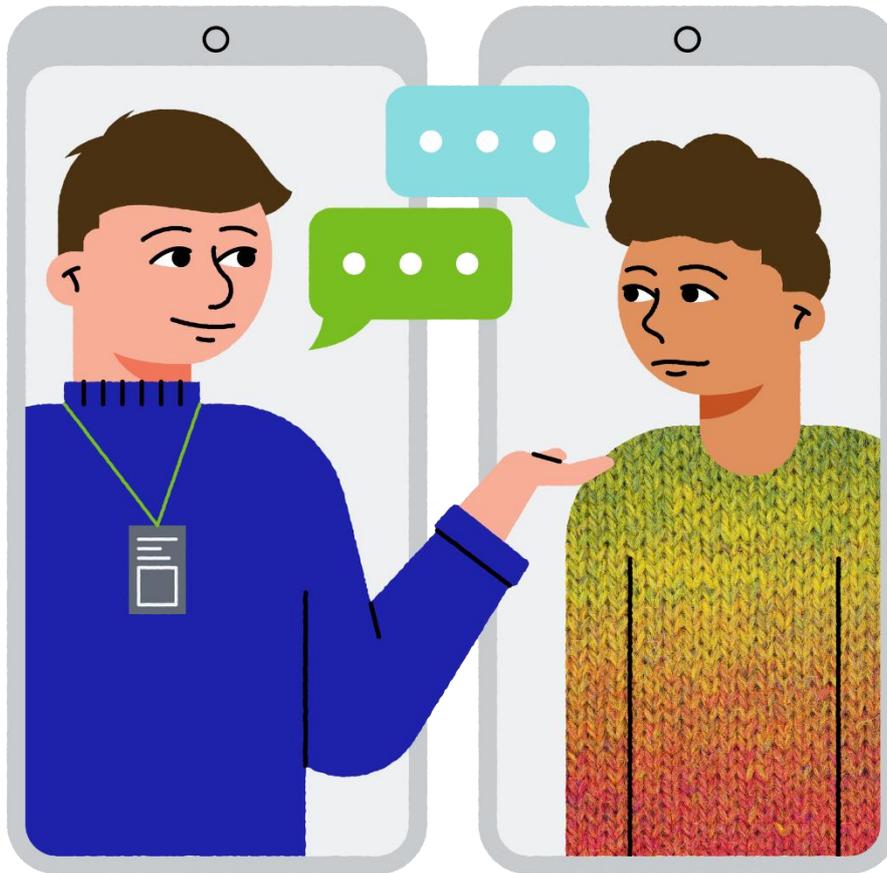


The headspace Digital Work and Study Service: Final Evaluation Report

Produced by: Evaluation Department, Strategy, Impact and
Policy Division

November 2018



Published by headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation
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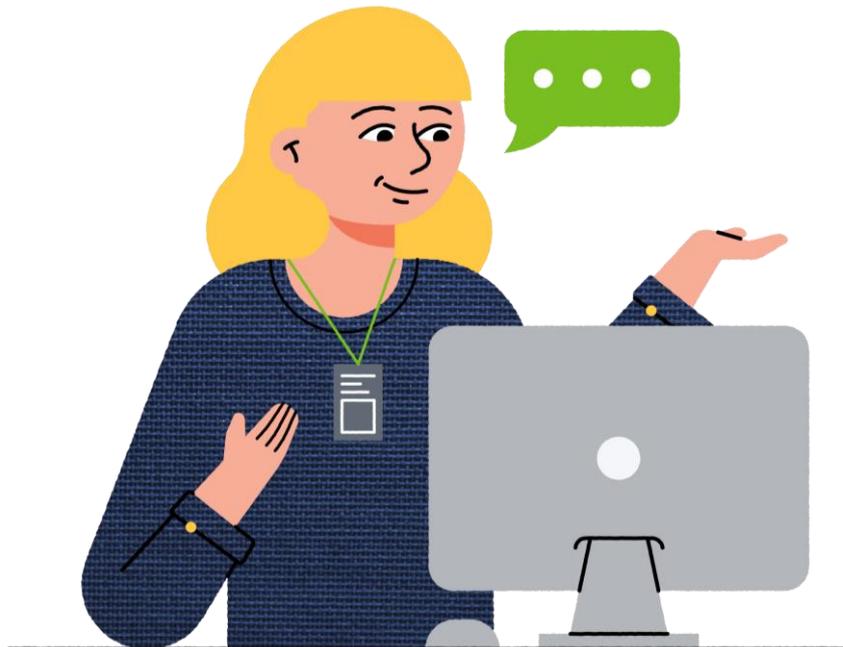
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The Digital Work and Study Service [is] an amazing program that I strongly believe should be expanded to the rest of the country - anyone should be able to access services like these given the current state of youth unemployment in Australia.

(Digital Work and Study Service client, Trans, 19 years old, Metropolitan)*



Executive Summary

Young people face unique challenges in navigating work and study pathways. At an individual and societal level there can be significant consequences if challenges are not addressed. There is therefore a need to develop and invest in evidence-based approaches that are effective in helping young people to address their work and study challenges.

In response to the unique work and study needs and challenges of young people, headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, developed the headspace Digital Work and Study Service (DWSS). The service provides young people across Australia aged 15 to 24 with work and study support via a digital platform (synchronous chat, asynchronous email, telephone assistance, and video conferencing). While the DWSS is accessible to all young people in this age cohort, priority is given to targeted regional locations, Indigenous young people, and early school leavers. The DWSS was initially funded through a Department of Jobs and Small Business 'Empowering YOUTH Initiatives' grant for the period July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2018. An alternative funding source(s) is currently being sought for the service, with the Department of Health providing interim funding to June 30, 2019.

The headspace Evaluation Department undertook a process and early impact evaluation of the first two years of the DWSS. The purpose of this evaluation was to explore the DWSS in terms of its implementation, appropriateness, and effectiveness. Five data sources were developed for the evaluation, including: a Minimum Data Set (MDS); a survey for DWSS clients; a survey for DWSS staff; a survey for headspace Centre Managers; and an interview with the headspace Manager of Vocational Services.

The key findings with regard to the **implementation** of the DWSS include that:

- the DWSS was largely implemented as planned,
- the DWSS met—and exceeded—its contractual requirement to provide 600 episodes of care in its first two years (n=628), and
- the DWSS reached its key target groups.

With regard to the **appropriateness** of the DWSS, the majority of clients surveyed (n=74) indicated that they:

- think the DWSS service is appropriate for young people aged 15 to 24 (93 per cent agreed or strongly agreed),
- think the DWSS provides valuable support (88 per cent agreed or strongly agreed),
- appreciate the fact that the DWSS is voluntary and has few eligibility requirements (89 per cent and 97 per cent respectively agreed or strongly agreed), and
- like that the DWSS offers flexibility with regard to level of contact (94 per cent agreed or strongly agreed).

Client survey respondents were also asked about the appropriateness of the digital nature of the DWSS. Findings included:

- 88 per cent did not have difficulties explaining their situation via a digital platform,
- 86 per cent liked that they could remain anonymous, and
- Less than 20 per cent reported that they would have preferred in-person support.

Of the eight headspace Centre Managers surveyed, all reported that it was helpful for their centre to be able to refer young people to the DWSS. Seven indicated that they think the DWSS fills a major gap in headspace services, and seven indicated that they think the DWSS should be continued at an increased capacity.

In terms of the **effectiveness** of the DWSS, the majority of clients surveyed (n=74) reported that they:

- felt supported in pursuing their work/study goals (90 per cent agreed or strongly agreed),
- identified work/study goals as a result of working with the DWSS (84 per cent agree or strongly agreed),
- felt more confident about work/study interviews and applications as a result of working with the DWSS (84 per cent agreed or strongly agreed),

- felt more optimistic about their work/study future as a result of the DWSS (82 per cent agreed or strongly agreed),
- took steps toward achieving their work/study goals during their time with the DWSS (79 per cent agreed or strongly agreed), and
- gained skills through the DWSS that would assist them with their work/study goals (77 per cent agreed or strongly agreed).

Analyses of MDS data indicated that the majority of DWSS clients (55 per cent) achieve positive work/study outcomes during their time with the service and that the more work/study sessions received, the higher the percentage of clients who achieve positive work/study outcomes. For clients who received at least 10 DWSS sessions, 72 per cent achieved positive work/study outcomes during their time with the service. Further, approximately half of clients Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) when they commence with the DWSS, obtain a work or study placement during their time with the service (47 per cent).

It is important to note, however, that given the lack of a comparator group it is not possible to attribute causality of these benefits to the DWSS.

A substantial amount of work was undertaken to establish the DWSS and the service has considerable potential to contribute to filling a major gap in service delivery across the four core streams that headspace centres are expected to provide (mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drugs, and vocational services). Its design was based on strong evidence, and findings from the process and early impact evaluation suggest it is effective in achieving its aims to help young people achieve important work/study outcomes and that the digital nature of the service is appropriate. Feedback from headspace centres shows the DWSS is a valued and useful referral source. Now that it is established, the DWSS is potentially upscalable to provide effective work and study support to young people across the country (including in regional and remote areas) at a relative low cost.

Evaluation findings (recognising the limitations of the evaluation methodology), provide strong support for the continuation of the DWSS within headspace, subject to the following recommendations for improvement.

- *Consider ways to better reach and assist young men* - the DWSS was less effective at engaging young men than young women.
- *Determine better ways to reach and assist young people who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander* - young people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin experience greater disadvantage than non-Indigenous young people, yet the evaluation data indicate the service reached slightly less Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people than the national percentage of young people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- *Expand the DWSS across the headspace centre network* - in the first two years of operation the DWSS targeted only a small number of headspace centres and these found the service to be valuable and important. Now that the DWSS is established, it is recommended that the service engage with a greater number of headspace centres across Australia, particularly those in regional and remote locations where young people have less access to alternative work/study supports and there is a high population of Indigenous young people. Increased resourcing would be required, however, for the service to be promoted to all centres.
- *Undertake further research and evaluation* - further research and evaluation needs to be undertaken to explore the impacts and outcomes of the service. Ideally, a randomised controlled trial would be able to establish causality and an economic evaluation would identify the potential value and long-term cost savings the service can achieve.

Key findings from the evaluation are displayed in the infographic below.

Key evaluation findings: Implementation, Appropriateness, Effectiveness

Implementation

How many young people and services?

600 +
5,000 +

Young people
Work/study support
sessions



High/very high psychological distress at commencement...

75%*

as measured using the Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale



Location & demographics of DWSS clients



All States/Territories

Particularly QLD (28%),
NSW (19%), VIC (18%)

Metro & Regional areas

71% and 29% respectively

*The OECD 2016 report indicates that 16.5 per cent of non-NEET, and 31.3 per cent of NEET young people experience high or very high psychological distress (also measured with the Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale).

Primary goal with DWSS

Work related	57%
Career planning related	17%
Study related	16%



Gender

Female (61%)
Male (36%)
Trans (2%)
Other (1%)

Age

15-17 years (12%)
18-20 years (39%)
21-23 years (35%)
24 + years (14%)

Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) when they first started working with the DWSS...

41%

Referral source

headspace centres (47%); eheadspace (22%); Other (31%)



Appropriateness

Of young people who completed the DWSS survey (n=74)...

93%
thought the DWSS was
appropriate for 15 to
24 year olds

88%
thought the DWSS
provided valuable
support



97%
liked that the DWSS
has few eligibility
requirements

89%
liked that the DWSS
is voluntary

85%
would recommend the
DWSS



<20%
would've preferred
in-person support

79%
found it beneficial that
no travel was required

88%
did not have difficulties
explaining their
situation via a digital
platform

94%
liked being able to
contact as much or as
little as they liked

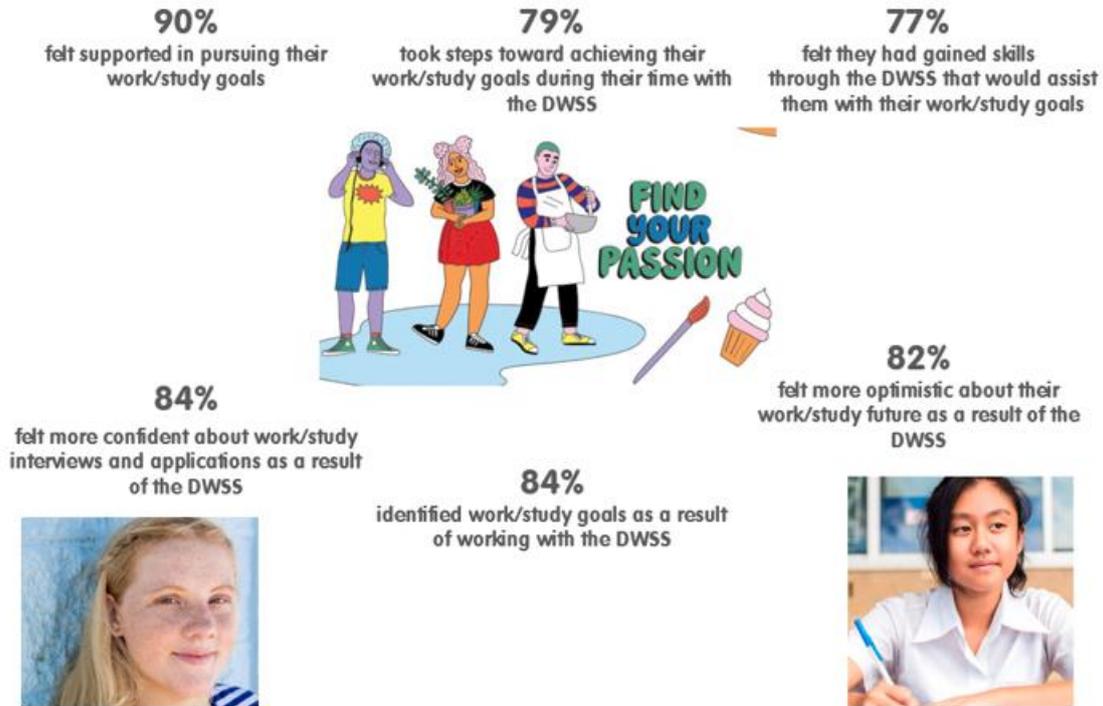
86%
liked that they could
remain anonymous



Key evaluation findings: Implementation, Appropriateness, Effectiveness

Effectiveness

Of young people who completed the DWSS survey (n=74)...

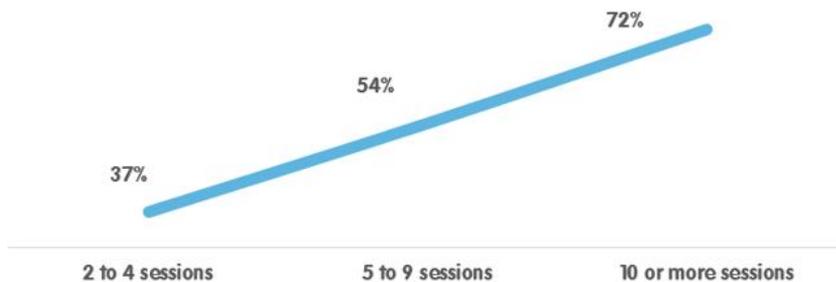


Of young people who first used the DWSS between July and December 2017 and who received at least two DWSS sessions (n=127)...



As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of clients who achieved a positive work/study change increased with the number of DWSS sessions received – 72 per cent among clients who used the service at least 10 times (average # sessions = 8.6).

Figure 1: Percentage of clients who achieved a positive work/study outcome by number of DWSS sessions received



Of those in the above sample who were NEET when they commenced with the DWSS (n=58), 47% obtained a work or study placement during their time with the service.



The Digital Work and Study Service greatly improved my work situation by providing me with effective strategies and skills relating to resume writing and interviews that have allowed me to remain consistently employed at various workplaces over the past year.

