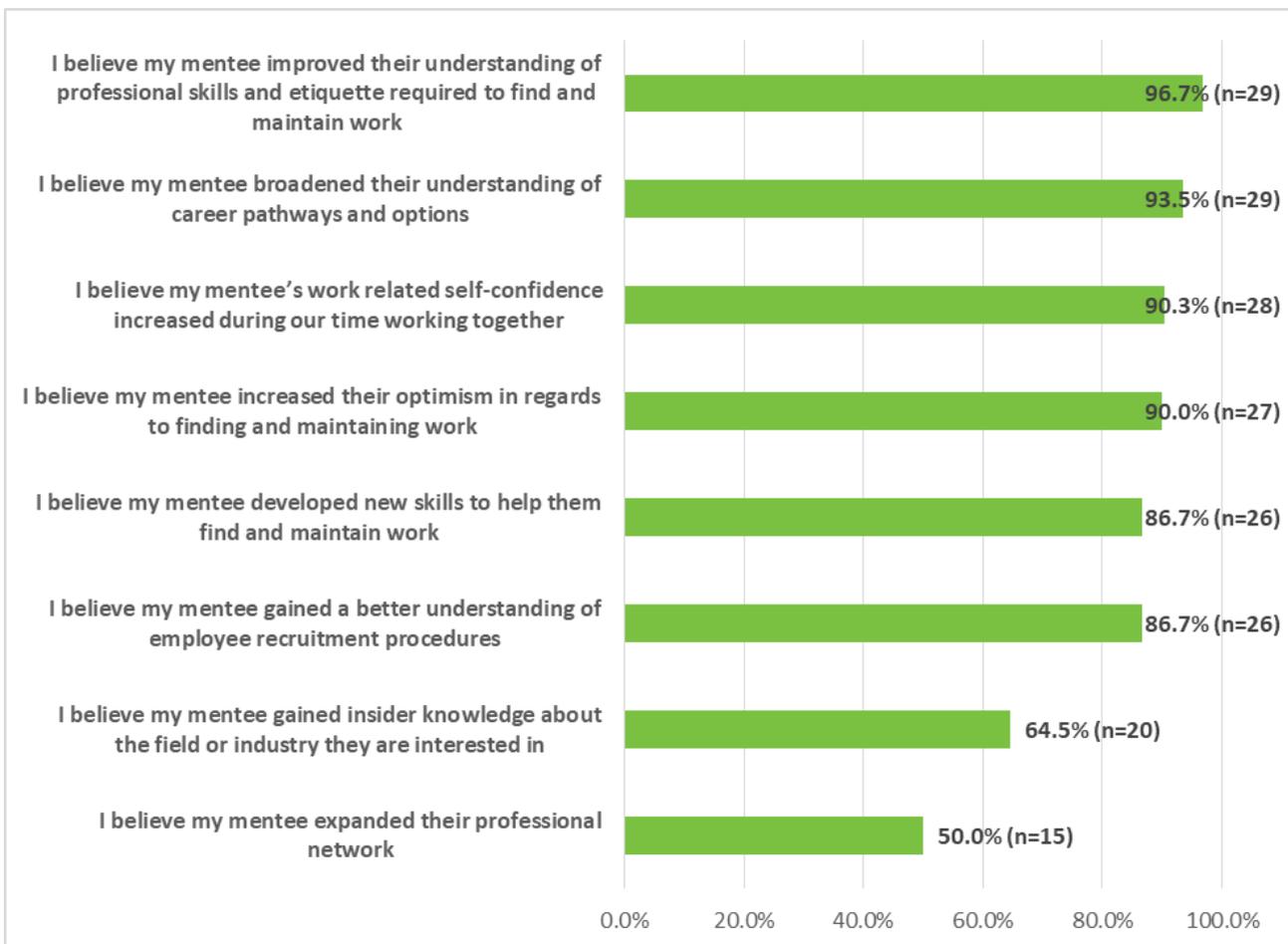

Figure 19: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on perceived impact on mentees

During individual interviews mentors highlighted that they felt a key outcome of the program was observing an increase in the self-confidence of the young people they worked with.

