

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

2018-2019 RESEARCH REPORT



Introduction

In a 2016 survey of young people aged 12-25, parents, and services in Mansfield, designed to inform the development of a Youth Strategy, mental health was clearly identified as a significant issue of concern.

Mansfield Shire Council received Local Partnership Project funding from the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership to develop a community wide strategy to address youth mental health issues in Mansfield.

The over-arching objective of this project was to identify and implement strategies aimed towards improving the mental health of young people. The project employed a project officer to develop initiatives to increase the mental health knowledge of young people and to begin to identify the barriers to seeking help for emerging or current mental health issues in young people.

Key Objectives included:

- Support coordination and collaboration of existing service providers
- Support the coordination in the provision of additional needed services to Mansfield
- Provide recommendations of gaps in service, the effects of this on young people and what could be implemented to improve services.
- Increase the mental health knowledge of families, friends and associates of young people
- Reduce barriers to seeking help for emerging or current mental health issues in young people
- Increase awareness of professional help
- Decrease stigma and build community resilience to address common mental health problems

The Youth Mental Health Project also aligned with all 3 strategic priorities in the CHPCP Strategic Plan and outcomes, which all focus on good mental health in the community.

Key Partners

Mansfield Shire Council

Mansfield District Hospital

Central Hume Primary Care Partnership



Problems to be Addressed

National statistics show that

- 1/5 (20%) Australians aged (16-85) experience a mental illness in any year
- The onset of mental illness is typically around mid-late adolescents and Australian Youth (18-24) have the highest prevalence of mental illness than any other age group.
- 1/5 (20%) of young people (15-19) meet the criteria for a probable serious mental illness
- 54% of people with mental illness do not access any treatment

Based on the national statistics, there could be up to 290 young people experiencing a mental health illness (20% of 1459).

2016 Youth Survey:

324 young people aged 12-25 (250 below 18, 74 above 18), 14 service providers and 70 parents completed a youth survey.

Young people identified the following key issues

- Drugs (other than alcohol and cigarettes)
- Bullying
- Family issues

Concern about mental health spiked with age. 40% of young people above 18 listed mental health as a key concern, whilst 20% young people aged 12-18 listed it as a concern.

The main presenting issue to services was parenting and family issues followed by mental health.

Outcome

Support coordination and collaboration of existing service providers

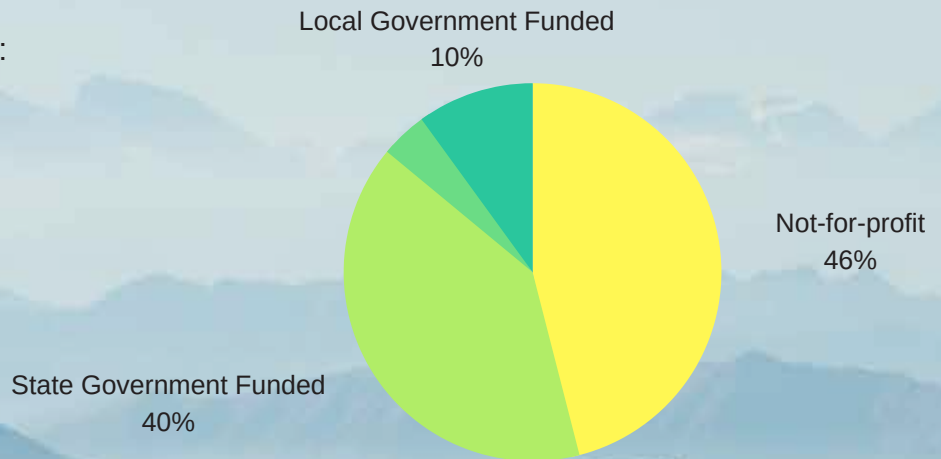
Support the coordination in the provision of additional needed services to Mansfield

Key Results

A survey was sent out to 170 known service providers in the Mansfield area and immediate outlying areas. Out of these, 35 responded. These respondents included local, regional, and statewide services. Over 77% of respondents were not youth specific services.