(Digital Work and Study Service client, Male, 17 years old, Metropolitan)

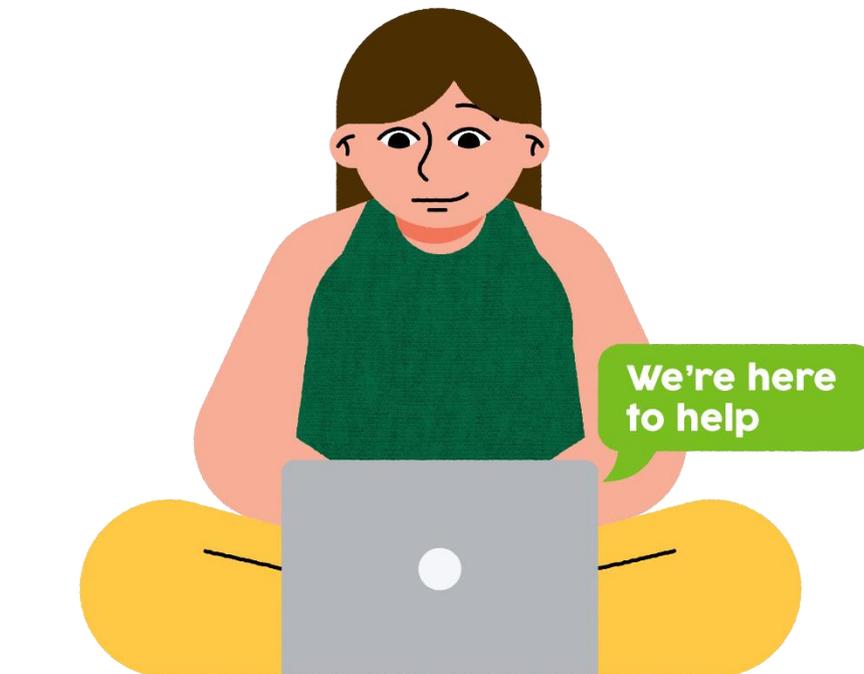


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Definitely fills a gap. Excellent service that should be expanded and available at all headspace centres.

(headspace Centre Manager)



Section 1: Literature review

1.1 Background

The period of adolescence and young adulthood is a significant time in the life-course. It is a time characterised by physical and emotional changes (Kleinert & Horton, 2016), and typically the completion of schooling, career contemplation, employment or training pathways, and transitioning into the workforce (Patton et al., 2016; State Adolescent Health Resource Centre, 2013). While the transitional period can be a positive time for some, for others, contemplating, preparing for and achieving work and study outcomes can be challenging for a variety of reasons. It is recognised that young people can face substantially different barriers to work compared with those faced by older job seekers including lack of experience, transport barriers, and the competitiveness and casualisation of the job market (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2017).

1.2 Consequences of struggling to navigate work/study pathways

Early school leaving and long-term unemployment can be two consequences of struggling to navigate work and study pathways. An 'early school leaver' has been defined as a young person who exits the education system prior to completing Year 12 (or equivalent) and who does not take up an alternative work and/or study pathway (Robinson & Meredith, 2013). Data reported by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012) indicate that Australia has an average school completion rate of 85 per cent (based on adults aged 25 to 34). This means that 15 per cent of young people do not complete Year 12 (or equivalent). Research suggests that early school leavers are more likely than those who complete Year 12 to remain unemployed in the longer term, earn significantly lower wages if/when they are employed, and find it difficult to accumulate wealth (Deloitte Access Economics, 2012).

Australia's youth unemployment rate is also high. Around 12 per cent (12.4 per cent) of all 15 to 24 year olds in the labour market in October 2017 were unemployed compared to the overall rate of 5.5 per cent. In addition, figures from September 2017 indicate that 18.4 per cent of unemployed young people aged 15 to 24 meet the definition of being 'long-term unemployed' (unemployed for a year or more). Long-term unemployment has been associated with risk factors including social exclusion, long-term dependence on welfare, lower life satisfaction, mental health difficulties, and increased chance of involvement in criminal activities (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2010). Accordingly, the outcomes of long-term employment can be very costly to society in terms of health, welfare and criminal justice (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2010). Overall, recent figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that seven per cent of adolescents (aged 15 to 19 years) and 13 per cent of young adults (aged 20 to 24 years) are of NEET status—that is, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015).

1.3 Those most at risk

Some groups of young people are at particular risk of poor work and study outcomes, including those with mental health difficulties, those living in regional and remote locations, and Indigenous young people.

Mental health difficulties

Evidence shows that fewer young people with mental health conditions are engaged in work and/or study compared with those without mental health issues (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). A recent study of young people accessing a youth mental health service found that approximately one third were of NEET status (Holloway et al., 2018), which compares with less than 13 percent of those in the general community.

Regional and remote location

While youth unemployment is an issue across Australia, analyses of Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 labour force survey data, undertaken by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, indicated that for most states it was regional and remote locations where youth unemployment was at its worst (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2016).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

A 2017 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare highlights that people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin tend to experience higher unemployment rates, earn lower incomes, and are more likely to be reliant on a government pension or allowance (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). People of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin are also less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to have completed Year 12 (or equivalent). Those in the 15 to 24 age bracket experience higher unemployment rates than those aged 25 to 34 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

1.4 What support is available to young people?

In the Australian context, there are two Federal Government employment services programs to assist job seekers to attain employment and receive financial support:

- the *jobactive* program (Department of Jobs and Small Business) provides broad employment assistance and advice. To receive financial support payments, young people must enrol in *jobactive*. Recent results from the *jobactive* Employment Services Outcomes Report indicate that overall, 48.7 per cent gained employment within three months of enrolment (Department of Employment, 2017). *jobactive* classifies job seekers into one of three streams based on an assessment of vocational barriers. Stream C includes the most disadvantaged job seekers who have multiple and complex barriers such as mental health issues; this group had the lowest employment rate with 27.1 per cent attaining employment within three months of enrolment.
- the Disability Employment Services (DES) initiative (Department of Social Services) assists job seekers with injury, health conditions or permanent disability to find or keep a job, and assists with employment support needs (Department of Social Services, 2018). There are both for-profit and not-for-profit DES providers of varying size.

1.5 What does the evidence suggest is effective?

While many young people achieve positive outcomes through *jobactive* and DES services, there are clearly some young people, including those with a mental health condition, who may benefit from more specialised intervention. The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model is a vocational intervention for people with mental health conditions (Orygen The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, 2015). The eight practice principles of the IPS model include: 1) The goal is competitive employment¹; 2) Employment assistance and mental health treatment are integrated; 3) There is a zero exclusion approach whereby every individual with mental illness who wants to work is eligible for IPS assistance; 4) Client preferences drive services provided and the type of job sought (not the service providers' preferences for the client); 5) Advice around benefits is provided (implications of gaining work on current benefits situation, benefits clients may be eligible for etc); 6) Job searching begins early on in a client's engagement with an IPS approach; 7) Staff network with and develop and maintain good relationships with employers to ensure they are aware of opportunities of relevance to clients; and 8) Continued, individual support is provided to clients even after they gain work (Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center, 2014).

There is overwhelming International and Australian evidence that the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model can be effective in improving the employment outcomes of young people (and adults) with mental health conditions when compared to traditional vocational interventions (Killackey, Jackson, & McGorry, 2008; Morris, Waghorn, Robson, Moore, & Edwards, 2014; Waghorn, 2015; Waghorn, Dias, Gladman, Harris, & Saha, 2014). However, to date there is limited evidence around the extent to which the IPS model is associated with improved educational outcomes (Orygen The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, 2015). Furthermore, the model has largely been applied to people

¹ 'Competitive' is defined as jobs that pay at least minimum wage and the wage that others undertaking the same work receive, and jobs working alongside others without disabilities (i.e. not jobs exclusive to those with disabilities).

with serious mental health conditions, including low prevalence disorders such as first episode psychosis, rather than people with more common conditions like depression and anxiety. The model also relies on direct face-to-face engagement with the client, which can be problematic for some individuals who want support but also want anonymity, for those who live in hard to service rural and remote areas, and for those who have a level of mistrust of mainstream services.

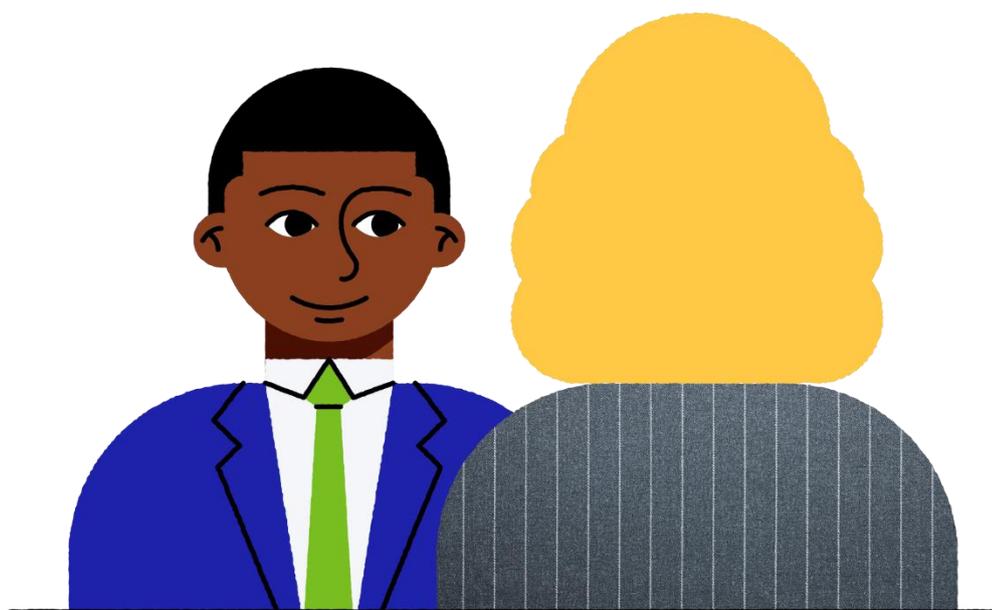
1.6 A new approach to assisting young people with their work and study pathways

An innovative approach to providing young people across Australia with work and study support has been developed and piloted through the headspace Digital Work and Study Service. This service is based on understanding of the unique challenges that young people can face in navigating work and study pathways (particularly young people with mental health issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people in regional and remote locations and early school leavers), the positive impacts (at an individual and societal level) that can be associated with helping young people achieve and maintain work and study outcomes, the limitations/gaps with traditional employment services, and the strengths (and limitations) of the IPS approach.



The staff member I worked with was very supportive, non-judgemental, knowledgeable, and just went the extra mile to make sure I succeeded.

(Digital Work and Study Service client, Male, 17 years old, Metropolitan)



Section 2: Introduction

2.1 What is the headspace Digital Work and Study Service?

The headspace Digital Work and Study Service (DWSS) forms part of headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation (headspace)². headspace is an enhanced primary care platform for youth mental health care designed to break down common barriers to help-seeking and facilitate early access to mental health counselling and support. There are over 100 headspace centres across Australia that offer young people support for the main reasons they need professional support. Vocational support is one of the four core streams that headspace centres are expected to deliver (alongside mental health, physical health and alcohol and other drug support). The vocational support stream is not well supported by current funding options; some centres have staff experienced in supporting young people with work and study issues while others refer young people to other services for this type of support. The reach of the headspace centre network is augmented by eheadspace, which is a digital, Web-based, mental healthcare and information service³.

The DWSS provides young people aged 15 to 24 across Australia with work and study support via a digital platform (synchronous chat, asynchronous email, telephone assistance, and video conferencing). While the DWSS is accessible to all young people in this age group, priority is given to targeted regional locations⁴, Indigenous young people, and early school leavers (Robinson & Meredith, 2013)⁵. The DWSS was initially funded through a Department of Jobs and Small Business 'Empowering YOUTH Initiatives' grant for the period July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2018 (Department of Employment, 2016; Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018). An alternative funding source(s) is currently being sought for the service, with the Department of Health providing interim funding to June 30, 2019.

The DWSS provides young people with multifaceted support including assistance with: writing a resume; career planning; strengths and skills assessments; job searching and job applications; preparing for job interviews; identifying and accessing relevant Centrelink support; exploring suitable education options; enrolling in education or training; sourcing financial support for education; and managing vocational and non-vocational barriers (such as mental health issues) that may impact on young people's capacity to achieve their work or study goals. With regard to supporting young people's mental health needs, the DWSS undertakes collaborative care with young people's clinical supports, and provides—and also assists young people to access—clinical support (if applicable). Young people are either referred to the DWSS by another support service (such as a headspace centre or eheadspace), or they can access the service directly without a referral.

The key objectives of the DWSS are to increase the extent to which young people:

1. Understand their work and/or study goals,
2. Know how to reach their work and/or study goals,
3. Are equipped to reach and maintain their work and/or study goals, and
4. Are equipped to understand and manage vocational and non-vocational barriers (including mental health and wellbeing issues) impacting on their capacity to achieve their work and/or study goals.

The overarching goal of the DWSS is to increase the extent to which young people seek, attain and maintain work and study outcomes. Additionally the DWSS strives to improve young people's sense of self-efficacy and independence in managing their work and/or study situation, and increase young people's level of social engagement, wellbeing and hope (overall and in terms of their work/study situation).

² The Australian Federal Government established headspace in 2006.

³ eheadspace commenced as a pilot in July 2010 and was rolled out across Australia in July 2011. It is funded by the Australian Federal Government.

⁴ Gippsland, Victoria; Riverland, South Australia; Gladstone and Rockhampton, Queensland; Northern Tasmania; Southern region, Western Australia; and Rockingham, Western Australia.

⁵ An 'early school leaver' has been defined as a young person who exits the education system prior to completing Year 12 and who does not take up an alternative pathway.

The service was designed in line with key principles of the IPS model (discussed on page 14) with adaptations to reflect its different target group and mode of delivery. Namely, the DWSS works predominantly (but not exclusively) with young people experiencing high prevalence mental health issues (depression and anxiety), and offers personalised support with a work and study specialist via a digital platform rather than in-person. The service is also time limited, focussing on a distinct timeframe to achieve self-directed short-term and longer-term goals. Young people may receive up to two episodes of care, whereby an episode of care consists of intensive support over a three month period that includes a minimum regular fortnightly appointment (with some flexibility as necessary).

The DWSS is designed to be: highly accessible (no travel required, flexible hours of operation, different service modes on offer); non-confrontational (engagement is personalised over the phone or through a digital platform rather than in-person); and voluntary. Additionally, it is designed to: allow clients to remain anonymous; have limited eligibility requirements; have a strength-based approach in terms of focussing on the skills and attributes young people have (rather than those they do not); and allow young people to self-direct their level of engagement with the knowledge that the service is time limited.

Further detail about the DWSS and how it was developed and implemented is provided in Section four. The program logic model for the DWSS is provided as Appendix one.

2.2 Structure of this report

The report is structured as follows:

- Section three provides an overview of the evaluation design,
- Section four presents key findings from the evaluation, and
- Section five provides a discussion of key findings and recommendations for future directions for the service.



The support I received was invaluable...Something I desperately needed at that time. I especially liked the mock interview...Please keep continuing the great work!

(Digital Work and Study Service client, Male, 24 years old, Metropolitan)



Section 3: Evaluation of the Digital Work and Study Service

3.1 Evaluation overview

headspace ensures all its services are internally monitored and evaluated. The headspace Evaluation Department undertook service monitoring activities and a comprehensive process and impact evaluation across the two years DWSS was funded by the Department of Jobs and Small Business.

Additionally, the Department of Jobs and Small Business commissioned external evaluations of all initiatives funded through Empowering YOUth Initiatives, including the DWSS. The purpose of these external evaluations is to identify activities and methods that have the greatest capacity to increase the extent to which young people who are long-term unemployed (or at risk of long-term welfare dependency) are job ready, in a job or staying in a job. Findings from the individual project evaluations will feed into an overall evaluation that is expected to be released in December 2019. Evaluation learnings will inform service delivery, and future policy and program design (Department of Employment, 2016).

This report focusses on the internal monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by the headspace Evaluation Department

3.2 Methodology

The key purpose of the monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by the headspace Evaluation Department, was to explore the DWSS in terms of its:

- Implementation,
- Appropriateness, and
- Effectiveness.

A quasi-experimental design was chosen for the pragmatic reasons that the timeframe for the evaluation, and the target numbers that the service was contractually required to meet in that time, limited the possibility of random allocation and a control group.

Five key data sources were developed for the DWSS evaluation:

1. A **Minimum Data Set (MDS)** to capture detailed information about client characteristics and service activity. These data enabled exploration of the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the service.
2. A **survey for DWSS clients** to explore their perspective of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the service.
3. A **survey for DWSS staff** to explore their perspective of the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the service.
4. A **survey for headspace Centre Managers** to explore their perspective of the need for, appropriateness of, and effectiveness of the service.
5. An **interview with the headspace Manager of Vocational Services** to gain detailed insight into how the service was implemented, her perspective on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the service, and her plans for the future of the service.

