Project Air Strategy for **Schools**

A collaborative project between NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Department of Education and the Project Air Strategy for Personality Disorders at University of Wollongong.

Understanding and responding to emerging personality disorder, trauma history, self-harm and suicidal behaviour and difficulties with identity, emotions and relationships
Project advisory committee

- Danielle Maloney (Co-Chair; NSW Ministry of Health)
- Pauline Kotselas (Co-Chair; NSW Dept Education)
- Brin Grenyer (Project Air Strategy)
- Michelle Townsend (Project Air Strategy)
- Mahlie Jewell (Consumer representative for BEING)
- Katrina Ko (Representative for BEING)
- Amy Shearden (NSW School-Link Program Manager)
- Danielle Thomas (NSW School-Link Program Manager)
- Anne Frahm (Education Specialist Centre Facilitator)
- Katrina Worrall (Principal Psychologist, Dept Education)
- John Wilson (Senior Psychologist, Dept Education)
- David Harding (Child and Adolescent Mental Health)
- Bruce Winter (School-Link Coordinator)
- Belinda Cooley (School-Link Coordinator)
The need

6.5% of the population: 1.5 million Australians have a diagnosable personality disorder
Onset of personality disorder in in youth – school years
1.1% of the population have schizophrenia (i.e. 285,000 people in Australia)
The rise in self-harm

- 12% self-harm at some point in their life
- 6-7% of young Australians (aged 15-24) have self-harmed in any 12-month period
- Self-harm is more common after the onset of puberty
- The average age at which self-harm first occurs is 12-14 years
- Suicidal behaviour and suicide contagion in schools
Whole of school approach

- NSW Education and NSW Ministry of Health
- Early intervention in schools
  - Teachers
  - Year advisors and Principals
  - Students and Parents
  - Health services – Child and Youth, Headspace and other agencies
  - High quality resources, information and models of evidence-based care
Completed

- Research and guideline drafted and approved by committee
- Consulted with 138 Department of Education Senior Psychologists and Networked Specialist facilitators
- Consulted with 30 School-Link Coordinators
- Consultation with parents and teachers and school counsellors
- All resources in final form for testing
Chloe’s Story: Helping Schools Help with Mental Health

Cast
Chloe - Kayley Smith
Ron Jeffries/Year Advisor - Winston Cooper
Kim/Student 1 - Mia Bowd
Serena/Student 2 - Chantelle Van Appen
Karen/Teacher - Lou Pollard
Mum - Debora Krizak
Jane/School Counsellor - Susan Kennedy
Psychologist - Cameron Barnes

Project Air team
Professor Brin Grenyer
Dr Michelle Townsend
Annaleise Grey
Dr Marianne Bourke
Pat Frencham
Dr Denise Meuldijk
Nicholas Day
Kate Lewis
Fiona Ng

Louder Than Words
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www.projectairstrategy.org
Helping schools help with mental health

Chloe's story...
Project rollout

1. Project Air Full day training sessions with 300 Senior Psychologists, School-Link Coordinators and School Counsellors from across NSW (2016)

2. NSW Education - 120 Train the Trainers – disseminate to individual school student welfare teams over 2017

3. Evaluation of the program and dissemination of results and resources through Project Air Strategy website
Resources
Guidelines
Fact sheets
Training slides
Training film
Evaluation

Working with young people with complex mental health issues

Understanding and responding to emerging personality disorder trauma history, self-harm and suicidal behaviour and difficulties with identity, emotions and relationships

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Personality disorder in young people – the facts

Experiences of young people with emerging personality disorders

For a young person struggling with personality disorders, the difficulties they face can be overwhelming. A personality disorder is a pattern of behavior that is disruptive and maladaptive, and it is often diagnosed in young adulthood. People with personality disorders may struggle with managing emotions, relationships, and daily life. The symptoms can range from mild to severe, and they can affect various aspects of a person's life, including their work, relationships, and health.

Young people with personality disorders often feel different from others, which can lead to isolation and social difficulties. They may have difficulty forming and maintaining relationships, and they may also struggle with stress and anxiety. In some cases, personality disorders can lead to more severe problems, such as self-harm or suicidal behavior. It is important to recognize the signs of personality disorders and seek help early to prevent further complications.

Key principles for working with young people with complex mental health issues

Be compassionate
- Listen and validate the young person's current experience
- Take the young person's experience seriously
- Maintain a non-judgemental approach
- Remain calm, respectful and caring
- Engage in open communication
- Be clear, consistent and reliable
- Convey encouragement and hope
- Monitor your own internal reactions
- Do not misattribute extreme distress or impairment as “normal” adolescent difficulties
- Create a welcoming and understanding environment that encourages open discussion about mental health among young people and adults
- Work collaboratively with the young person, parents, guardians, schools and health professionals
- Be aware and supportive of diversity in identity and background, including the indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, gender-diverse) communities
- Promote the education of the young person, including school attendance and completion of schoolwork
- Support and make reasonable adjustments to assist a young person's return to school after a mental health emergency
- Reinforce the young person's strengths and resilience while implementing trauma-informed care where appropriate

Self-harm: how to respond

Why do young people self-harm?
Self-harm is often a way for young people to express emotional distress, cope with stress, or deal with negative feelings. It can be a way to communicate and be understood, and it is often a way to escape or avoid a situation. Young people who self-harm may use it as a coping mechanism, and it can be a way to gain attention or validation from others.

Young people who self-harm may also have other issues, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma. It is important to understand the context and triggers for self-harm, as well as the underlying reasons for the behavior.

Strategies for managing self-harm

- Educate young people about self-harm and the risks and consequences of self-harm
- Encourage young people to seek help and support from trusted adults or professionals
- Provide safe and supportive environments for young people who self-harm
- Offer support and guidance to parents and caregivers of young people who self-harm
- Encourage young people to reach out for help when they are feeling overwhelmed
- Provide resources and information to young people and their families
- Encourage young people to attend group therapy or counseling
- Provide opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities and hobbies

Responding to challenging behavior

The journey from accessibility to understanding is not always a straightforward path. It is often filled with obstacles and challenges, and it requires a great deal of patience and effort. Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in helping young people overcome these obstacles and reach their full potential. They can provide a safe and supportive environment for young people to learn and grow, and they can also help to identify and address any underlying issues that may be contributing to challenging behavior.

Steps for responding to challenging behavior

1. Establish the immediate safety of the young person
2. Remember to take a calm and reasonable approach
3. Avoid raising their anxiety or anger
4. Stay focused on what is important for the young person and their family
5. Be supportive and understanding, and avoid judgmental or critical comments
6. Encourage the young person to seek help and support from trusted adults or professionals
7. Provide a consistent and safe environment
8. Ensure that the young person feels safe and supported
9. Encourage the young person to participate in positive activities and hobbies
10. Provide opportunities for the young person to develop coping skills

Key principles for responding to a challenging young person

- Remain calm, supportive and non-judgmental
- Avoid raising their anxiety or anger
- Stay focused on what is important for the young person and their family
- Be supportive and understanding, and avoid judgmental or critical comments
- Encourage the young person to seek help and support from trusted adults or professionals
- Provide a consistent and safe environment
- Ensure that the young person feels safe and supported
- Encourage the young person to participate in positive activities and hobbies
- Provide opportunities for the young person to develop coping skills

Contact details

- 1300 945 188 (24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)
- 1800 737 737 (Lifeline)
- 1300 22 44 55 (Lifeline)
- 1800 656 888 (Child helpline)
- 1800 273 768 (Reach)
- 1800 787 333 (Beyond Blue)
- 1800 730 797 (Mensline)