Just seeing them grow in confidence over time and that reassurance that they're actually things that they're feeling are quite natural. That was what I said at the start about I wish - I could see a lot of those things. When I look back I was thinking a lot of the similar things and you have to have everything worked out. But in reality, that's not necessarily the case. So, just being able to feel it, just see some light bulb moments when they're actually realising you're sharing your experience where you've done something similar and it's a kind of natural feeling that they're going through and to try to alleviate some of that I think was good to know. Made a big difference. (Mentor)

I think - from what [name] and I talked about, her confidence grew. So that was our main issue, was [name] had sort of got herself locked into a cycle where she just didn't think - she didn't know what steps to

take. I think a lot of it was to do with confidence and just building her confidence up and also building up her resilience. (Mentor)

I think, gained a bit of confidence in the process, better ways of maybe reframing stress and seeing those things as excitement and this is just how your body is responding. (Mentor)

Figure 20 provides insight into mentors' perceptions around participating in the mentoring program. All mentors reported that they had gained new skills and knowledge, and most agreed or strongly agreed that they developed a better understanding of mental health and the challenges young people faced when finding work. However, statements around professional impact on mentors received somewhat less support, although 64 per cent reported a benefit for them professionally and 42 per cent believed their involvement increased their employability (see Figure 21).
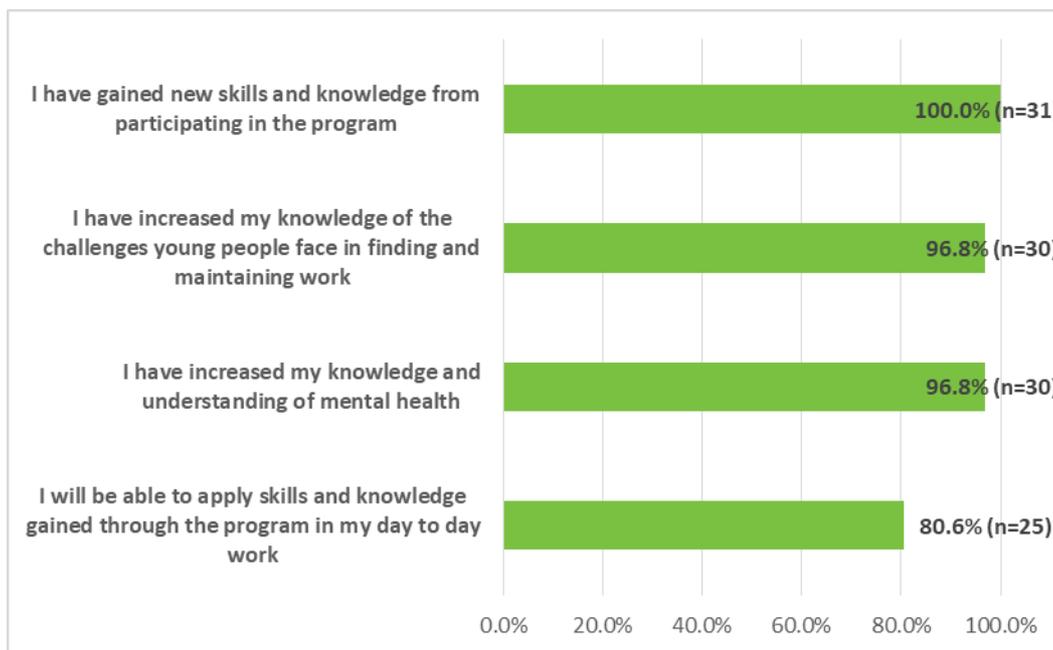
Figure 20: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements on self-impact of service
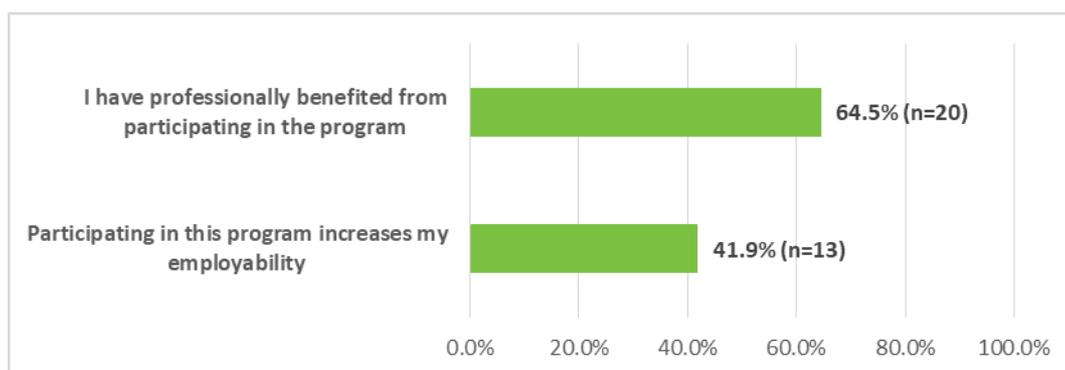
Figure 21: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements around professional impact

Mentors highlighted a number of personal outcomes of participation in DIMS. These included increased understanding and empathy for young people entering the workplace and the difficulties they face, and more practical outcomes enhancing their own experiences at work and creating new opportunities.