3.2.1 Minimum Data Set

Data source

The headspace Evaluation Department developed a comprehensive Minimum Data Set (MDS) specifically for the DWSS. This was designed to: meet reporting requirements of the Department of Jobs and Small Business; meet monitoring requirements of the **headspace** Manager of Vocational Services; and collect data that provided insight into the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the service.

The MDS captures data relating to: 1) client characteristics at presentation (e.g. demographics, reasons for using the service, work/study status); 2) service activity (e.g. number and type of services delivered, duration of services delivered); and 3) client outcomes over time including change in work/study status (clinician rated), change in readiness for work and study using a measure based on the Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) of change (clinician rated), and social and occupational functioning using the Social and Occupational Functioning Assessment Scale (SOFAS) - clinician rated. Further detail about each outcome measure is provided below.

With regard to change in work/study status, staff complete questions after every session about whether the young person has achieved a positive work/study outcome since their last session. A positive work/study outcome is defined as: gained work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) – if they did not previously have a job; gained a better job than the one they had (i.e. one they enjoy more, one aligned with study, one with a higher salary); increased work hours; resolved job at risk; engagement in the Path Program (PaTH); obtained placement); obtained job taster; obtained volunteer placement; began study – if they weren't previously studying; swapped to a course/training that was 'better' than what they were previously studying (i.e. something more likely to lead to good job outcomes, something they enjoy more); increased study; and resolved study at risk.

With regard to changes in readiness for work and study, staff complete questions after every session about whether the young person has had a change in their readiness for work/study, as gauged via scales based on the Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change (one scale for work, another scale for study). Stages of readiness include: Pre-contemplation about working/studying; Contemplation about working/studying; Determination/preparation for working/studying; Active stage of job seeking/study seeking; Maintaining job/study seeking activities for at least 6 months; Working/Studying; and Not applicable.

DWSS staff record the SOFAS scores in clients' first sessions, and if clients reach post placement (i.e. achieve a work or study placement and continue to have contact with the service). Responses include: 91-100: Superior functioning in a wide range of activities; 81-90: Good functioning in all areas, occupational and socially effective; 71-80: No more than a slight impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning; 61-70: Some difficulty in social, occupational or school functioning; 51-60: Moderate difficulty in social, occupational or school functioning; 41-50: Serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning; 31-40: Major impairment in several areas such as work or school, family relations; 21-30: Inability to function in almost all areas; 11-20: Occasionally fails to maintain minimal personal hygiene; 1-10: Persistent inability to maintain minimal personal hygiene; 0: Inadequate information.

Procedure

The **headspace** digital platform used to deliver the DWSS and interact with young people—Dynamic Health 2 (DH2)—is also used to collect all MDS data via forms within the platform.

Participants

MDS data were collected for over 600 young people (n=604) across 628 episodes of care between data collection commencing on August 9, 2016 and the end of the funding period (June 30, 2018). Most MDS data presented in this report—including client demographic data, client characteristic data, and service activity data—represents this full sample.

Restrictions were placed around MDS data used to explore the impact of the DWSS in this evaluation. Specifically, these analyses focussed on young people who: received their first DWSS episode of care between July 1 and December 31, 2017; and who received at least two work/study sessions between

July 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018 (n=127). There were a number of reasons for narrowing the sample in these ways as outlined below.

First, the reason for the two or more session restriction was that the measure used to capture change in work/study status is captured via the service form completed by staff after every session. This question is framed in terms of, 'Has there been a change in the young person's work/study status since their last session?' Unless a client has had at least two sessions this question is irrelevant. Second, DWSS commenced operations very quickly. Accordingly, in the early months of operation, continuous quality improvement changes were being implemented and there was some level of staff turnover. By July 1, 2017, the service itself and staffing levels were relatively stable. Focussing on a period of time when the service had established itself and was relatively stable enabled evaluation of the program in a more mature state. Third, the reason for picking December 31, 2017 as the end date for having commenced an episode of care, and April 30, 2018 as the end data for having received the two sessions, was that it meant everyone in the sample had the opportunity to receive at least three months of service (the approximate service duration afforded to all clients). Last, to undertake the outcome analyses in time to include them in this final evaluation report, it was not possible to examine data up until June 30, 2018. Instead, data were examined up until April 30, 2018.

3.2.2 Client survey

Data source

A survey was designed specifically for young people who had used DWSS. The survey covered 10 domains relating to clients' experiences with and perceptions of the service, including whether or not they felt they had experienced benefits from the service. The survey mainly comprised quantitative questions that used a mix of five-point-Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree) and Yes/No response options. The survey also included a small number of open-ended qualitative questions.

Procedure

Criterion sampling was used for the client survey. All young people who received support from DWSS between August 9, 2016 and November 15, 2017, indicated as part of their registration process that they agreed to be contacted about future research and evaluation activities, and provided a valid email address (n=321) were emailed an invitation to complete the client survey. The email invitation contained the survey link, and detailed participation information. Survey Monkey was used for the survey itself and to distribute the email invitation.

Participants

In total, 74 clients completed the survey which represents a response rate of 23 per cent. Of the 74 clients, 66 answered every question, while 8 only partially completed the survey. The demographic characteristics of survey respondents were broadly in line with the demographic characteristics of all clients who have used DWSS (see page 30). Survey respondents ranged in age from 15 to 24 with a mean age of 20.8 years. More than half of respondents were female (57 per cent), while 37 per cent were male, three per cent indicated that they were trans*, and three per cent indicated that they identified as another gender. Approximately three quarters (75 per cent) were located in metropolitan or major cities, while 21 per cent were located in inner regional areas of Australia and four per cent were located in outer regional areas of Australia. Most respondents indicated that they were from Queensland or Victoria (32 per cent and 22 per cent respectively).

3.2.3 Survey for Digital Work and Study Service staff

Data source

A survey was designed specifically for DWSS staff. This covered nine domains relating to staff perspectives on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the service as well as feedback about the staff induction process and support available to staff. The survey mainly comprised quantitative questions that used a mix of five-point-Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree) and Yes/No response options. The survey also included a number of open-ended qualitative questions.

Procedure

All DWSS staff employed in June of 2018 (n=10), were emailed an invitation to complete the staff survey. The email invitation contained the survey link, and detailed participation information. Survey Monkey was used for the survey itself and to distribute the email invitation.

Participants

In total, seven people completed the DWSS staff survey which represents a response rate of 70 per cent.

3.2.4 Survey for headspace Centre Managers

Data source

A survey was designed specifically for the Managers of **headspace** centres. This covered six domains relating to the extent to which they had received sufficient information about the DWSS, and their perspectives on the need for, appropriateness of and effectiveness of the service. The survey mainly comprised quantitative questions that used a mix of five-point-Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree) and Yes/No response options. The survey also included a small number of qualitative open-ended questions.

Procedure

Criterion sampling was used for the survey for **headspace** Centre Managers. There was only one criterion, that being that only managers of centres that had referred at least three clients to the DWSS were approached (n=17). This criterion was chosen to ensure that those approached were in a position to provide detailed and rich data (Liamputtong, 2006). These managers were emailed an invitation to complete the survey that also contained a link to the survey itself, and detailed participation information. Survey Monkey was used for the survey itself and to distribute the email invitation.

Participants

In total, eight people completed the survey which represents a response rate of 47 per cent.

3.2.5 Interview with the headspace Manager of Vocational Services

Data source

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to explore the perspective of the **headspace** Manager of Vocational Services in relation to the implementation of DWSS and its appropriateness and effectiveness.

Procedure

Given the breadth and depth of information to cover, rather than one in-depth semi-structured interview, two informal discussions were held with the Manager of Vocational Services in June/July of 2018, one of which was audio-recorded and transcribed.

3.3 Data analysis

Frequency and descriptive analyses of quantitative data (MDS and survey data) were undertaken using Tableau Business Intelligence software and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It is important to note that not all respondents answered all questions in the surveys. Therefore, the overall 'n' varies (and is therefore reported) on a question-by-question basis throughout the 'Findings' section of this report.

Open-ended responses from the surveys and qualitative data from the interview with the headspace Manager of Vocational Services were coded according to the broad categories used across this evaluation (implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness). Within these broad categories, comments were further coded according to themes that arose from the data.

3.4 Limitations

The restrictions placed on the sample for exploring change over time in client outcomes meant that the sample was relatively small (n=127). The sample for the client survey was also relatively small (n=74). Accordingly, it was not possible to undertake reliable and valid analyses of satisfaction and outcomes among the key target groups (young people in regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, Early School Leavers) compared to the overall sample. This is something that will be explored in future research.

As indicated on page 18, for pragmatic reasons a quasi-experimental design was chosen. If a randomised controlled trial had been conducted, whereby all participants were given an equal chance of being allocated to the experimental group or the control group, it would have been possible for the evaluation to provide insight into causality. Due to its quasi-experimental design this evaluation is not able to demonstrate causality. This evaluation also did not include a follow-up phase to measure the extent to which the DWSS helps young people to maintain work/study outcomes.

Another limitation is the relative lack of qualitative data. The headspace Evaluation Department had initially planned to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups with DWSS clients and staff, and with the Managers of headspace centres that had made referrals to the service. However, the external evaluators appointed by the Department were including qualitative data collection in their methodology. To avoid unnecessary duplication in data collected (and to minimise the burden on young people and other stakeholders from who data were collected), the headspace Evaluation Department decided not to go ahead with qualitative data collection, on the understanding and agreement that both teams would share data. Unfortunately, for ethical and logistical reasons the external evaluators were unable to share their qualitative data with the headspace Evaluation Department in time for findings to be incorporated into this final evaluation report. Importantly, some qualitative data were collected via the surveys conducted by the headspace Evaluation Department, and some of these data are presented in this report.

It is also important to highlight that given the criterion sampling approach used for the headspace Centre Manager survey (described on page 23), this evaluation did not capture the opinions and experiences of all headspace Centre Managers across the country.

A potential perceived limitation of this evaluation is that it was an internal evaluation in the sense that the evaluators work for the organisation that delivers the DWSS. However, the evaluators are experienced in conducting evaluations to high ethical and quality standards, and the intimate knowledge of the service, and established working relationships with the headspace Manager of Vocational Services, were useful for designing an appropriate evaluation. It is generally accepted (NSW Government Department of Premier & Cabinet, 2018) that:

An evaluation can be designed and managed internally where the program is a small to moderate investment and a low risk...the evaluation is limited in scale, and internal staff have skills and resources for systematic data collection and analysis.

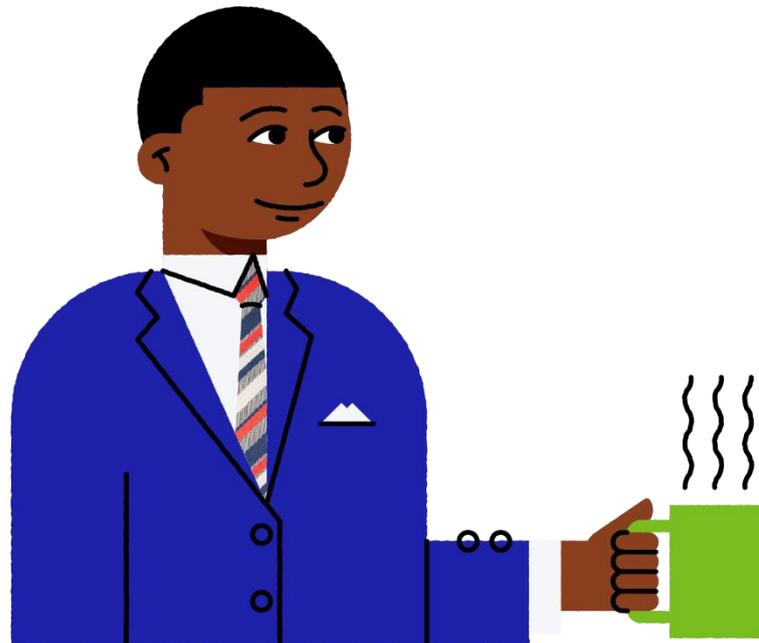
3.5 Ethics approval

The headspace Evaluation Department sought ethics approval for its client survey through the Quality Assurance ethics approval process of the Melbourne Health Office for Research (<https://www.thermh.org.au/research/researchers/ga>). Approval was obtained on November 16, 2017. In line with guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluation (Australasian Evaluation Society, 2013), participant information documents for all methods highlighted that participation was voluntary and that those who chose not to complete it would not be disadvantaged in any way.



Young people linked in [to the Digital Work and Study Service] have provided very positive feedback to staff.

(headspace Centre Manager)



Section 4: Key findings

4.1 Implementation

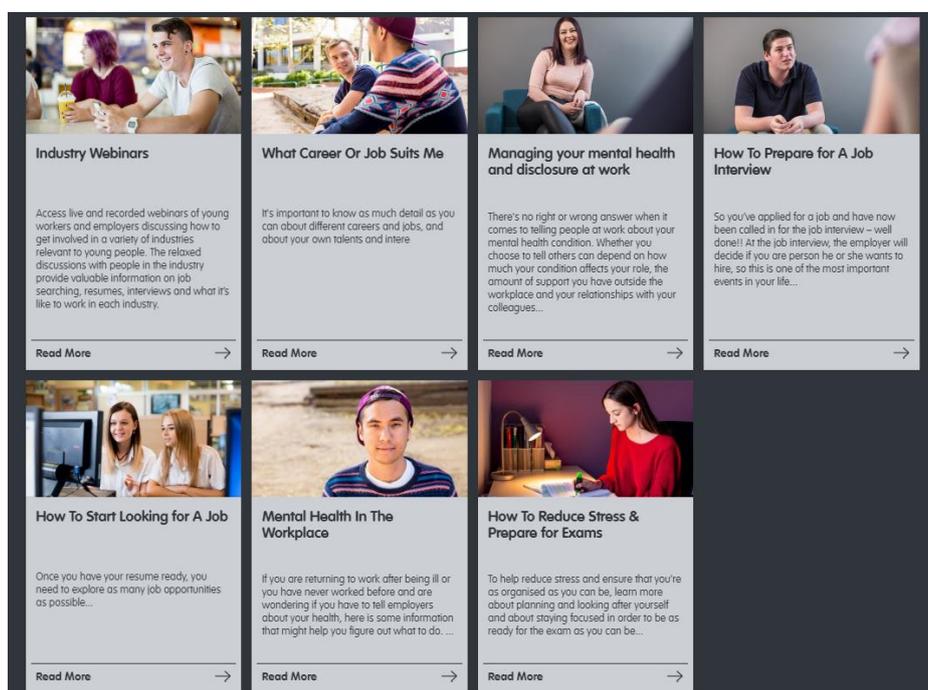
This section presents data that shed light on what was involved in implementing the DWSS and the extent to which its implementation went to plan. Each key activity of the DWSS, as outlined in the Program Logic Model (Appendix one), is discussed in this section. Unless otherwise stated, information presented in this section comes from the interviews with the **headspace** Manager of Vocational Services.

4.1.1 Establishing the Digital Work and Study Service

Program design

The DWSS was designed in line with the evidence-based IPS model, and key learnings **headspace** had gathered from delivering (on a small scale) work and study support via its online counselling platform (**eheadspace**). The Empowering Youth Initiatives grant provided the means to substantially expand and enhance the work and study support that had been provided through **eheadspace**, in terms of: the services offered; staffing; digital modes of delivery; and capacity to integrate with centres. The clinical component of the service was designed to focus on clinical governance, policies and procedures to ensure there was clinical oversight of all clients. Across the two years, the DWSS was also able to allocate a portion of its funding directly towards learning/development/employment opportunities for young people⁶.

A suite of DWSS informational services were developed that young people can access at any hour of the day (see Screenshot 1). These were designed to be accessible and offer practical support and guidance around common areas of need for the target demographic of the DWSS.



Screenshot 1: Screenshot of some Digital Work and Study Service resources accessible through the Web Pages for the service

⁶ Staff could submit applications for this funding if they thought a client could particularly benefit from additional support. The Manager of Vocational Services considered all applications and selected those that were feasible and appropriate. Where possible the Manager of Vocational Services asked the young people to make a contribution to the overall cost to ensure their buy-in and to help develop their decision-making skills.