Service categories included:

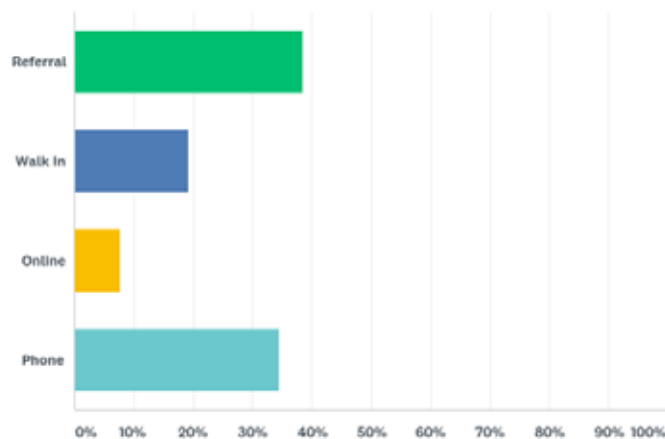
- case management
- generalist counselling
- disability support
- education
- mental health
- health
- youth development



Of these providers, 51% were not already a part of the Mansfield Youth Service Providers Network. And of those, 90% were interested in partnering.

93% of services surveyed cover Mansfield, with access through the below pathways:

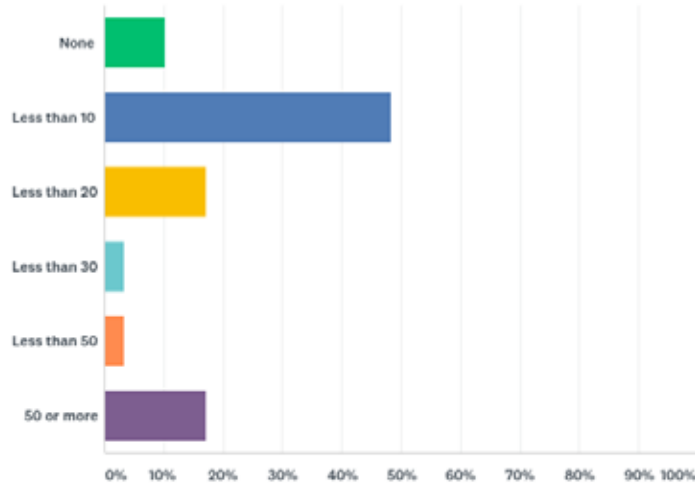
Q13 How would a young person typically access your service?



Access

The survey indicated that whilst there are a number of services available within our area, there are low numbers in terms of young people utilising.

Q22 Please indicate how many young people 12-25 per year from Mansfield visit or make use of your service (on average)?



"Our service is not accessed well by young people from Mansfield but we feel confident that there would be greater number of young people needing mental health services. We think this is because young people and other services are not aware of our service or how to access us"

One of the biggest barriers identified is a lack of awareness of what is out there. Many of the suggestions or comments surrounded a lack of services in the area, however the results would show there are already a number of services operating in Mansfield.

67% of the 29 service providers answered the question "What are the barriers that young people face when accessing a service?", and these were the top answers:

- public transport/distance
- financial hardship
- lack of referrals
- lack of drug and alcohol services and free counselling (lack of specific service)

Outcome

Decrease stigma and build community resilience to address common mental health problems

Increase the mental health knowledge of families, friends and associates of young people

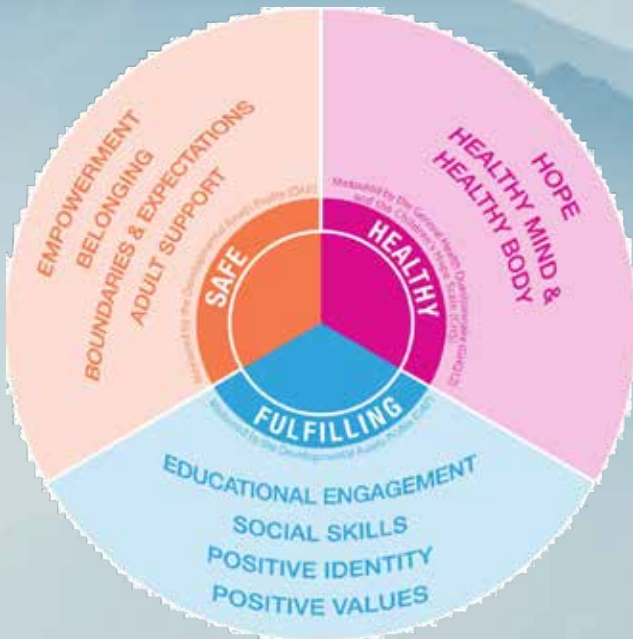
Key Results

The Resilience Survey

The Resilience Survey is an instrument that measures the strengths, mental health, and hopefulness of young people. Conducted by Resilient Youth Australia, a not for profit charitable institution, participants completed an online survey, the answers of which were generated into a report for our partners.