It's also a bit of a check for me and to just understand more about the challenges of other people in the workplace, different, younger people starting their careers. (Mentor)

So from a personal development or what reflected back or could be kind of echoed back in the workplace, so some of the things that we've spoken about with the EQ or communications or just coaching and those

different pieces, understanding others, empathising, all of those things that just focuses on them, they were hugely beneficial. (Mentor)

Me getting up and talking to a different group at work about the program which I wouldn't have had that opportunity or there's nothing like that that I've been involved in getting up and talking to a lot of different people. So yeah, that's definitely helped me as well. (Mentor)

In addition, mentors also highlighted the impact of their participation on their professional satisfaction and workplace culture (Figure 22), with most mentors reporting increased professional satisfaction (96.8%), and many describing a positive impact on their organisation's workplace culture (71.0%).
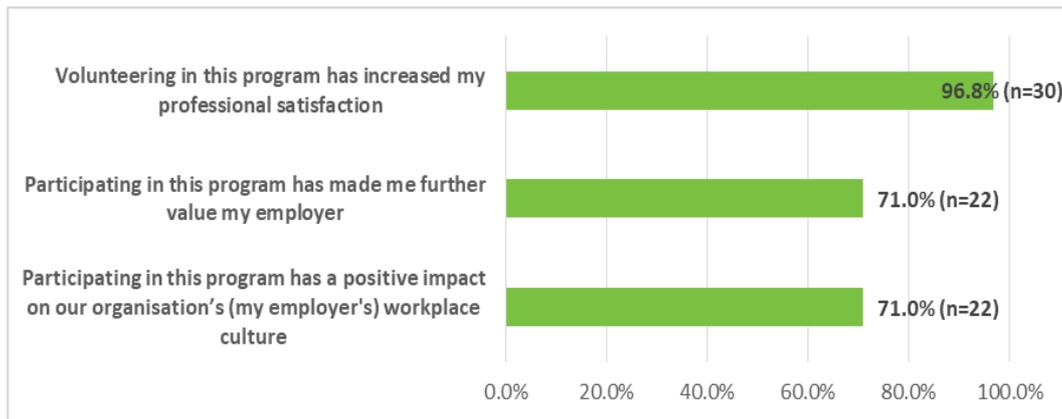
Figure 22: Proportion of mentors who agreed/strongly agreed to statements around workplace values

Open-ended survey questions also highlighted mentors' satisfaction and impact of their involvement in the program.

I would really recommend this to other employers and more and more of our people, nationally, know about and are so eager to be involved. It truly is a win-win for people in business. (Mentor)

Yes, I think it is very valuable as it gave me a lot of professional wellbeing and job satisfaction outside of my normal responsibilities. (Mentor)

This is a truly valuable program, as it reaffirms the commitment to mental health and people development that (organisation name) champions. (Mentor)

…it's an opportunity to give back to the community! It's also good social corporate responsibility to give employees an opportunity to develop others outside the immediate workplace. (Mentor)

4.4   Sustainability

The final section of this evaluation highlights key learnings and subsequent areas for improvement that are vital to the sustainability of the service. Data from interviews with mentees, mentors and headspace staff provided insight into how DIMS can continue to operate within headspace's vocational and educational program space. This section explores the sustainability of the service through the evaluation questions on the key learnings and areas for service improvement.

Collaboration with an Industry Advisory Committee

As briefly mentioned in Section 4.1, a representative from each industry partner organisation formed an Industry Advisory Committee. This group worked closely with the headspace DIMS team to provide advice to headspace on service components such as service design and recruitment strategies. Qualitative feedback from program staff highlighted that having an advisory committee provided an effective mechanism for knowledge-translation and ongoing service feedback. This was perceived as being vital for maintaining stakeholder relationships and for the long-term sustainability of industry partnerships.