Digital infrastructure

The DWSS was able to leverage the established infrastructure of eheadspace (namely, the aforementioned DH2 platform). This meant that the service was able to become operational relatively quickly and inexpensively with regard to both the means to securely interact with young people via a digital platform (namely, technology for online chats and emails), and in terms of record keeping and data collection (namely, the means to securely collect client information and service activity detail via forms). Web pages for the DWSS were integrated into the headspace website in August 2016.

The DWSS was also able to leverage established teams at headspace National, responsible for and experienced in storing, managing and reporting on headspace data. Specifically, the headspace Data Strategy and Governance team was able to integrate DWSS data in its established data warehouse (that also houses data from headspace centres, eheadspace, headspace School Support), and the headspace Evaluation Department was able to take on responsibility for service monitoring and reporting using Tableau business intelligence software. The headspace Evaluation Department developed the Minimum Data Set for the service which was described on page 21.

Partnerships

The DWSS worked with **headspace** Corporate Partners to offer young people 'mock' interviews. Corporate partners included, but were not limited to, Jellis Craig and Viva Energy Australia. Approximately once every two months, Corporate Partners volunteered their time to attend **headspace** National and participate in panel interviews with young people⁷. They ran through standard interview questions with young people, and then provided young people with verbal and/or written feedback. Where possible the mock interviews were conducted via video-conferencing to make the interviews as 'real' as possible for young people. Additionally, the video-conferencing modality allowed the Corporate Partners to provide feedback not only related to discussion content but the presentation of young people as well. Corporate Partners received training and support from the DWSS with regard to how to provide young people with appropriate feedback.

Governance

An Expert Advisory Group (EAG) was established for DWSS that met approximately three to four times each year. In each meeting the Manager of Vocational Services provided an update on how the service was progressing, and sought advice and recommendations from the group as appropriate. The group had representatives from a Primary Health Network, Disability Employment Australia, the Secondary Principles Association, Recruitment Consulting Services Australia, the Career Industry Council of Australia and the Department of Jobs and Small Business.

Meeting headspace quality and safety standards

The DWSS was required to meet and abide by **headspace** clinical governance standards. A detailed Clinical Governance Framework was developed that clearly articulates how the service identifies and monitors at-risk young people.

Recruiting/training staff

In July/August 2016, 5.2 FTE staff were recruited to the DWSS. The staffing number increased as the service capacity and referrals increased to 9.2 FTE by June 2018. Staff with diverse experience and professional backgrounds were selected, including community workers, disability employment workers and career advisors certified through the Career Development Association of Australia. Staff received in-person training and written resources on the service. In addition to work/study specialists, a 1.0 FTE clinical role was filled. Mental Health First Aid Training and Motivational Interviewing Training were provided to all staff.

Developing referral pathways

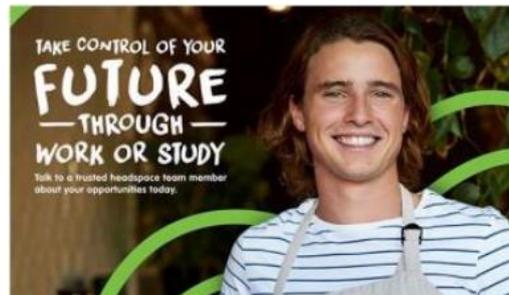
Referral forms and processes were established for headspace centres, eheadspace and other services. Additionally, DWSS management: travelled to headspace centres in the target regions (and other relevant services near the centres); undertook online and telephone communication with centres; and consulted with eheadspace management. The purpose of these visits and consultations was to ensure headspace (and other relevant) services had good awareness and understanding of the service, in order to increase the likelihood of referrals from these services. Where possible a DWSS 'champion'

⁷ This component of the service led to the development of a new headspace service called the Digital Industry Mentoring Service. This was successful in obtaining two years of funding through the second round of Empowering YOUth initiatives.

was established in centres (ideally the Centre Manger). The key role of these champions was to ensure other staff were aware of and knowledgeable about the DWSS, and to encourage referrals to the DWSS.

Promoting DWSS

A suite of resources was developed to promote the service in youth-friendly and engaging ways. Flyers, posters, and a video promotion were developed. These were disseminated via Facebook, and displayed in selected headspace centres (and other relevant services) across the country. Additionally, a young person shared information about his experience with the DWSS via a video recording. The video is shown at various forums and meetings when explaining what the service does and how it works. Examples of promotional resources are shown in Screenshot 2.



Screenshot 2: Examples of some promotional flyers, posters and videos developed for the Digital Work and Study Service

4.1.2 Delivering the Digital Work and Study Service

Target numbers

By the end of its first two years of operation, DWSS had exceeded its target⁸ of 600 episodes of care, providing 628 episodes of care to a total of 604 clients (24 clients received two episodes of care). Figure 1 displays both monthly fluctuation, and growth over time, with regard to episodes of care.

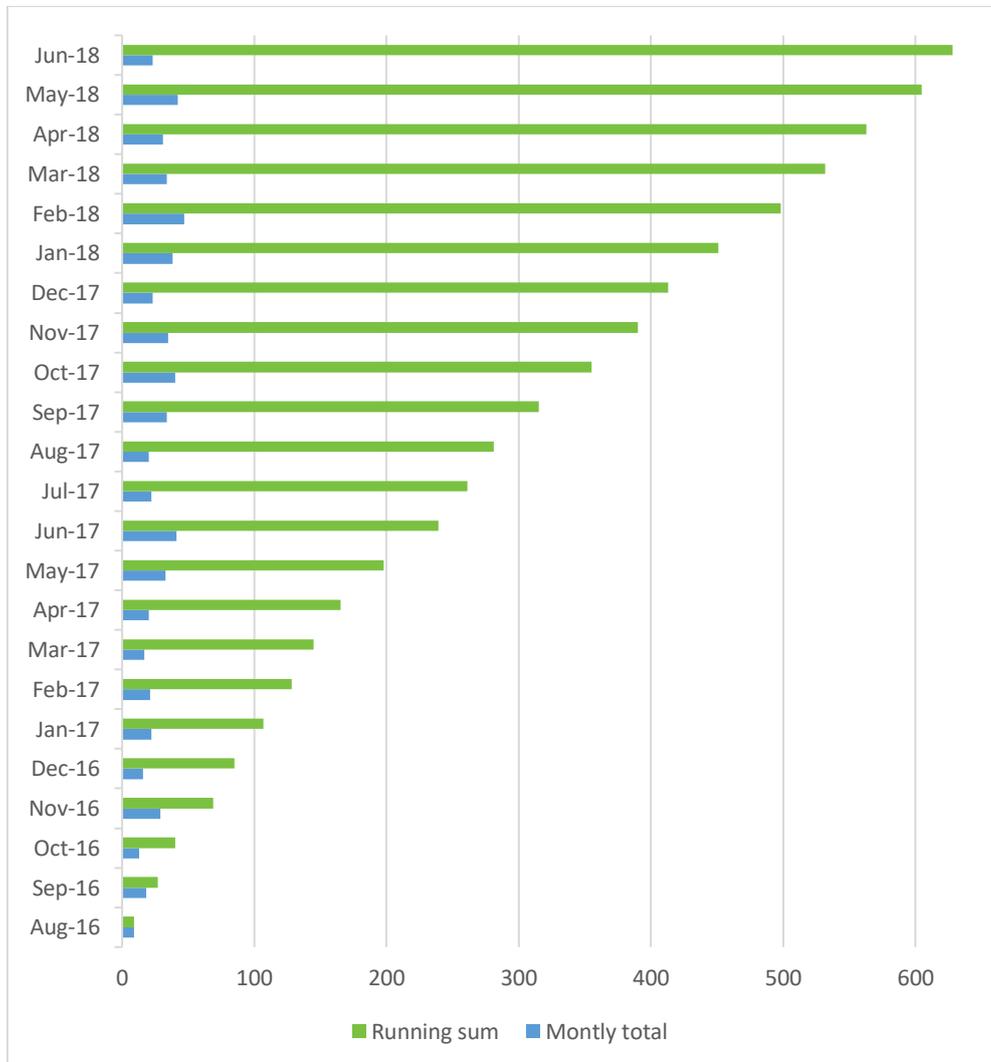


Figure 1: Number of new episodes of care commenced each month, and the running total of episodes of care

⁸ This target was set by the Department of Jobs and Small Business

Target groups

Table 1 provides demographic detail about clients. These data suggest that DWSS was more effective in reaching young women than young men, that the service is mainly accessed by young people aged 18 or older, and that approximately one third of clients (30 per cent) identify as a sexuality other than heterosexual/straight.

Demographic category		Percentage of clients
Gender	Female	61%
	Male	36%
	Trans*	2%
	Another gender	1%
Age¹	15 to 17	12%
	18 to 20	39%
	21 to 23	35%
	24 or older	14%
State/Territory	Queensland	28%
	New South Wales	19%
	Victoria	18%
	Western Australia	16%
	South Australia	13%
	Australian Capital Territory	3%
	Tasmania	3%
	Northern Territory	<1%
Location type²	Major city / Metropolitan	72%
	Inner regional	19%
	Outer regional	9%
	Remote	<1%
	Very remote	<1%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	70%
	Bisexual	13%
	Questioning	6%
	Gay	4%
	Lesbian	2%
	Other sexuality	5%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin³		4.1%

¹ Mean age 20 years (range 15 to 26; SD=2.5).

² ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018b) indicates that in 2017 the percentage of Australians in Major city/Metropolitan, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote and Very remote areas was 72 per cent, 18 per cent, 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

³ Of the Australians aged 15 to 24 who provided information about whether or not they were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in the 2016 census (n=2,817,558), 4.4 per cent indicated that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018a).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Digital Work and Study Service clients (MDS data)

Table 2 presents detail about the characteristics of clients at the time they began working with the service.

Client characteristics at time of commencement with the Digital Work and Study Service		Percentage of clients
Early school leaver ¹		24%
At least one vocational barrier ²		63%
At least one non-vocational barrier ³		74%
Main income source	Government pension or allowance	36%
	Supported by family/carer	31%
	Wages	27%
	Other	6%
Work and study status ⁴	Not working or studying	41%
	Working (part-time or full-time)	32%
	Studying (part-time or full-time)	40%
	Working and studying	13%
Registered with an employment agency		24%
Receiving counselling		61%
Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale rating ⁵	High or very high psychological distress	75%
SOFAS	A score of 60 or lower (Moderate difficulty in social, occupational school functioning through to failing to maintain minimal personal hygiene)	18%

¹ Data reported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012) indicate that Australia has an average school completion rate of 85 per cent (based on adults aged 25 to 34).

² Vocational barriers include poor work history, no work history, early school leaver, incomplete education. The most prevalent (experienced by 25 per cent of clients) was having a poor work history.

³ Non-vocational barriers include a mental health issue(s), rural remote location, a physical health issue(s), lack of transport options, culturally and linguistically diverse. The most prevalent (experienced by 44 per cent of clients) was having a mental health issue(s).

⁴ Sub-categories are not mutually exclusive.

⁵ The OECD 2016 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016) report indicates that 16.5 per cent of non-NEET, and 31.3 per cent of NEET young people experience high or very high psychological distress (also measured with the Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale).

Table 2: Work/study and mental health related characteristics of Digital Work and Study Service clients at the time of commencement (MDS data)

Data presented in tables 1 and 2 above indicate that the DWSS reached young people from its particular target groups:

- It reached young people with work and/or study needs, with: close to half (41 per cent) not working or studying when they started engaging with the DWSS; less than one quarter receiving support from another employment agency; and approximately one quarter (24 per cent) recorded as being Early School Leavers (compared to approximately 15 per cent of the general population).
- It reached young people with complex needs, with the majority of clients experiencing vocational and/or non-vocational barriers (63 per cent and 74 per cent respectively).
- 4.1 per cent of DWSS clients identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 4.4 per cent of the general population aged 15 to 24).
- Three quarters (75 per cent) recorded Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale ratings that indicated high or very high psychological distress (compared to approximately 16.5 per cent of the general population).

- The percentage of DWSS clients in non-metropolitan locations (28 per cent) was the same as the percentage of the whole population in non-metropolitan locations (28 per cent).

What were the specific work/study needs of the young people who used the DWSS?

All client survey respondents (n=74) were required to provide a qualitative comment about why they chose to use the service. Nearly all comments indicated strong alignment with the types of issues which the DWSS is specifically designed to assist. Some examples of reasons provided by young people included:

I initially had trouble breaking into the work force and was not particularly job-ready. At the time I had a lot on my plate and Digital Work and Study Service assisted me in navigating the job market. (Male, 22 years old, Major City)

I was struggling to find work and confidence had become very low, disrupting other areas of my life. (Male, 24 years old, Regional)

At the time, I had genuine concerns about the possibility of having to move out from my parents on bad terms. I knew that it was essential that I found work as quickly as possible to give myself better chances if that were to occur. I tried to find all the support I could. (Trans, 19 years old, Metropolitan)*

Because I have had a [hard] time getting a job and I have handed in heaps of job resumes to sadly no avail or success. (Female, 20 years old, Regional)

Feeling depressed at university and unsure how to balance work and study. (Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

Isolated, unemployed, living rural. (Male, 21 years old, Regional)

I was having difficulty getting a job with no previous experience. (Male, 17 years old, Metropolitan)

I had trouble finding a job for a year after applying for more than 50 jobs. (Female, 16 years old, Metropolitan)

Due to my social anxiety I wanted some help understanding how to get a job, make a resume and present myself as I'd never had a job before. (Female, 19 years old, Regional)

I was so confused and overwhelmed with study and couldn't deal. (Female, 25 years old, Metropolitan)

These qualitative survey data (provided directly by young people) can be compared to quantitative MDS data (recorded by staff) about young people's primary goal in using the service. This information is collected in clients' first session only. Figure 2 displays the goals that can be selected and the percentage of clients assigned to each goal. Again these data indicate alignment between the reasons selected and the type of support the DWSS offers. As shown, the majority of clients (57 per cent) contact the service for assistance gaining work.



Figure 2: Clients' primary goal in using the Digital Work and Study Service (MDS data)

Did young people become aware of the Digital Work and Study Service via the expected channels?

headspace services were expected to be the main referral sources for the DWSS. As shown in Table 3, at the end of June 2018, most referrals had come from headspace centres (47 per cent of referrals), followed by eheadspace (22 per cent of referrals).

How clients became aware of the Digital Work and Study Service	Percentage of clients	
Heard about it from someone/a service provider/they were referred	headspace centre staff	47%
	eheadspace staff	22%
	Friend	3%
	Family member	3%
	Other	6%
Found it online (e.g. Google, a website, social media)	18%	
Advertised or in the media	1%	

Table 3: Detail about how Digital Work and Study Service clients became aware of the service (MDS data)

Did the Digital Work and Study Service deliver services as planned?

During the funding period, the DWSS provided 5,086 work and study support sessions across the 628 episodes of care. The average number of sessions per client was 8.4 (Range 1 to 91; SD=9.5). Figure 3 provides a breakdown of sessions by service type. As shown, most services (54 per cent) related to work assistance and 15 per cent related to study assistance. Figure 4 provides detail about the types of work assistance provided. As shown, 25 per cent of work assistance sessions related to helping young people with resumes and 17 per cent related to helping young people with job applications.