THE 3 PATHWAYS

The Resilience Survey presents our students responses across a three pathway framework: Safe, Healthy, and Fulfilling. There are 10 domains within these 3 pathways that comprise the Resilience Framework, with each domain being an opportunity to measure and build resilience.



THE 10 DOMAINS

Empowerment

Focused on whether students feel valued by adults and the community

Belonging

Young people need to know they are valuable and fit in within a family and/or group.

Boundaries and Expectations

Clarity and consistency in what's expected of young people contributes positively to a variety of outcomes

Adult Support

A young person with a safe, warm and supportive family is associated with lower risk behaviours and higher academic achievement

Hope

Hope focuses on the ability to plan good things in the future, and the ability to make them happen

Healthy Mind & Healthy Body

The ability to manage worry and stress and remain confident. Includes sleeping well, eating well, exercising and staying away from unhealthy substances

Educational Engagement

Both the motivation and rewards related to learning

Social Skills

Abilities that young people need to interact with others, navigate social and cultural differences, build friendships, resolve conflicts

Positive Identity

Self-esteem, optimism, growing sense of purpose in life

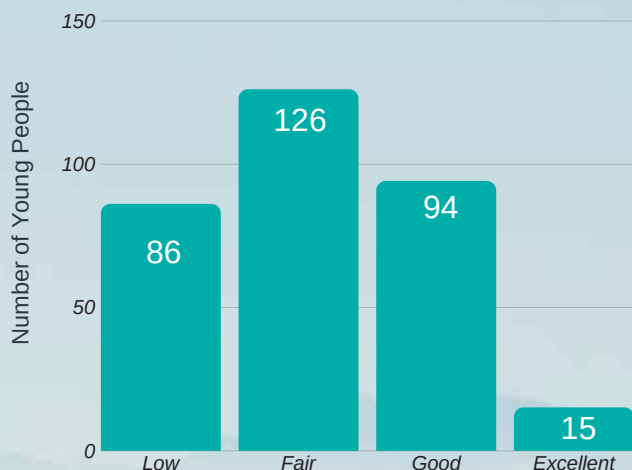
Positive Values

Deepening personal values that links to development, commitments, and a guide to thinking and acting

The Resilience Survey

Five of Mansfield Shire's local schools participated in the Resilience Survey in 2018; Mansfield Primary School, Merrijig Primary School, St Mary's Primary School, Mansfield Rudolf Steiner School, and Mansfield Secondary College, **Totalling 321 respondents, 169 females, 152 males.** For the purposes of this report, the following data is a combined year 7-12 response only.

Overall Resilience



The Resilience Survey splits the total young people into 4 resilience groups: Low, Fair, Good, and Excellent, and compares all data to a National Australian Average.

In Mansfield, our young people rated highest in the fair category, which means they have some resilience, but it is weak and/or infrequent across domains.

66% scored in low/fair, compared to 62% of the national average. 34% were good/excellent, compared to 38% national average.

Overall, Mansfield rates slightly lower in resilience than the overall Australian standard.

Gender Breakdown

In a gender breakdown of the overall resilience groups, young males score significantly lower resilience than females.

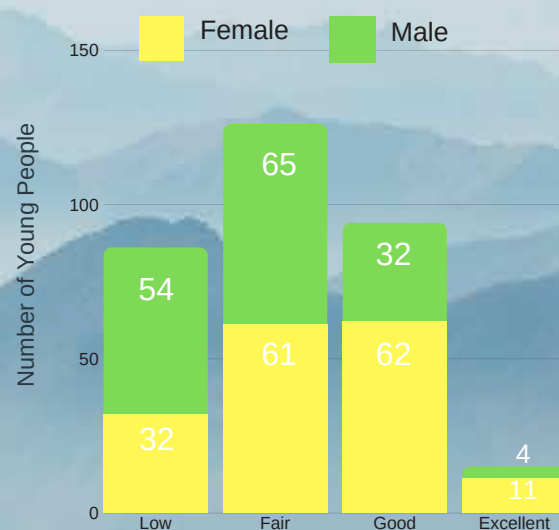
Low/Fair:

Females score better at 56% than the national average of 59%
Males are significantly less resilient, scoring 77% compared to 65% national average.

Good/Excellent:

Females are close to the national average with 44% compared to 41%, but males again are depleted in this area, with 23% compared to 35% national average.

Overall, whilst our female young people are hovering just above the national scores of resilience, our young men appear to be left behind.