> *I think the critical thing about how that all came together was we made a decision that we wanted them to form part of an advisory committee. I think that was one of the key success of why it worked so well, was that each of the organisations had a person who sat around an advisory committee and we agreed on processes together. And that helped us develop recruitment practices, messaging out through their networks to their staff, providing information, developing the evaluation strategy, and providing appropriate feedback, back to corporate heads on how their staff perceived the value of the service. (headspace staff)*

Diversifying industry sector partnerships

For the impacts of the service to be sustainable, headspace staff commented on the need to explore a broader range of industry partner organisations. As discussed in detail in Section 4.2, young people had preferences in working with mentors from specific industry areas, many of which were not available within the pilot programme. Diversifying the range of partner organisations to represent a wider range of industry sectors will ensure greater alignment with young people's work and study needs.

> *Upon reflection, I think moving forward we'd look to create relationships with a broader range of industries. The partners did impact on the mentors we could offer. We do know that young people are often looking for mentors from different industries and one industry that was sorely missed in the program was the health or social and community sector organisations. (headspace staff)*

Broadening referral pathways

Results showed that two main pathways were utilised by young people to find the service. headspace staff highlighted the need to strengthen the referral pathways with employment service providers, which would in turn increase collaboration within the broader vocational services sector. Enhancing this referral pathway may improve the service by being able to recruit additional young people with identified work and study challenges.

> *…an element of strengthening our referral pathways would also be continuing our work with organisations such as employment service providers. We know we've got some great relationships with some of those organisations but we still don't have that breakthrough or traction in terms of moving a MoU or an agreement with them through to really strong and active referral lines. So some work in that space would really be of benefit. (headspace staff)*

The need for a simple yet reliable digital platform

The online platform is a key design characteristic of DIMS that was mentioned by both young people and volunteer industry professionals as critical in providing an accessible, appropriate and flexible mentoring experience. However, findings revealed that software reliability and usability issues impacted on the service accessibility and experience.

Ultimately, you just want to chat and see - if it's a digital platform, you want to make it as simple as possible, and we had a number of issues with not being able to get on the conference line or not being able to do this… (Mentor)

Clarity around target audience

A key learning identified through mentee and mentor interviews was the need to clarify the target audience for the service. Despite several demographic characteristics being outlined as criteria for entry into DIMS, mentees still felt uncertain about individual work and study circumstances that warranted assistance through DIMS.

I was kind of a little bit confused throughout who is the target audience for the service was. It was felt as a university student and looking for employment, I wasn't sure if I was the target audience but I just kind of rolled with it. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

… being a part of the program now that I'm a little bit more educated and working kind of in the mental health and employment sector myself, I wasn't sure of if I was necessarily the target audience. So I kind of had that I don't know what the word is but I kind of felt bad that I was taking a position of someone may have been more in need of the service. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

Similar remarks were made by mentors regarding the target audience for volunteer industry professionals. Mentors identified clarity was needed to alleviate concerns regarding what a mentor can look like, what is the right fit, and what experience is necessary to be a good mentor.

Just a really clear idea of what is the program, what does it involve? Who is it that's - would be an ideal mentor? Even to know that it's so broad that you can be involved in this and you don't have to have that kind of certain experience or whatever, because the pairing is going to be with a person that's going to utilise your experience and I think as well a major thing for everyone in our business (Mentor)

…how it's - the mentoring program is marketing or just for people to have that understanding beforehand and I'm sure it'll draw in a broader audience. (Mentor)

I think - I'm not too sure how this program is positioned to participants, I'll be honest. (Mentor)

Review of current workforce and resources

headspace staff also mentioned that a critical component for sustaining this service was adequate staffing and resources. Currently, staff appeared stretched by having to undertake a broad range of activities supporting both mentees and mentors.

What became very apparent for us was in program setup and delivery, we definitely needed more staffing. So we have brought a casual staff member on board to assist the project officer with the administration and day-to-day running of the program. So we had probably under anticipated the demands in terms of screening, training, recruiting and supporting mentee and mentor relationships to make sure they're successful, so that's everything from a quick follow-up phone call to debrief after a session, through to sending a resource. So there's a lot of constant contact with our program participants that we probably hadn't envisaged accurately. So for the service continuation I can see real benefit in having additional administrative support for the program. (headspace staff)

A balance between robust data collection and participant obligations

Data from mentee interviews revealed that young people experienced issues with the amount of information that was collected throughout various time-points in the service. In addition to the logistical issues of contacting young people via telephone to complete the MDS items, young people appeared burdened by the amount and frequency of data collection.