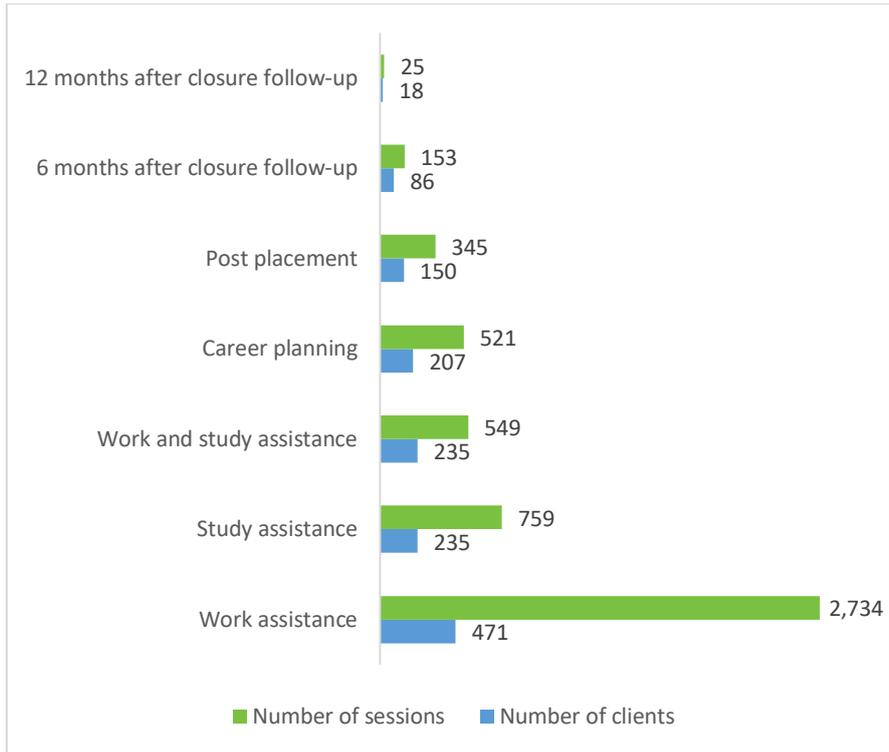


Figure 3: Breakdown of Digital Work and Study Service delivered during the funding period (MDS data)

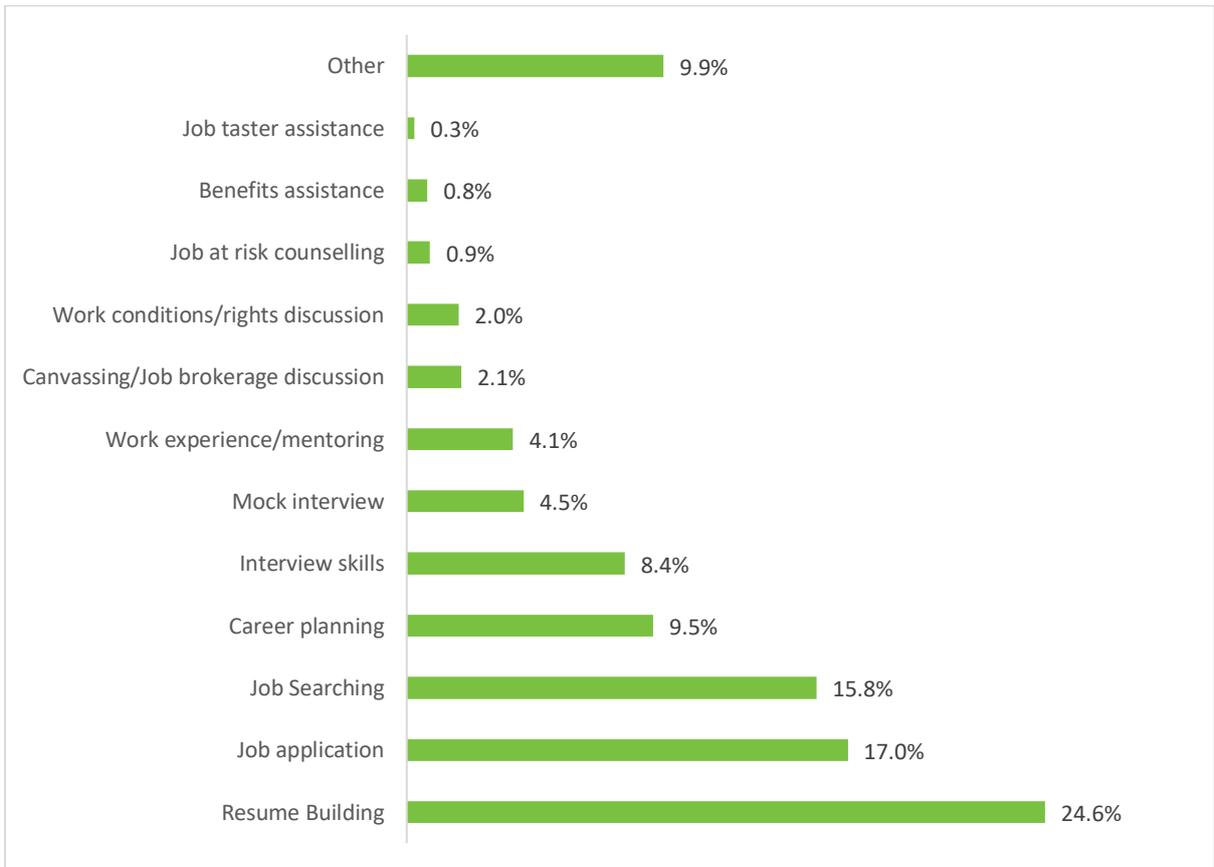


Figure 4: Breakdown of work assistance sessions (MDS data)

In addition to full work and study support sessions, the DWSS provided close to 20,000 additional sessions (n=18,466). These included brief work/study support sessions, indirect sessions, clinical sessions (delivered by the DWSS Clinical Advisor), and administrative sessions. Table 4 provides a breakdown of these session types.

	Number of clients	Number of sessions
Brief work and study support ¹	579	3856
Indirect sessions ²	580	5299
Clinical sessions	102	599
Administrative sessions ³	584	8712

¹ Brief work and study support sessions occur when young people are provided with some work/study advice/guidance, but do not require (or it is not possible to provide) a full work/study session.

² Indirect sessions include case review/care planning sessions, secondary consultations, liaison with headspace centres and other care/support providers and referrals.

³ Administrative sessions include appointment scheduling and other administrative tasks.

Table 4: Supplementary sessions delivered by the Digital Work and Study Service (MDS data)

How did young people utilise the various digital service modes?

Figure 5 provides detail about the mode of work and study sessions delivered during the funding period. As shown, the majority of services were provided via the phone (59 per cent)⁹ or email (34 per cent). Data regarding the appropriateness of the digital modes on offer are presented in Section 4.2 of this report.

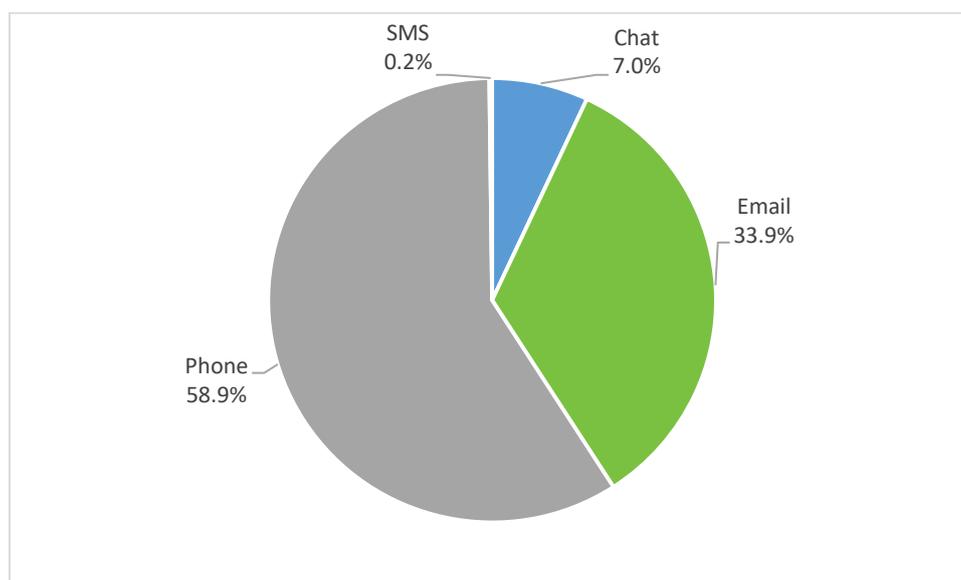


Figure 5: Mode of work and sessions (MDS data)

⁹ Some sessions categorised as 'Phone' sessions—including mock interviews with the Corporate Partners—were video conferencing sessions.

4.1.3 Was the Digital Work and Study Service implemented as planned?

As detailed in the above section on 'Delivering the Digital Work and Study Service', the DWSS was largely implemented as planned. Two minor exceptions in this regard included:

- *Revised target numbers:* Initially, the DWSS was contractually required to provide 700 episodes of care across its two years of funding. Six months into service delivery, negotiation with the Department of Jobs and Small Business was required in order to lower the target to 600 as the service took longer than expected to gain momentum. The slower than expected start was mainly due the infancy of the service and the need to invest more time in networking and relationship building with headspace centres (the key referral source for the DWSS). While eheadspace referrals were relatively consistent across the two years, referrals from headspace centres increased dramatically over time. Importantly, by the end of the two year funding period the DWSS had met its target number.
- *Changes to the clinical role:* The clinical role with the DWSS team was adjusted over time in line with key learnings. Initially, the predominant focus of the clinical role was on providing clinical support directly to DWSS clients. While managing clinical governance, policies and procedures was a component of the role, the focus was on direct clinical work. Over time it was determined that the development of appropriate clinical governance, policies and procedures was a bigger piece of work than expected. The clinical role was subsequently adjusted to more of a leadership and advisory role, and expanded to: include responsibility for developing systems to ensure clinical oversight of all clients (by way of comprehensive care plans); and providing clinical supervision to work and study staff. While a component of the clinical role is to provide direct clinical support to young people who do not have any other clinical supports available, where possible young people are linked in with appropriate clinical support from other headspace (and external) services.

This has all evolved over time...in a positive way to ensure the mental health safety of young people within the service.

(Manager of Vocational Services)

4.2 Appropriateness

This section presents data from each data source that sheds light on the appropriateness of the Digital Work and Study Service.

4.2.1 Client survey data

Overall experience

Client survey respondents were presented with a range of broad statements about their overall experience with the DWSS and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each statement. Figure 6 displays the statements and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded the statements was, “Thinking about your overall experience with the DWSS, to what extent do you agree (or disagree) that...” Responses indicate very high satisfaction with regard to: appropriateness for its target age range; the type of support provided; the impact of support provided; staff; accessibility; and the extent to which it aligns with expectations.



Figure 6: Young people’s overall satisfaction with the Digital Work and Study Service (client feedback survey; n=68)

Qualitative comments about overall satisfaction

In line with 88 per cent of survey respondents indicating that they found the service valuable, a number of survey respondents provided open-text comments that indicated high satisfaction with the service overall:

The Digital Work and Study Service [is] an amazing program that I strongly believe should be expanded to the rest of the country - anyone should be able to access services like these given the current state of youth unemployment in Australia.

(Trans, 19 years old, Metropolitan)*

The support I received was...something I desperately needed at that time.

(Male, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

All I can say that all aspects of headspace have been complete life changers and savers...[I] feel that there are a lot of people that would benefit from their service.

(Trans, 22 years old, Metropolitan)*

It's been so great to feel supported and I don't know what I would have done without [the Digital Work and Study Service].

(Female, 25 years old, Metropolitan)

Qualitative comments about DWSS staff

In line with the vast majority of survey respondents (88 per cent) indicating that they were satisfied with DWSS staff, a number of young people provided qualitative comments that indicated high satisfaction with staff. A selection of comments included:

I felt so comfortable with my counsellor. I really liked how she made sure that what I was choosing was what I really wanted. We went through a few different options, but she was patient and understanding in letting me discover exactly what I was interested in. I didn't at all feel pressured to just choose something I felt lukewarm about, and I'm very thankful for that.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

The staff member I worked with was very supportive, non-judgemental, knowledgeable, and just went the extra mile to make sure I succeeded.

(Male, 17 years old, Metropolitan)

The staff were extremely friendly and understanding of my personal situation and how employment would fit into that. It was important that they had this holistic understanding.

(Trans, 19 years old, Metropolitan)*

The person who contacted me was friendly and supportive. She made me feel valued.

(Female, 18 years old, Metropolitan)

A couple of young people commented that they had found it challenging that they did not have consistency in the staff member they worked with. One made the point that she did not appreciate having to retell her story which left her “back at the starting point more than needed”. This young person also commented that she would have found it helpful if staff kept better records of young people’s preferences in terms of things such as preferred mode of contact and times of availability for appointments:

I requested to use the phone [instead of] the internet due to lack of connection out here. Most of my appointments were over the internet anyway. I also gave specific note of when I wasn't available so my appointments wouldn't be a hassle. They were a hassle none the less because that note was ignored.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

Appropriateness of the key components

Client survey respondents were presented with a range of statements about the appropriateness of key components of the DWSS and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each one. Figure 7 displays the statements and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded the statements was, “To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that it is important that services such as the DWSS...” As shown, feedback indicates that the lack of restrictions with regard to who can access the service, the flexibility of the service with regard frequency of contact, the capacity for young people to remain anonymous and the fact that the service is voluntary are all components that the vast majority of clients regard as important.



Figure 7: Appropriateness of the key components of the Digital Work and Study Service (client feedback survey; n=67)

Qualitative comments about accessibility

A number of survey respondents commented on the extent to which they found the DWSS accessible and regarded this accessibility as important. Some examples include:

Accessibility to everyone is very important.

(Male, 23 years old, Metropolitan)

[A key benefit of the Digital Work and Study Service] was that it was over the phone so I didn't have to drive to a centre every week.

(Female, 18 years old, Regional)

I could just talk from home where I felt comfortable.

(Female, 15 years old, Metropolitan)

No travel required, super flexible hours, convenience of online appointments.

(Male, 20 years old, Metropolitan)

Importantly, however, a small number of young people provided comments that indicated that they did not find the service as accessible as they would have liked it to be. Two comments related to disappointment at not being able to arrange an appointment on a Saturday¹⁰.

Setting up an appointment is difficult...I spend days waiting for a reply just to set an appointment day and time via email.

(Female, 20 years old, Regional)

I was unable to get an appointment on Saturday when I had time off work and study...I was so stressed and so time poor, but there was no option to have an appointment on a Saturday.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

Qualitative comments about anonymity/privacy

With regard to the anonymity/privacy of the service, one young person suggested that it would be good if clients could send emails directly to the staff member they are working with rather than to a generic DWSS account accessed by all staff members. The implication was that young people might be more open and honest in their email correspondence if they know that only the staff member they are working with will see what they write.

Maybe would have preferred if each staff member had their own email address, even though I'm sure the whole team has access to all information, it just seems a bit confronting sending an email with personal information to a generic email and not being completely sure who is reading it.

(Female, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

Qualitative comment about being voluntary

One young person commented that they appreciated that the service was voluntary and thought that this improved both access and use:

The voluntary services means there are fewer government regulations and red tape, making it easier to access and use.

(Female, 24 years old, Regional)

Qualitative comments about who drives the level of contact

Qualitative comments indicated that there is some variability in whether contact is driven by DWSS staff or young people. Although the service aims to encourage young people to be the drivers in this regard, open-text comments indicate that some young people thought they were contacted by the service too frequently, and some felt they were not contacted enough. With regard to being contacted too frequently, comments included:

I had grown tired of being contacted so frequently. I had what I needed.

(Male, 20 years old, Metropolitan)

[The main thing I disliked about the service was] the constant phone calls.

(Female, 16 years old, Metropolitan)

¹⁰ The Digital Work and Study Service introduced appointments in 2017.

With regard to not being contacted enough, comments included:

After finishing my allocated three months, I fell into significant anxiety/depression. It was very hard for me to keep looking for work even with the amazing support I received. Perhaps more check-ins after finishing the program would have been useful for me.

(Trans, 19 years old, Metropolitan)*

I feel like I needed more contact and more intensive discussions about what I needed from the service.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

[The main thing I disliked about the service was] no one checked if I ever got a job.

(Male, 20 years old, Metropolitan)

[My suggestion for improvement is to] check in regularly. So we are not left on the other end wondering if the service is gonna contact us.

(Female, 15 years old, Metropolitan)

Appropriateness of offering support via a digital platform

Perceived benefits of working via a digital platform

Client survey respondents were presented with a list of possible benefits of the DWSS providing support via a digital platform rather than in-person, and asked to select those that were relevant to them. They could select as many as applied. Figure 8 displays the list of benefits they were presented with and the percentage of respondents that selected each one. As shown, more than three quarters (78 per cent) indicated that they found it beneficial that no travel was required and close to half (49 per cent) reported that they found it beneficial that the digital platform enabled communication that was less confronting than in-person communication. More than one quarter (27 per cent) indicated that they may not have sought work/study help if in-person support had been the only type of support available.