Ages of Low Resilience

When analysing the data as a whole, the Resilience Survey indicated that our key age groups to address low resilience was with our year 7 and year 12 boys, as outlined in specific areas above. Another cohort that was not reflected in the individual Resilience Pathways was year 10 girls, who ranked significantly lower than other female age ranges in almost every area.



For example of where low scores of resilience fall according to year level. This graph is particular to the area of empowerment.



Empowerment

Overall, our young people scored almost identical to national averages in the area of empowerment.

However, when broken down in gender, it showed that males were 5% lower than the national average of abundant empowerment (females were higher than national average).

The areas where males scored lower were in feeling valued, and feeling safe. Only 54% of males felt valued and appreciated by others, compared to the national average of 61%. Both genders recorded higher percentages for having experienced bullying.

Overall, Mansfield's young people of both genders scored better in being included in decisions, been given useful roles and responsibilities, and feeling safe in their neighbourhood.

Boundaries & Expectations

Households/families ranked on par with national average for young people knowing their boundaries and expectations.

Belonging

The largest discrepancy in this area for all our respondents was their school belonging.

31%, compared to the 21% national average felt depleted in their school belonging, with a further only 11% compared to a national 21% who felt abundant. Broken down into gender:

Females

14% abundant, national average 23%
27% depleted, national average 19%

Males

6% abundant, national average 19%
22% moderate, national average 30%
35% borderline, national average 28%
37% depleted, national average 23%

The survey showed that our young people score less in eagerness to achieve academically.

In the area of social relationships, our males scored lower across the board in their ability to build friendships, have friends who set good examples, and having at least 2 different groups of friends.



Social Skills

In this area, again, our males are showing less resilience than females and in comparison than the national average.

3% abundant, national average 11%
27% moderate, national average 33%
35% depleted, national average 20%

This is particular evident in decision making skills of how to plan ahead and make good choices, and interpersonal skills such as empathy, sensitivity and friendship.

Positive Identity

Mansfield young people, overall, rated higher than average in the area of positive identity. Combined genders indicated that 65% feel in control of their lives, as compared to national average of 58%. 68% of our young people feel they are developing a sense of purpose for their lives, and 59% feel good about themselves.

However, males are proportionally less percentage in these areas than females, with only 5% overall ranking abundant resilience, as opposed to a 12% national average.

Positive Values

88% of our young people consider themselves trustworthy people, yet only 60% feel they are able to trust others. This is still more than the 57% national average. They also ranked better than Australian standards at forgiven others and forgiven themselves.

However, both males and females scored lower than average when asked about telling the truth and taking responsibility for their actions.

Males alone ranked lower in areas of helping others and solving social problems, 31% compared to 45% national average.

Hope

Hope is the anticipation that good things will happen in the future, and that we have the ability to make some of those good things happen.

This survey showed that our young people in Mansfield are relatively hopeful, with an even match with the national standards. In fact, our girls rated higher in abundant hope than the national average. The only area with some indication that our young people struggle was with problem solving.

Healthy Mind & Healthy Body

Our young people scored better than the national average in areas of concentration, NOT being under strain, NOT unhappy or depressed, NOT losing confidence, and NOT feeling worthless. The data showed that our young people are generally more active, physically fitter, and healthier eaters than the national average.

However, combined genders scored as using more alcohol than the national average, with a 15% difference, one of the largest margins in any area of the entire Resilience Survey.



Outcome

Reduce barriers to seeking help for emerging or current mental health issues in young people

Increase the mental health knowledge of families, friends and associates of young people

Decrease stigma and build community resilience to address common mental health problems

Increase awareness of professional help

Key Results

Youth Mental Health First Aid

As part of a broad strategy to increase mental health knowledge in the community, parents of young people in Mansfield were invited to register for a free course in Youth Mental Health First Aid starting August 27, 2019 at the Mansfield Youth Centre. 17 local parents participated in the course, and gained accreditation, just like they would if they completed a physical first aid course.

This was a comprehensive course which taught adults how to assist adolescents (particularly those aged between 12 and 18 years) who were developing a mental illness, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or in a mental health crisis, until appropriate professional help was received or the crisis resolves.

Course participants learned about adolescent development, the signs and symptoms of the common and disabling mental health problems in young people, where and how to get help when a young person is developing a mental illness, what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective, and how to provide first aid in a crisis situation.