I had like five different surveys about the service the surveys were a bit much. There was like five, and it was all asking the same thing. (Mentee, Female, Age 22 to 23 years, Major Cities)

… it was kind of annoying for me personally because you guys had to keep calling me to go through stuff and it was kind of like I could have said this in an email. I mean I don't understand why you have to keep calling. (Mentee, Female, Age 20 to 21 years, Major Cities)

Continued monitoring and evaluation

Mentors highlighted the importance of feeding back progress monitoring and evaluation data to partner organisations. It was often perceived that there were uncertainties around whether the mentoring sessions were having an effect on young people and to what degree. Sustainability of this service would require ongoing communication between headspace and partner organisations with a focus on satisfaction and outcomes (either of perceived changes or changes to work/study circumstances).

I'll say it to yourself as part of what you're doing now, is making the data available for mentors and their businesses to have the confidence that they know what's going on. They know that it is a successful program. Sometimes the feedback I got from our guys was, they're doing it but they don't really know if they're making a difference. (Mentor)

Better integration with the headspace centre network

A key theme from interviews with staff that related to service sustainability was about the need to further engage with the headspace centre network to improve this particular referral pathway. Staff perceived a need to fill a noticeable gap in providing young people with access to vocational and educational support across headspace sites.

I think with all service delivery from national office there's real opportunity to improve our centre relationships and how we go about advertising and supporting centres with the work we are doing. So a really key part of that for us is getting both of our vocational services, so the work and study service and the mentoring service, acknowledged in the model integrity framework. So centres know that this is a viable pathway to make referrals through to. And it would be recognised as a vocational service offering for their centre. (headspace staff)

Thinking about the sustainability of the service, so where it sits in head office's offerings to centres and the remit of vocational services in offering something a little bit different. And I think we really need to start thinking about our vocational services in terms of jobs for the future, setting up our young people for where we see the labour market moving. So a program like this is really vital. So I think sustaining that momentum behind supporting innovative and different programs that maybe challenges the status quo, in this case that was through engaging volunteers and industry partners. (headspace staff)

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This evaluation has found that DIMS was implemented as planned and provided an appropriate service to facilitate the recruitment of young people and mentors to see the service exceed the initial target of 180 commencements. The establishment of strong industry partnerships allowed for adequate recruitment of volunteer industry professionals to deliver mentoring activities, although with a limited variety of industry sectors. Most young people found the service through two main sources: referrals from the headspace DWSS or via social media campaigns.

The demographic characteristics of service users showed that a higher proportion were female, the majority were aged 20 years and older, and most resided in metropolitan areas. Consequently, young people from some demographic groups that were identified as priority groups for the service appeared to be under-represented, specifically, those who live outside major cities and those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The work and study situation of young people registering with the service generally aligned with expectations, with more than half reporting they were not employed at registration and a similar amount not studying. Significantly, 30 per cent were not in any form of education, employment or training (NEET). Young males were over-represented across each of these categories. Young people reported that a range of vocational and non-vocational barriers had impacted on their ability to achieve their work and study goals. The primary vocational barriers were limited or no work history, or a lack of relevant qualifications, and key non-vocational barriers generally related to mental health issues, lack of transport, and living in a rural or remote location.

Regarding program expectations, most young people were hoping to develop clarity and direction around their career pathways, and to gain insider knowledge on specific work industries. The work industries of most interest to these young people were the retail, administrative, marketing, and customer service sectors. While many of the mentors available to young people worked within these sectors, a number of young people also appeared interested in sectors that mentors did not specifically represent, such as the healthcare, scientific and legal sectors, highlighting additional industry sectors for future partnership development.

Findings indicated that the mentoring support provided to young people was appropriate and relevant to young people's expectations, and mentors felt well supported and equipped by program staff and resources. Young people received an average of 4.8 mentoring sessions and approximately half of all mentoring sessions lasted more than three months. Most sessions focused on career pathways, in alignment with priorities indicated by young people at registration. Mentees and mentors highlighted that a key strength of the service was the practical nature of the mentoring sessions. This included the support provided with drafting résumés and cover letters, and interview preparation. In addition, mentees were supported to better understand their existing strengths and skill-sets that could assist them in job applications and interviews

Mentors highlighted that the Mental Health First Aid training and mentoring workshop were effective in supporting them to provide appropriate work and study mentoring to young people. The content of the training allowed mentors to increase their knowledge about youth mental health and provided preparation and confidence for engaging in discussions with young people around topics related to their mental health. However, while the resources developed to guide mentoring sessions were appropriate as a general guide, session content was largely directed by young people's pre-determined objectives and topics of interest.