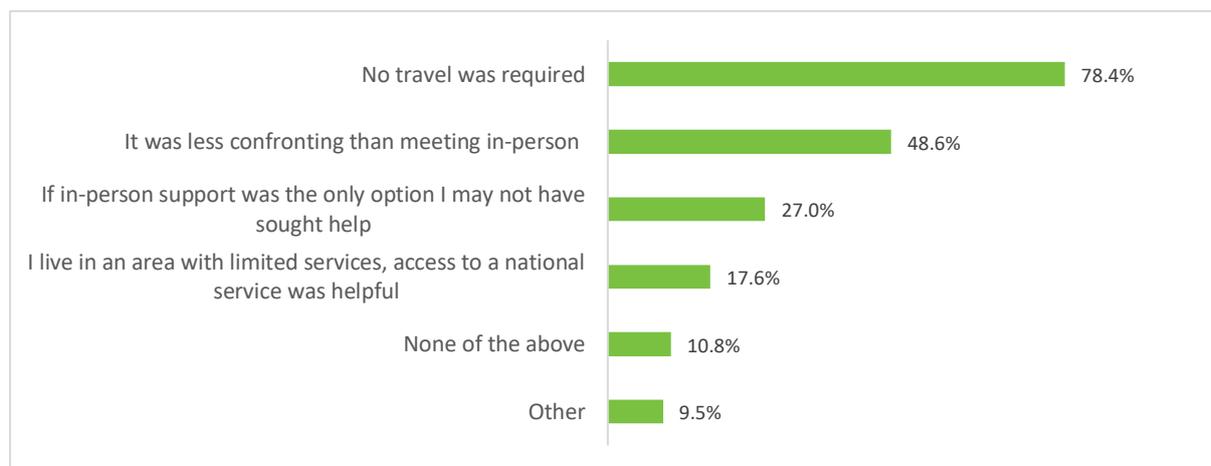


Figure 8: Perceived benefits of working via a digital platform (Client feedback survey; n=68)

The following comments provided by client survey respondents further demonstrate that young people can find the digital nature of the service helpful:

I suffer from social anxiety so doing this digitally was very beneficial to me.

(Female, 19, Metropolitan)

The flexibility of the Digital Work and Study Service was incredibly helpful to my needs...I honestly wish I knew about the service sooner.

(Trans, 22 years old, Metropolitan)*

Perceived challenges of working via a digital platform

Client survey respondents were presented with a list of possible challenges of the DWSS providing support via a digital platform rather than in-person, and asked to select those that were relevant to them. They could select as many as applied. Figure 9 displays the list of challenges they were presented with and the percentage of respondents that selected each one. More than half of respondents (54 per cent) reported that they did not think there were any associated challenges. Interestingly, close to one fifth (19 per cent) indicated that they would have preferred to receive in-person support. Only 12 per cent reported that they found it hard to explain their situation to DWSS staff via the digital platform.

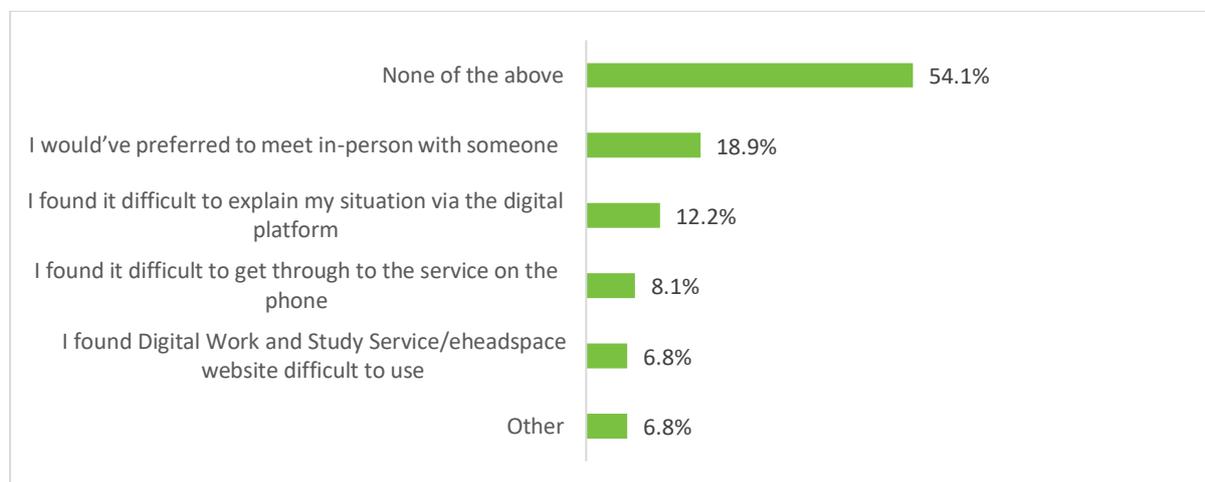


Figure 9: Perceived challenges of working via a digital platform (Client feedback survey; n=68)

Young people were also given the opportunity to provide open-text comments about their experience communicating via a digital platform. A comment by one young person highlighted the benefits that can be associated with communicating digitally:

In person I might have not done the things I could have done when I was right in front of a computer (i.e. submit an application, edit my resume with someone).

(Male, 22 years old, Metropolitan)

While feedback about the digital nature of the DWSS was overwhelmingly positive, comments by two young people indicated that they thought it would be good if the DWSS offered an in-person option, and one young person commented that they found it challenging not being able to see visual cues or get in-person interview experience:

[Being a digital service made] it made it more difficult to practice face to face interviews or strategies to learn.

(Female, 18 years old, Regional)

Appropriateness of assistance with vocational and non-vocational barriers

A key aim of the DWSS is to assist young people to manage vocational and non-vocational barriers impacting on the capacity to achieve their work/study goals. Client survey respondents were asked whether they had faced any obstacles to achieving their work/study goals at the time they first contacted the DWSS. They were presented with a list of obstacles and could select as many as applied.

Obstacles included mental health and wellbeing issues, limited (or no) previous work experience, limited transport options, incomplete education, a disability/disabilities, housing difficulties, regional/remoted location, alcohol or other drug issues, and language or cultural barriers. Respondents who indicated that they faced at least one obstacle (n=63) were presented with two statements about the extent to which the support they received from the DWSS helped them to manage the obstacle(s). They were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each statement. Figure 10 displays the statements and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded the statements was, "To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that the support you received from the DWSS helped you feel..." As shown approximately two thirds indicated that the service had helped them to feel supported in managing their obstacle(s) and better equipped to manage their obstacle(s) going forward (70 per cent and 66 per cent respectively).

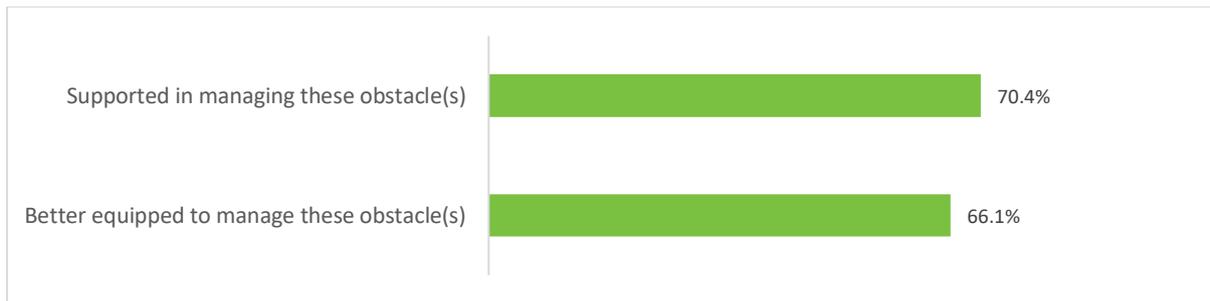


Figure 10: Impact of support from Digital Work and Study Service on managing obstacles if applicable (Client feedback survey; n=63)

One comment from a client survey respondent indicated that there may be room for improvement with regard to how the service works with young people from regional/remote locations. This young person commented that the staff member she had worked with had not understood the challenges associated with living in a regional/remote location. She indicated that she thought it would be valuable if there was greater understanding of these challenges, and suggested it would be good if young people from regional/remote locations could be linked with staff who have had experience in regional/remote locations themselves:

As someone from a rural area I felt misunderstood. The person I was working with didn't seem to have a clue about the limitations I had to deal with and it often left me feeling a strange horrible feeling. I felt like they weren't listening to me and not really understanding how much of an effect these limits had on me. They made many assumptions about my area, assuming we had public transport and suggested I check my area for some services, events, organisations and activities that can only be found in cities not small towns. They didn't seem to understand that in a small town, you don't have facilities to cater to a wide variety of people...Obviously there are probably a lot of young people from rural areas using the service but I'd really recommend that staff from rural areas work with young people from rural areas. The empathy and genuine understanding of the situation would have been so much easier for me to deal with and I feel it would have beneficial for me to hear advice from the perspective of someone who'd been in my position.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

Appropriateness of services and support offered by the Digital Work and Study Service

As outlined on page 32, qualitative comments from the client survey suggest strong alignment between the types of support young people who use the service are seeking, and the services and support the DWSS offers. In line with MDS data that indicated that resumes, interviews skills, and mock interviews were key types of work assistance delivered, a number of client survey respondents commented that they found the mock interviews and assistance with resumes particularly helpful:

I especially liked the mock interview...Please keep continuing the great work!

(Male, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

I loved the mock interview process, and the revisions of my resume. I have a nice looking resume now. They were my two biggest benefits from the service.

(Male, 20 years old, Metropolitan)

4.2.2 MDS data

As outlined on page 29, MDS data demonstrated that the DWSS was able to exceed the adjusted target numbers established with the Department of Jobs and Small Business. This in itself indicates that the service is appropriate in that it is a service that young people want to use. Similarly, MDS data indicate that the majority of young people who use the DWSS use it multiple times—MDS data examined (as reported on page 29) indicated that the average number of work/study services per client was 8.4. This also suggests that young people find it useful and valuable. Another indication from MDS data that young people find the DWSS valuable (and therefore appropriate), is that 24 per cent of young people in MDS data examined were accessing support from another employment service provider. This suggests that the other employment service provider was not meeting the work/study needs of these young people, and that the DWSS was able to address this gap(s).

4.2.3 headspace Centre Manager data

Relevance of the Digital Work and Study Service to headspace centres

The eight headspace Centre Managers surveyed were presented with two statements about perceived need for additional work and study support options in their area, and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each. The statements and the number of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each are presented in Figure 11. As shown, six of the eight indicated that work/study issues are prominent among young people in their area, and seven of the eight indicated that they think it is very important to ensure that young people receive support to address work/study needs.

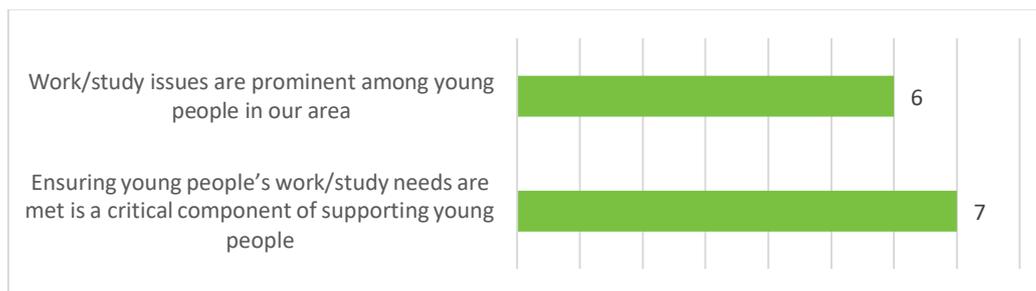


Figure 11: Reported need for the Digital Work and Study Service (headspace Centre Manager survey; n=8)

headspace Centre Managers surveyed were provided with the opportunity to comment on whether they think the DWSS fills a gap. Comments were very positive and included:

Definitely fills a gap. Excellent service that should be expanded and available at all headspace centres.
(headspace Centre Manager)

Definitely does [fill a gap] as a regional centre. Great opportunity for our young people to have experiences and support outside of their usual network.
(headspace Centre Manager)

When asked about other work/study support referral destinations in their area, six of the eight headspace Centre Managers agreed or strongly agreed that that the DWSS was their centre's preferred referral destination for work/study support, and five of the eight agreed or strongly agreed that without the DWSS their centre had limited appropriate work/study referral options.

Is the Digital Work and Study Service valued by headspace Centres?

The eight headspace Centre Managers were also presented with various statements about the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) that the DWSS is helpful (for young people and for staff), and the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) that clinicians at their centre value the DWSS. The statements they were presented with and the number that agreed or strongly agreed are presented in Figure 12. The text that preceded each statement was: "To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that..." As shown, Centre Managers overwhelmingly indicated that they regard the DWSS as valuable, as a referral option for centre staff, and as a service likely to benefit young people.

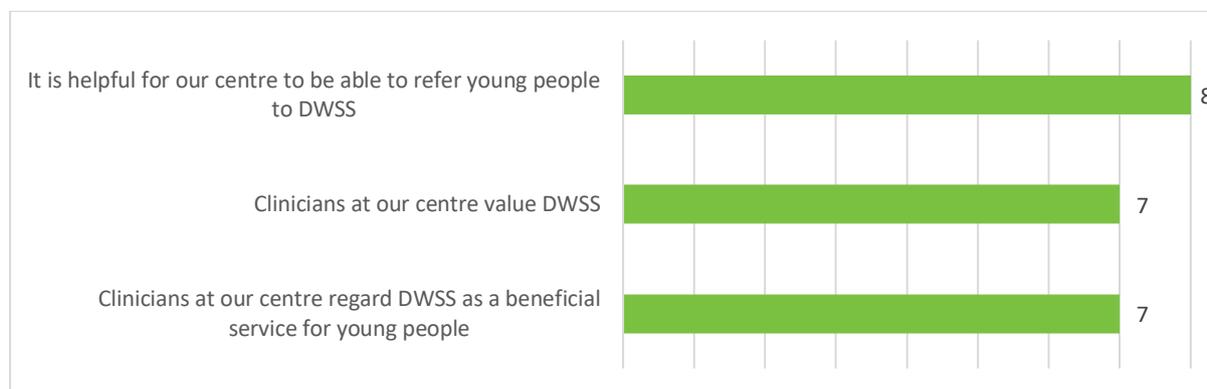


Figure 12: The extent to which headspace Centres values the Digital Work and Study Service (headspace Centre Manager survey; n=8)

Qualitative comments provided by headspace Centre Managers also indicated that centres regard the DWSS as valuable. Comments included:

Very knowledgeable team with targeted support for our clients.

(headspace Centre Manager)

We were chosen as a pilot site due to the severe localised economic downturn. We were impressed the small caseloads, their understanding of mental health issues and their experience with career planning and study pathways.

(headspace Centre Manager)

Does the Digital Work and Study Service fill a gap in headspace services?

The eight headspace Centre Managers surveyed were presented with a number of statements about the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) that for headspace overall, the DWSS fills a gap, and whether they think the service should be continued at an increased capacity. Seven of the eight agreed or strongly agreed that DWSS fills a major gap in headspace services, and seven of the eight agreed or strongly agreed that DWSS should be continued at an increased capacity.

Appropriateness of clinical collaboration

The eight headspace Centre Managers surveyed were presented with various statements about the need for and appropriateness of the clinical collaboration offered by the DWSS, and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each. The statements they were presented with and the number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed are presented in Figure 13. The text that preceded each statement was: "To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that..." As shown, nearly all Centre Managers indicated that they think: it is important that the DWSS has a Clinical Advisor to facilitate clinical collaboration and shared care planning with centres; that clinical collaboration between centres and the DWSS is useful for ensuring consistency of care for young people; and that clinical collaboration is effective.