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Key feedback:

- 93.33% found the course extremely helpful
- 60% strongly agreed that the training helped improve their understanding of youth mental health
- 53.33% agreed they feel more confident in knowing how to seek help, 40% strongly agreed, whilst 6.67% of participants strongly disagreed
- 100% of responses indicated they would be interested in further training and information
- 11/15 indicated they would like to be contacted in relation to planning of further well-being support for young people or to be a part of any future reference group

The biggest issues identified by participants were anxiety, depression, bullying, eating disorders, body image, drug use, and social media.

Anxiety Disorders Support Group

One of the key outcomes of this project was the establishment of an Anxiety Disorders Support Group, endorsed by Anxiety Recovery Centre, Victoria. This group meets once a month to offer support, information, and self help for people with a range of anxiety disorders. Carers, family members, and support workers are also included. The group also hosts various mindfulness and development sessions facilitated by the Anxiety Recovery Centre, offered to the wider community.

The Way Forward

The following action steps are recommended to address Youth Mental Health in our community:

1

Partnerships

Strengthen partnerships with service providers in the area

2

Staff Development

Increase staff capacity by providing further training and developing a mental health risk assessment framework

3

Transform and Educate

Seize opportunities to transform the way we talk about mental health through professional training

4

Safety Hub

Continue to provide a safe space for young people to access support and connection to service providers

The Way Forward

1 - Partnerships

Our partnerships with existing service providers in and around the area are already being utilised, and we have a network of dedicated specialist service providers across the shire, specifically those that respond to youth mental health. Our aim moving forward is to strengthen these partnerships, and continue to build bridges between services providers to enable better access for our young people.

RECOMMENDATION:

Strengthen partnerships with service providers in the area. When surveyed, 90% of providers who were not a part of the Youth Service Providers Network were interested in joining.

ACTION:

- hold quarterly partnership meetings to improve the foundations of current partnerships
- continuing relationship building with the local schools
- identify priority areas for the development of an information-sharing culture throughout the community services team, particularly with Integrated Family Services as the entry point for the community.

The Way Forward

2 - Staff Development

Council prioritises the equipping of our staff working alongside young people to better understand how to respond to mental health issues. This includes identifying and categorising an issue, clearly understanding what next steps to take, and following an outlined referral protocol. This is a double layered approach, where we both enhance our staff's ability to respond by giving them a clear framework, and also enabling them to participate in key development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION:

Seize opportunities for staff and providers to receive further mental health training and awareness. Develop a mental health risk assessment and management framework. This is useful in building a shared understanding of youth mental health and assisting young people to understand their options. The development of management processes will build on existing structures that will guide our long term response.

ACTION:

- seize opportunities for staff and providers to receive further mental health training and awareness
- participation in approved workshops and conferences around Mental Health and Well being support of young people.
- whole of workforce training for priority sectors.

Framework should include:

- rating/weighting of risk factors to identify if risk is low, medium or high
- evidence based risk indicators specific to mental health
- a comprehensive practice guide
- clear organisational and standard guidelines for effective response, supported by targeted workforce development and training
- standardised protocols for formal referrals of young people to specialised services
- endorsement of key service providers

The Way Forward

3 - Transform & Educate

Council recognises the need to continually transform the way we talk about mental health with our young people. We aim to reduce the stigmas around experiencing a mental health issue, and how that limits access to services. Many young people, experiencing mental health issues or not, indicated they would not approach a service from their own initiative. They required additional support, encouragement, and facilitation to reach out.

RECOMMENDATION:

Continue to transform the way we talk about mental health by keeping the conversation open, changing the language we use and our awareness through professional training

ACTION:

- provide opportunities for public engagement in Youth Mental Health First Aid training
- participation in approved workshops and conferences around Mental Health and Well being support of young people.
- expand on the existing Shire Website to include a Youth specific space - a place where young people can keep up with activities and service providers in their area. Include a display and details the service map— where, and how young people can seek help.

The Way Forward

4 - Safety Hub

Council has strong foundations on which to build its response to the mental health challenges faced by young people in our community, including our commitment to child safe standards and how we interact with young people, our emphasis on youth participation and keeping the conversation open, and the seriousness with which we regard mental health issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide better access to support services and safety hubs for young people to access professional services and/or feel supported by the community in their mental health.

ACTION:

- make it easier for those dealing with mental health to find help and gain better access to a greater range services
- continual operation of the Youth Centre—providing access to technology and infra structure, with opening hours four days a week after school, and a range of recommended service providers accessible
- offer a base for co-location—network with key service providers to share our space at the youth centre to operate 'hubs' or 'spokes'.