One issue that came up repeatedly was around the appropriateness of the digital platform that was selected. Despite clear recognition that an online mode of mentoring was beneficial for increased flexibility, convenience, and providing variety in communication modes, the software used was identified as a barrier to providing and receiving work and study mentoring online. Both mentors and mentees experienced technical issues and the reliability and connectivity of the software appeared to be a major issue, with consequent

impacts for program staff who were required to act as an intermediary between mentees and mentors regarding any change of schedule or connection issues. It is important to note that an alternative software—Zoom Video Conferencing software—was rolled out during the pilot period to address these technological issues. Further review is required of this new software to ensure it is meeting service user requirements and not acting as a barrier to future program success.

Despite initial software limitations, both mentees and mentors expressed overwhelming satisfaction with DIMS in terms of interactions with the service, their mentor or mentee, and the usefulness of the sessions. Furthermore, interviews highlighted the service's appropriateness and relevance in providing young people with a platform to discuss their work and study issues, and receive support and guidance from industry professionals. Additionally, the evaluation explored the effectiveness on changes to young people's level of awareness, confidence and general skills for employment seeking and maintenance. Results highlighted that most young people agreed that their mentoring experience had helped them to be more confident in applying for and starting employment, develop new skills, and be more optimistic about their work future. Mentors also reported positive impacts on their mentee's knowledge, understanding, confidence, and optimism around career pathways and finding and maintaining work.

This evaluation found that the service was effective in helping young people achieve employment outcomes, with three out of every five (60%) gaining employment during their mentoring relationship. A similar proportion of young people who identified being unemployed at the time of registration, also indicated they gained employment during their time in the service. While causality cannot be attributed to the DIMS pilot, the perceived impacts of DIMS on mentee's job seeking behaviours and on areas of confidence and motivation demonstrated that the service was a positive influence.

There were also unexpected benefits from the program for mentors, who reported that their participation had built their own skills and knowledge, as well as increased their understanding of young people's experiences in job-seeking and the impacts that mental ill-health has on their work and study situation.

Overall, the service was implemented as planned, having reached service registration and activity numbers beyond what was initially expected. The evaluation also found that the service was appropriate and effective for young people, achieving positive outcomes in terms of employment, as well as increased confidence, knowledge, skills and optimism for the future. Although the findings of the evaluation were generally positive, a few areas were identified for improvement to facilitate the sustainability of DIMS. These are provided as recommendations below.

6. Recommendations

The evaluation findings provide strong support for the continuation of DIMS. However, several areas for service improvement have been identified and the following recommendations are provided for consideration.

1. **Expansion of industry partner organisations to include a broader range of sectors. Notably in the healthcare and community services sectors.**

This evaluation clearly highlighted young people's desire to work with mentors from specific industry sectors and their preferences to focus on industry insights during the sessions. There was a noticeable absence of mentors from the scientific, healthcare and community services sectors. Broadening the range of sectors amongst headspace partner organisations would enable the service to better meet the mentoring needs of a wider range of young people.

2. **Enhanced service promotion and referral pathways through other headspace programs, the** headspace **centre network, and other external vocational organisations.**

Despite the service reaching their target number of 180 commencements across the two-year program lifespan, there was a clear underrepresentation of young people discovering DIMS through the eheadspace program, the headspace centre network, and employment service providers. A review of these referral avenues may increase the accessibility for different cohorts of young people interested in vocational and educational support.

3. **Consider methods to further attract young people from key demographic groups, such as young people from regional and remote areas, young men, and young people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.**

Young people of some demographic groups appeared to be under-represented, specifically, those who live outside major cities, young men, and those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Consequently, DIMS may benefit from reviewing current referral and recruitment strategies to increase the accessibility of the service.

4. **Review the software used to provide digital mentoring.**

The usability and reliability of the digital platform software was a major barrier to participation for both mentees and mentors. Evaluation findings indicate that providing mentoring using a digital platform requires the software to be simple, reliable and able to provide a variety of communication options. During the development of this evaluation report, headspace staff transitioned the software to Zoom Video Conferencing. While this new software seemed to overcome some of the concerns raised, further review is required to ensure the ongoing suitability of the new software

5. **Retain Mental Health First Aid training activities for prospective mentors.**

The Mental Health First Aid training was identified as a major enabler for volunteer industry professionals to build their confidence in working with young people who are clients of a youth mental health organisation. The training was relevant and ameliorated concerns held by many industry professionals around topics that may be covered during the sessions and how to navigate a range of work, study and mental health related themes.