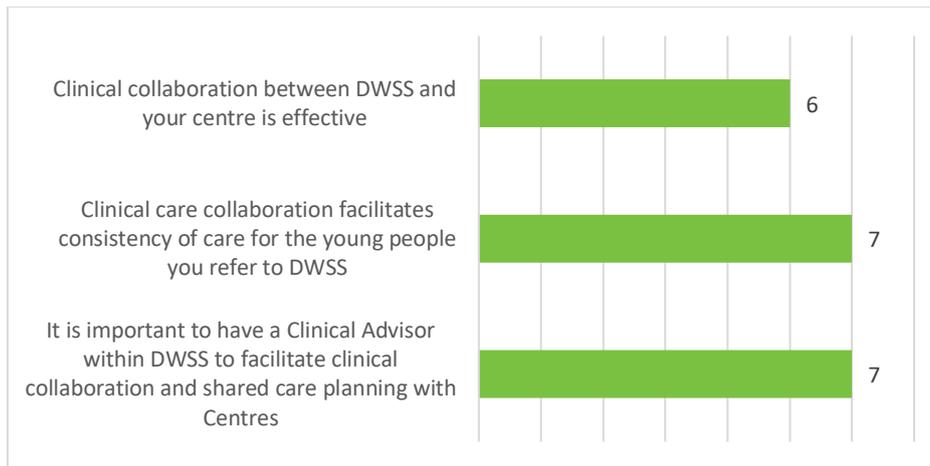


Figure 13: headspace Centre Manager perspectives on the importance of the clinical component of the Digital Work and Study Service (headspace Centre Manager survey; n=8)

The following qualitative comment was provided by a Centre Manager in relation to the collaborative care offered by the DWSS:

Clinicians love the shared care and being kept in the loop and the proactive nature of DWSS where they contact us all the time, we never have to chase them.

(headspace Centre Manager)

4.2.4 Digital Work and Study Service staff data

Appropriateness of offering support via a digital platform

The DWSS staff were provided with the opportunity to comment on what they saw as key strengths of interacting with young people remotely rather than in-person. The following points were made:

- The digital nature of the service makes it highly accessible, particularly for young people with “poor access to transport or those in remote/rural areas”.
- It offers work/study support to those who may not feel ready (or confident enough) to access in-person support. The point was made that digital support can be “less intimidating” and “less intrusive” for young people.
- Young people can be “more open and transparent with the communication and have a tendency to share more information” than they would in an in-person environment.
- If a young person has forgotten their appointment, the service can call them and the appointment can go ahead if the young person is still available. With in-person support this tends not to be possible due to the time taken to reach an appointment location.
- Young people can have the appointment in a “comfortable environment”.
- There are not safety issues for staff.

The DWSS staff were also provided with the opportunity to comment on what they saw as key weaknesses of interacting with young people remotely rather than in-person. The following aspects were raised:

- Not being able to see non-verbal cues can be challenging – “It’s very easy for [young people] to say ‘Yes’ over the phone when really their body language indicates the opposite”. One staff member commented that it can be difficult to get “the full picture of what is going on for [young people]”.
- It can be more challenging to develop a connection. The point was made that it can sometimes be difficult to “build trust and rapport” and get “engagement” and “accountability” from the young person. One staff member highlighted, however, that even in-person these things can be challenging.
- Being a national digital service, staff can lack knowledge of appropriate local support services to which they can refer young people.

- It can be challenging working on documents together (i.e. they need to be sent backwards and forwards via email).
- Staff cannot accompany young people on visits to potential employers.

Appropriateness of a multidisciplinary and diverse team

One of the DWSS staff surveyed commented that he/she thinks the fact that staff come from a range of professional backgrounds and have different skills and qualifications (i.e. the multidisciplinary nature of team) is a key strength of the service. He/she indicated that this has been useful from a staff perspective in terms of being able to draw on other staff members for their expertise and advice. The implication was that this flows through to benefits for young people to in terms of the expert advice and guidance they receive:

I think it has been great to have professional career counsellors, youth workers, Disability Employment Services [workers], Job Services Australia [workers], Youth Foyers [workers]...school experienced staff and an Aboriginal worker. We all have diversity in our skills set and I have learnt a lot from the richness in the team...It allows me to incorporate a different perspective or approach to [young people].
 (Digital Work and Study Service staff member)

Another of the DWSS staff surveyed commented that he/she has found it particularly helpful that the service has staff who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin and who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI). He/she indicated that this greatly helped inform his/her work with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQI young people.

Appropriateness of referral processes

The DWSS staff surveyed (n=6) were asked about the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) that the process of receiving and making referrals works well, and that enough information had been provided to services likely to make referrals to the DWSS. Figure 14 displays the number of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed. As shown, responses indicate that there is room for improvement with regard to receiving and making referrals, and ensuring other services are adequately informed about the DWSS. It is important to note, however, that it was unclear to which service types they were referring as the question did not differentiate between headspace services and non-headspace services. As previously stated, in its first two years the DWSS focussed on streamlining and facilitating referral processes with headspace services as opposed to all services across Australia.

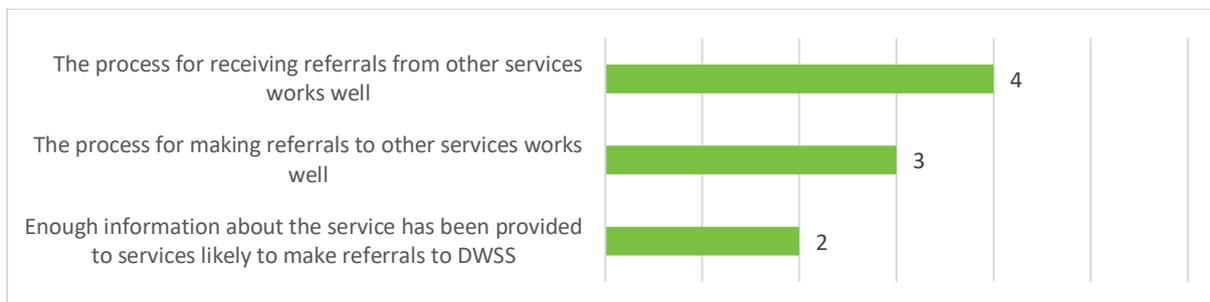


Figure 14: Digital Work and Study Service staff perspectives on processes for making and receiving referrals (Digital Work and Study Service staff survey; n=6)

4.3 Effectiveness

This section presents data that sheds light on the effectiveness of the Digital Work and Study Service. Data relating to effectiveness are largely presented in terms of the data collection method. Expected impacts of the Digital Work and Study Service as outlined in the Program Logic Model (Appendix one) are discussed in this section.

4.3.1 Client survey data

Impact on work/study skills and work/study situation

Survey respondents were presented with a range of statements about the impact the DWSS may have had on their work/study situation and skills, and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each statement. Figure 15 shows the statements they were presented with and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded each statement was: “To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that as a result of working with DWSS...”

As shown, more than three quarters indicated that the service had helped them feel more optimistic about their work/study future, that that they had taken steps towards achieving their work/study goals, and that they had gained skills that would assist them with their work study goals (83 per cent, 79 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively). Importantly, more than half (55 per cent) reported that as a result of working with the DWSS they had achieved their work/study goals.

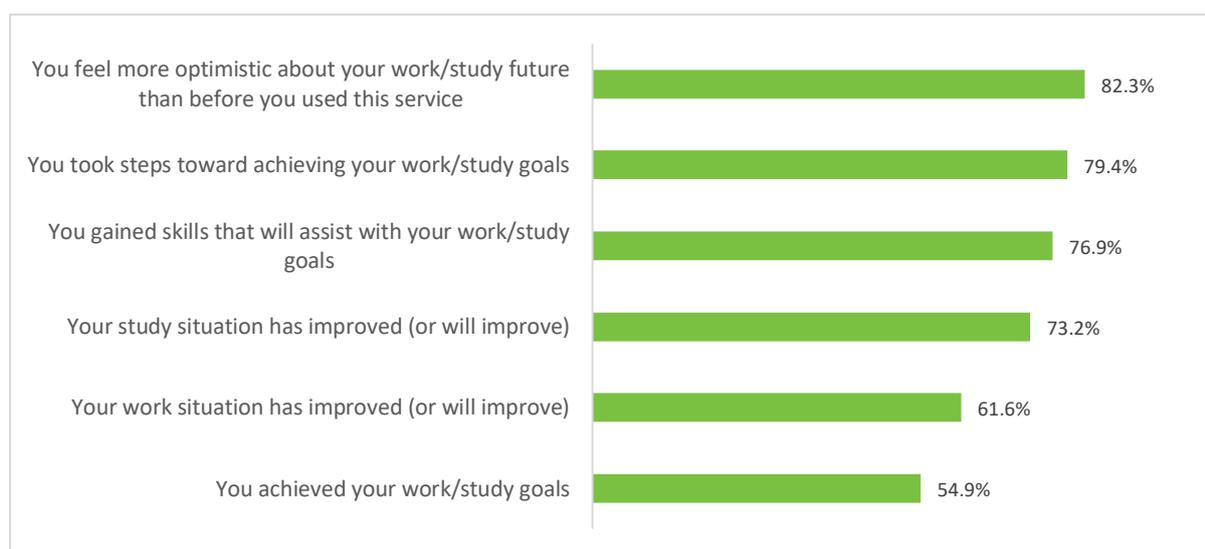


Figure 15: Impact on work/study skills and work/study situation (client feedback survey; n=70)

In addition to three quarters of survey respondents (73 per cent) indicating that their work/study situation had improved (or will improve) as a result of working with the DWSS, a number of survey respondents chose to provide open-text comments about how the service had helped them to improve their work and/or study situation. A selection of these comments include:

I was able to get out of my unhappy working situation and with the help of my worker, was able to successfully find multiple job interviews and gain a new job in a working environment that I am far happier in.

(Female, 15 years old, Metropolitan)

The Digital Work and Study Service has really helped me identify a career I would be passionate about pursuing. My counsellor...helped me immensely with writing resumes, cover letters and responding to selection criteria. She was very supportive and informative in letting me know the paths available to get where I wanted to go.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

I am about to complete my Certificate III thanks to Digital Work and Study, when a year ago it wasn't even on my radar to register for the class.

(Female, 24 years old, Regional)

Shortly after having a few phone appointments with one of the team members I secured a job that I felt happy and secure at. I was helped with my CV, the types of things I should say and do in my interview and also help identifying what my rights were and where to find more resources if I needed it.

(Female, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

It gave me help that I desperately needed. Without a resume I would not have been able to even think about working somewhere else.

(Male, 23 years old, Metropolitan)

The Digital Work service greatly improved my work situation by providing me with effective strategies and skills relating to resume writing and interviews that have allowed me to remain consistently employed at various workplaces over the past year.

(Male, 17 years old, Metropolitan)

They found a lot of things to consider I wouldn't have found on my own.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

The service held me accountable for completing certain tasks by certain dates which was really helpful...I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when started with the service but after speaking with a [Digital Work and Study Service] specialist I decided I wanted to study and I now have offers for Postgrad study from four different universities.

(Female, 24 years old, Regional)

A few young people commented that even though they had not yet achieved their specific work/study objectives, they still felt like the DWSS had provided valuable assistance:

It has helped me improve but my goal hasn't been reached yet. I still really value the work that had been done here and I'm sure I have a better chance of achieving my goal with skills I learned in this program.

(Female, 19 years old, Metropolitan)

I guess it has given me a lot more to think about, and it's given me a bit more confidence when choosing a career path. But I'm still a bit on the fence about the future. Not entirely sure where I'm going but this service definitely showed me some options and how to get there.

(Male, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

The [Digital Work and Study Service] has given me some optimism and new confidence however I can't say some of it has lasted due to personal reasons. My goals have since changed and I've become quite aimless...The biggest thing the [Digital Work and Study Service] has helped me with was interviews and how to be more confident and comfortable in them. I feel much better about the idea of going to an interview and more confident about what I would do and say.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

Impact on mental health and wellbeing (if applicable)

Client survey respondents who had accessed mental health assistance through the DWSS (n=33), were presented with a range of statements about the impact of the service on their capacity to manage their mental health and wellbeing issues. They were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Figure 12 displays the statements and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded the statements was: "To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that the mental health and wellbeing support you received from the DWSS helped you to..."As shown, the vast majority (82 per cent) reported that the DWSS had helped them to understand how their mental health and wellbeing issues were impacting on their work/study situation. More than two thirds reported that the service had helped them to: feel supported in managing their mental health and wellbeing issues; reduce the impact of their mental health and wellbeing issues on their life more generally; and feel better equipped to manage their mental health and wellbeing going forward (72 per cent, 69 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively).



Figure 16: Impact on mental health and wellbeing - if applicable (client feedback survey; n=33)

Some young people chose to comment on mental health assistance provided by the DWSS. These comments were mostly positive, although two comments indicated that the mental assistance offered by the DWSS was not what they expected or felt they needed.

One young person indicated that she felt like the staff member she worked with did not make enough effort to understand the extent to which mental health and wellbeing issues were impacting on their wellbeing. The young person highlighted that as a result she did not feel like the DWSS was helping her effectively:

I feel like the mental health assistance was very short lived and it was hard to communicate my distress. I received many comments about how friendly and happy and confident I was on the phone, so it felt like there was this expectation that I was much better off than I really was. I feel if we had been speaking in person this may have been different. In general I find talking with headspace staff to feel more like talking to someone who wants to be my friend rather than my doctor. Whilst that is what some people need and whilst it works for them, it doesn't have this same effect on me. It was nice to receive help but it felt like they didn't know everything they needed to about my mental state and so my phone calls with them started to feel unnecessary as I wasn't really getting what I wanted out of them.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

Another young person commented they would have appreciated more comprehensive mental health support, and that the work/study advice they received did not sufficiently take into account their mental health situation:

There was limited mental health support (if any) and most of the focus was getting me a job. I really wish they'd tailored my job search to things that would be applicable to my mental health situation. There were some good suggestions.

(Male, 20 years old, Metropolitan)

This young person did go on to say, however, "At the time it helped greatly because I needed my resume reviewed and the confidence to do an interview and be followed up."

Positive comments included:

I was pleasantly surprised by the genuine, caring support that I received in regards to my depression. [The staff member I worked with] was wonderful in understanding my personality type, and hence providing specific advice that would be well received by me. I learnt a lot more about how I was feeling, which helped me understand it and control it more. It was not only intellectually enlightening, but had a positive impact on my mental health. I always felt supported and understood. [The staff member I worked with] is always patient and is an amazing listener.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

The person I talked to was likely the reason I didn't end up homeless and hungry! I was feeling very overwhelmed, depressed and was spending days in bed, not eating instead of trying to find work. The Digital Work and Study Service helped turn all that around, I got a job I enjoyed, didn't miss a rent payment and got my life back on track!

(Female, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

My counsellors provided me with wonderful mental [health] support as I am currently dealing with depression. I now have direction in my life and I am extremely grateful for the help I've received. I definitely feel much better than I did when I first began using the service.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

Interestingly, comments provided by a couple of young people indicated that some young people are purely interested in accessing work/study support and do not want to discuss mental health issues alongside this. When asked if there was anything they disliked about the service, one of the young people commented, “the pressure to give information about mental health”.

Identification of work/study goals and impact on work/study confidence and support

Survey respondents were presented with various statements about whether the DWSS helped them to identify work/study goals, and to feel confident and supported with regard to their work/study future. They were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each statement. Figure 17 displays the statements they were presented with and the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each one. The text that preceded each statement was: “To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that DWSS helped you to...” Nearly all respondents (90 per cent) indicated that the DWSS had helped them feel supported in pursuing their work/study goals. More than three quarters indicated that the service had helped them to: identify work/study goals; feel more confident about work/study interviews and/or application; feel confident that they can achieve their work/study goals; and feel confident that they can manage their work/study situation going forward.



Figure 17: Identification of work/study goals and impact on work/study confidence and support (client feedback survey; n=70)

While 84 per cent of survey respondents indicated that the DWSS had helped them to identify work/study goals, one young person commented that he/she found the pacing too fast, and thought the staff member should have spent more time getting to know and understand them before setting goals to work towards.

I think the pacing was too fast, there needed to be more time spent figuring out what I needed from the service and how this could be provided to me. I feel like if we'd explored me as a person more and looked into my limitations and how to work around them, we could have had more concrete goals to work towards so it would feel like real progress was happening.

(Female, 19 years old, Regional)

An open-text comment provided by one young person with a disability indicated that he/she had found the service helpful in terms of increasing his/her work/study confidence.

I suffer from a disability...I'm part of small percentage of other Australians that suffer with this...I'm remarked as "one of the worst cases" of this disease. It's very hard to manage my [day-to-day] life and has impacted my self-esteem. I also live in an "unhappy" household...Since contacting the Digital Work and Study Service, I have found a little bit of confidence into how to enter the workforce and find education that would help me get closer to a well-paid career that is related to my interests. While my

personal and family life does drag down a huge amount...that little amount of progress we gained is still momentous compared to [not] ever accessing the service.