6. **Consider limiting future data collection and streamlining existing processes (i.e. the volume of data collected, timing of collection and the items collected).**

Much of the data collected throughout the evaluation was required to measure effectiveness of the pilot program and meet contractual obligations. Given the recent changes in funding arrangements and feedback

received by program participants regarding data burden, data collection tools and items could be reduced or streamlined and collected less frequently and at more appropriate time-points.

7. **Incorporate research and evaluation activities into future program plans and deliverables to further guide continuous improvement.**

Findings from this process and outcome evaluation provide important insights into the implementation, appropriateness, and effectiveness of DIMS, and give directions for service improvement and sustainability. It is recommended that ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities are implemented to guide the continuous quality improvement of the service and ensure information is available to meet reporting requirements, promote the service, contribute to the limited evidence base on online mentoring, and to enable the program team to advocate for future funding or service expansion.

7. References

1 https://mhfa.com.au/

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). 6202.0 – Labour Force, Australia, May 2019. Retrieved from:
https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0May%202019?OpenDocument

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). Underemployed Workers. Retrieved from:
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/products/036166B5C6D48AF2CA256BD00027A857?OpenDocument

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018). 6202.0 – Labour Force, Australia, September 2018. Retrieved from:
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0main+features10September%202018

5 Robertson, P. (2019). The impact of career guidance on the mental well-being of young people. Career Development Institute. Retrieved from:
https://www.thecdi.net/write/BP620-Briefing-_Mental_wellbeing-_FINAL.pdf

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018). 6226.0 – Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia, February 2018. Retrieved from:
https://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/6A38AB9379F0EFF9CA257FD8001293DE?OpenDocument

7 Voßemer, J. & Eunicke, N. (2015). The impact of labor market exclusion and job insecurity on health and well-being among youth – a literature review, EXCEPT Working Papers, WP No 2. Tallinn University, Tallinn.

8 **headspace** (2019). **headspace** Year in Review 2019. Retrieved from:
https://**headspace**.org.au/about-us/annual-reports/

9 Perales F, Higginson A, Baxter J, Western M, Zubrick S R, & Mitrou F. (2014). Intergenerational Welfare Dependency in Australia: A Review of the Literature. LifeCourseCentre. Retrieved from:
http://www.lifecoursecentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2014-09-LCC-Working-Papers-Perales-Higginson-Baxter-Western-Zubrick-Mitrou1.pdf

10 Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2016). Australia's youth employment hotspots: Snapshot. Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved from:
http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9004/1/BSL_Aust_youth_unemployment_hotspots_Mar2016.pdf

11 Bennett O., Dawson E., Lewis A., O'Halloran D., Smith W. (2018). Working it out: Employment Services in Australia. Retrieved from:
https://percapita.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Working-It-Out-FINAL.pdf

12 Department of Jobs and Small Business (2018). Employment Services Outcomes Report April 2017 – March 2018. Retrieved from: https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/jsb18-0363_esor_april_2017_to_march_2018.pdf

[13] Department of Jobs and Small Business (2018). Employment Services Outcomes Report. Disability Employment Services. October 2017 – September 2018. Retrieved from: https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/employment_services_outcomes_report_october_2017_to_september_2018_-_des_0.pdf

[14] Haggard, D. L., Dougherty, T. W., Turban, D. B., & Wilbanks, J. E. (2011). Who is a mentor? A review of evolving definitions and implications for research. Journal of Management, 37, 280-304.

[15] Linnehan, F. (2003). 'A longitudinal study of work-based, adult–youth mentoring', Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 63 (2003), 40-54.

[16] Panopoulos, A. & Sarri, K. (2013). E- mentoring: The adoption process and mentoring: The adoption process and innovation challenge. International Journal of Information Management, 33, 217-226.

[17] Kennedy V., Miyazaki K., Carbone S., Telford N., & Rickwood D. (2018). The **headspace** Digital Work and Study Service: Final Evaluation Report. November 2018. **headspace** National Youth Mental Health Foundation.

18 https://mhfa.com.au/

19 https://aymn.org.au/