(Male, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

Impact of working with the Digital Work and Study Service beyond work/study outcomes

Client survey respondents were presented with a range of statements about the impact of the DWSS beyond work/study outcomes and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (or disagreed) with each statement. Figure 18 displays the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. The text that preceded the statements was: "To what extent do you agree (or disagree) that as a result of working with DWSS..." As shown, three quarters (75 per cent) reported that as a result of working with the DWSS they felt more optimistic about the future, and more than two thirds (68 per cent) indicated that as a result of working with the service their general wellbeing had improved.

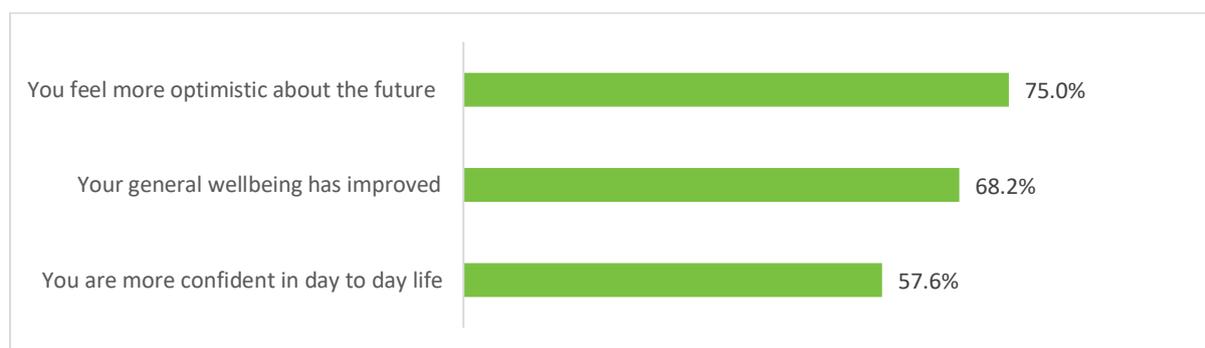


Figure 18: Broad impact of working with the Digital Work and Study Service (client feedback survey; n=70)

Open-text comments in relation to the broad impact of the service in terms of optimism and confidence indicate young people find the service valuable in these ways:

The person I worked with...really made me feel a lot better about my situation and gave me hope.

(Female, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

I am so glad I found this service. My quality of life has really improved with the support I've received, and I wouldn't have done it on my own.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

It gave me the confidence to get out there and find a job. I now work in a place that I love and my life has improved a lot since Digital Work and Study Service.

(Female, 18 years old, Metropolitan)

[The Digital Work and Study Service] gave me the tools to be more confident and enrol in masters of marketing.

(Female, 24 years old, Metropolitan)

A comment by another young person indicated that his/her experience of the service was that it was non-judgemental:

There was no judgement, whatever your work/study situation was the staff tried to help you with your situation as best as they could and didn't compare you to others doing worse or better than you.

(Male, 21 years old, Metropolitan)

4.3.2 MDS data

Analyses of MDS data were undertaken to explore the percentage of DWSS clients who achieved: positive work/study outcomes during their time with the service; an improvement in their readiness for work and/or study; and a positive change in their social and occupational functioning. A restricted sample was used for these analyses as described on page 21.

It is important to acknowledge and highlight that while these data provide an indication of how the DWSS might help young people, it is not possible to determine the direct (i.e. causal) impact of the service on young people’s work/study outcomes as these outcomes may be attributable to other factors such as other services they are receiving.

Positive work/study changes

As noted on page 21, a positive work/study outcome is defined as: gained work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) – if they did not previously have a job; gained a better job than the one they had (i.e. one they enjoy more, one aligned with study, one with a higher salary); increased work hours; resolved job at risk; engagement in Path Program (PaTH); obtained placement); obtained job taster; obtained volunteer placement; began study – if they weren’t previously studying; swapped to a course/training that was ‘better’ than what they were previously studying (i.e. something more likely to lead to good job outcomes, something they enjoy more); increased study; and resolved study at risk.

Analyses revealed that more than half of clients examined (n=70; 55 per cent) achieved at least one positive work and/or study outcome during their time with the service.

Analyses were undertaken to explore whether there was an association between the number of sessions received and whether positive work/study outcomes were achieved. These analyses indicated that the higher the number of sessions received, the higher the percentage of young people who achieved a positive work and/or study outcome during their time with the service. Figure 19 displays the percentage of clients who achieved a positive work/study change broken down by various session groupings (2 to 4 sessions, 5 to 9 sessions, 10 or more sessions). As shown, among clients who received two to four sessions (n=43), 37 per cent achieved a positive work and/or study outcome; among clients who received 5 to 9 sessions (n=37), 54 per cent achieved a positive work and/or study outcome; and among clients who received 10 or more sessions (n=47), 72 per cent achieved a positive work and/or study outcome. As previously stated, the average number of sessions per client was 8.4.

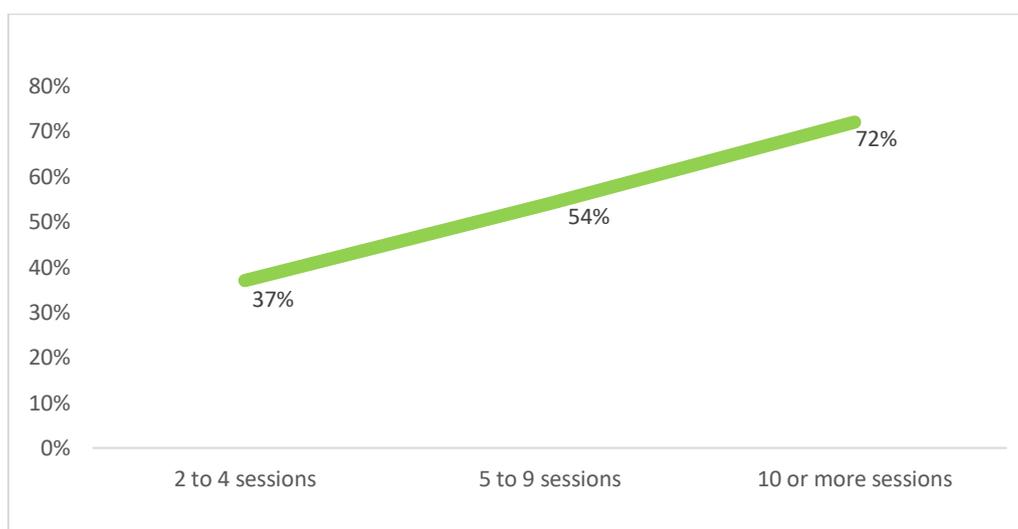


Figure 19: The percentage of clients who achieved positive work/study changes broken down by number of work/study sessions received – categories (MDS data)

Outcomes for young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) when they commenced with the Digital Work and Study Service

Analyses were undertaken to explore what percentage of those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) when they commenced with the DWSS, obtained a job (or job placement) and/or a study placement during their time with the service. This analysis indicated that of those who were NEET when they commenced (n=58), 47 per cent (n=27) obtained a job, job placement and/or study placement during their time with the service. Among this cohort there was also an increase in outcomes as the number of sessions increased (see Table 5). Specifically, among those who received two to four sessions (n=19), 37 per cent obtained a job, job placement and/or study placement; among those who received five to nine sessions (n=21) 38 per cent obtained a job, job placement and/or study placement; and among those who received 10 or more sessions (n=18), 67 per cent obtained a job, job placement and/or study placement.

	Gained a positive work/study placement during their time with the DWSS
Two to four sessions (n=19)	37%
Five to nine sessions (n=21)	38%
Ten or more sessions (n=18)	67%

Table 5: The percentage of clients who were NEET when they commenced, who achieved a work or study placement broken down by number of work/study sessions received (MDS data)

Changes in readiness for work and study

As described in the Methodology section of this report (page 21), in every work/study session they have with young people, Digital Work and Study staff make an assessment of young people's readiness for work and/or study (if applicable). For clients who had at least two ratings, first ratings were compared to final recorded ratings. Table 7 displays changes in work readiness and Table 8 displays changes in study readiness.

As shown in Table 6, of the 25 young people who were only contemplating working at the start of their time with the DWSS, 72 per cent of these young people (n=18) had progressed to either preparing for work (e.g. preparing a resume), actively looking for a job, or had secured a job by the time of their last session in the reporting period examined. Across all young people with two ratings of readiness for work (n=121), 59 per cent had progressed to an improved stage by the time of their last session in the reporting period examined.

As shown in Table 7, of the 11 young people who were not even contemplating studying at the start of their time with the DWSS, 73 per cent of these young people (n=8) had progressed to either contemplating study, preparing for study (e.g. preparing an application for a course), actively looking for a suitable course, or had secured a study placement by the time of their last session in the reporting period examined. Across all young people with two ratings of readiness for study (n=99), 58 per cent had progressed to an improved stage by the time of their last session in the reporting period examined.

		Final readiness for work stage recorded						Total	Percentage that improved
		Pre-contemplation about working	Contemplation for working	Determination/preparation for working	Active stage of job seeking	Maintaining job seeking activities for at least six months	Working		
First readiness for work stage recorded	Pre-contemplation about working	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	100%*
	Contemplation for working	1	6	5	8	1	4	25	72%
	Determination/ preparation for working	2	4	8	7	3	9	33	58%
	Active stage of job seeking	0	0	5	16	1	17	39	46%
	Maintaining job seeking activities for at least six months	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0%*
	Working	1	0	0	2	0	18	21	N.A.
Total		4	11	18	34	6	48	121	59%

Table 6: Changes in work readiness during the reporting period – if applicable (MDS data)

		Final readiness for study stage recorded						Total	Percentage that improved
		Pre-contemplation about studying	Contemplation for studying	Determination/preparation for studying	Active stage of seeking study	Maintaining study seeking activities for at least six months	Studying		
First readiness for study stage recorded	Pre-contemplation about studying	3	3	0	1	0	4	11	73%
	Contemplation for studying	1	9	4	0	1	8	23	57%
	Determination/ preparation for studying	0	1	1	2	0	3	7	71%
	Active stage of seeking study	0	1	4	6	2	8	21	48%
	Maintaining study seeking activities for at least six months	0	1	0	0	3	3	7	43%
	Studying	0	1	1	2	1	25	30	N.A.
Total		4	16	10	11	7	51	99	58%

Table 7: Changes in study readiness during the reporting period – if applicable (MDS data)

Positive changes in social and occupational functioning as assessed via the Social and Occupational Functioning Assessment Scale

Of the 127 clients whose outcome data were analysed, 64 had a SOFAS rating recorded in their first session as well as a follow-up SOFAS rating. As stated on page 21, follow-up SOFAS ratings are only recorded if clients receive 'post placement' sessions with the DWSS; that is, if they achieve a work or study placement and maintain contact with the service. First recorded SOFAS ratings were subtracted from last recorded SOFAS ratings to explore change over time. These analyses indicated that between their first and last ratings, clients increased by an average of 5.9 points on the SOFAS scale (where an increase indicates improved functioning as described on page 21). In total, close to two thirds (n=40; 63 per cent) moved to a higher SOFAS score between their first and last ratings, 17 per cent (n=11) stayed the same, and 20 per cent (n=13) moved to a lower SOFAS between the first and last ratings.

4.3.3 The perspective of the Manager of Vocational Services

The Manager of Vocational Services highlighted that the soft skill development the DWSS can help young people to achieve (in terms of confidence, self-determination and sense of worth) cannot be underestimated in terms of impact on young people's sense of worth and hope for the future, and on young people's capacity to take bigger steps forward. She made the point that despite the importance of soft skill development, it tends not to hold as much weight with funders in comparison to outcomes such as work and study placements:

What we're finding is the service is just as much about the journey...Some of these young people come in and they can't make a decision, they have no interest in life or themselves – they think they're worthless, they can't even pitch a short-term goal. So achievement [for them] is feeling like they're actually worth something and realising that they've got some interests and things they care about. That is huge. How do you represent that in an outcome measure of funding? You just can't. But without that, they [can't take] the next step of setting a short-term goal, or building their knowledge around a particular area...or doing some voluntary work or doing some training...All of these little steps...It's like we presume they're just going to jump straight into something, and these are vulnerable young people, that's just not the way it works.

(Manager of Vocational Services)

The Manager of Vocational Services commented that the strengths-based and soft skill development approach that the DWSS takes to supporting young people has the potential to assist young people in the long-term. She made the point that the development of these kinds of skills may be more effective in the longer term than pushing young people into inappropriate work or study placements:

On paper it might not be a job or study, but it's a massive step from where they came from, and it's all because of what [the Digital Work and Study Service has] done to engage them and help them along that journey. It's got to count for something. Otherwise we just keep doing the same thing – pushing them into jobs and they keep falling out, pushing them into jobs and they keep falling out - without building the supports, and the strengths, and the protective factors and the resilience for them to be able to do that and stay there.

(Manager of Vocational Services)

Section 5: Discussion and recommendations

This section provides a discussion of key evaluation findings, and makes some suggestions and recommendations with regard to the future of the service and aspects of the service that may benefit from consideration/modification.

5.1 Discussion of key findings

Evaluation findings suggest that the DWSS is feasible, acceptable, and provides a range of benefits to participants. The infographic on pages 6 and 7 demonstrates some key findings from the evaluation in relation to the implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness of the DWSS. These findings suggest that that the DWSS is effective in its aims to help young people to:

1. Understand their work and/or study goals,
2. Know how to reach their work and/or study goals,
3. Are equipped to reach and maintain their work and/or study goals, and
4. Are equipped to understand and manage vocational and non-vocational barriers (including mental health and wellbeing issues) impacting on their capacity to achieve their work and/or study goals.

Evaluation findings also demonstrate that the DWSS is effective in increasing the extent to which young people seek and attain work/study outcomes, and effective in increasing young people's sense of self-efficacy and independence in managing their work/study situation, and their optimism for the future.

It is important to note, however, that given the lack of a comparator group it is not possible to attribute causality of these benefits to the DWSS.

The evaluation also noted areas for improvement with regard to reaching a greater proportion of: young men; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; and young people from regional and remote locations. Additional potential areas for improvement as indicated by the evaluation include: increasing the extent to which young people understand who drives contact (the young people themselves or DWSS staff); ensuring young people's experience of the service aligns with key components of the DWSS (e.g. with regard to accessibility); and improving referral processes between the DWSS and referral agencies. It is recognised that the DWSS is in the process of adjusting the service in these regards.

In conclusion, a substantial amount of work was undertaken to establish the DWSS and the service has considerable potential to contribute to filling a major gap in service delivery across the four core streams that headspace centres are expected to provide (mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drugs, and vocational services). Its design was based on strong evidence, and findings from the process and early impact evaluation suggest it is effective in achieving its aims to help young people achieve important work/study outcomes and that the digital nature of the service is appropriate. Feedback from headspace centres shows the DWSS is a valued and useful referral source. Now that it is established, the DWSS is potentially upscalable to provide effective work and study support to young people across the country (including in regional and remote areas) at a relative low cost.

5.2 Recommendations

Evaluation findings (recognising the limitations of the evaluation methodology), provide strong support for the continuation of the DWSS within headspace, subject to the following recommendations for improvement.

- *Consider ways to better reach and assist young men* - the DWSS was less effective at engaging young men than young women.
- *Determine better ways to reach and assist young people who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander* - young people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin experience greater disadvantage than non-Indigenous young people, yet the evaluation data indicate the service reached slightly less Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people than the national percentage of young people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- *Expand the DWSS across the headspace centre network* - in the first two years of operation the DWSS targeted only a small number of headspace centres and these found the service to be valuable and important. Now that the DWSS is established, it is recommended that the service engage with a greater number of headspace centres across Australia, particularly those in regional and remote locations where young people have less access to alternative work/study supports and there is a high population of Indigenous young people. Increased resourcing would be required, however, for the service to be promoted to all centres.
- *Undertake further research and evaluation* - further research and evaluation needs to be undertaken to explore the impacts and outcomes of the service. Ideally, a randomised controlled trial would be able to establish causality and an economic evaluation would identify the potential value and long-term cost savings the service can achieve.

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Appendices

Appendix one: Program logic model





The service held me accountable for completing certain tasks by certain dates which was really helpful...I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when started with the service but after speaking with a [Digital Work and Study Service] specialist I decided I wanted to study and I now have offers for Postgrad study from four different universities.

(Digital Work and Study Service client, Female, 24 years old, Regional)

