

July 2024

# evaluation snapshot report



## What young people say about headspace Work and Study Online

Young people, aged 15-25 years, are at a critical stage of life where they navigate vocational pathways, explore work and study opportunities, complete school, make career choices, and move into the workforce (Rickwood et al., 2021). Young people are also at a time of heightened vulnerability to mental health difficulties due to the major physical, emotional and social changes that occur at this time of life (Merikangas et al., 2010). Young people disengaged from education, employment or training are at increased risk of many adverse outcomes, including social and economic exclusion, poor physical and mental health, and reduced wellbeing (Powell et al., 2018).

Engagement in work and study can provide young people experiencing mental health difficulties structure, a sense of self, social connectedness and can support independence and economic security (Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, 2014). Furthermore, there is strong evidence that participation in education and employment is a protective factor for positive mental health and well-being (Bond & Drake, 2014; Modini et al., 2016).

### About headspace Work and Study Online

headspace Work and Study Online is an established early intervention service that supports young people to reach their work and study goals. Based on the Individual Placement and Support model of employment support for people living with mental health difficulties (R. E. Drake, Becker, & Bond, 2019), headspace Work and Study Online integrates vocational support with clinical mental health and psycho-social support.



**headspace**

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

headspace Work and Study Online helps young people to overcome barriers to work and study, build their confidence and resilience, and improve their mental health and wellbeing. Recent evaluations have found it has effectively helped young people achieve positive work and study outcomes (Rickwood et al., 2021). Tailored specifically to the individual needs of young people, headspace Work and Study Online is:

- **Voluntary:** young people can choose to engage with the service or leave whenever they choose. This is generally not the case with other employment support services.
- **Flexible:** young people can contact as much or as little as they want to during an episode of care, which is typically three months but can be longer.
- **Accessible:** no travel is required, and support is available via a mode that the young person chooses e.g. phone, video conference or webchat.
- **Personalised:** the support young people receive is strengths based and tailored to their needs so that they reach the work and study goals that they set.
- **Clinically integrated:** the service has a team of mental health clinicians who offer mental health support directly to young people. Staff will also liaise with a young person's external mental health provider, where relevant, to ensure work and study supports align with and reinforce their mental health interventions.
- **Delivered with a no-exclusion approach:** if a young person is aged 15 to 25 years old, has a work and study goal they are eligible to use the service.

## How does headspace get feedback from young people?

headspace developed the Work and Study Online evaluation questionnaire to capture feedback from young people who had received support from the service. The questionnaire explores young people's engagement with the service, their experience accessing support via a digital platform, impacts on work and/or study goals, impact on mental health and wellbeing, and overall service satisfaction.

Young people who commenced with the service during a 12 month period (April 2022 to April 2023) were invited to participate in the voluntary survey and 276 surveys were completed (18 per cent response rate).

## What does our data tell us?

### Young people value the availability of online services

As part of the survey, respondents were asked about the advantages of headspace Work and Study Online offering work and study support through a digital platform (Figure 1). The vast majority of young people surveyed (83%) highlighted that not needing to travel was a key benefit of the service, and almost half (45%) found online interactions less confronting than meeting in-person. Additionally, one in four (26%) young people expressed that without the availability of the headspace Work and Study Online service, they might not have sought out any work, study, or mental health support.

*"It's a lot more flexible to access online services when you have a busy or irregular work schedule."*  
(NSW, female, aged 23)

*"The online services helped me become used to the online environment if I ever had to do an online interview."*  
(NSW, female, aged 19)

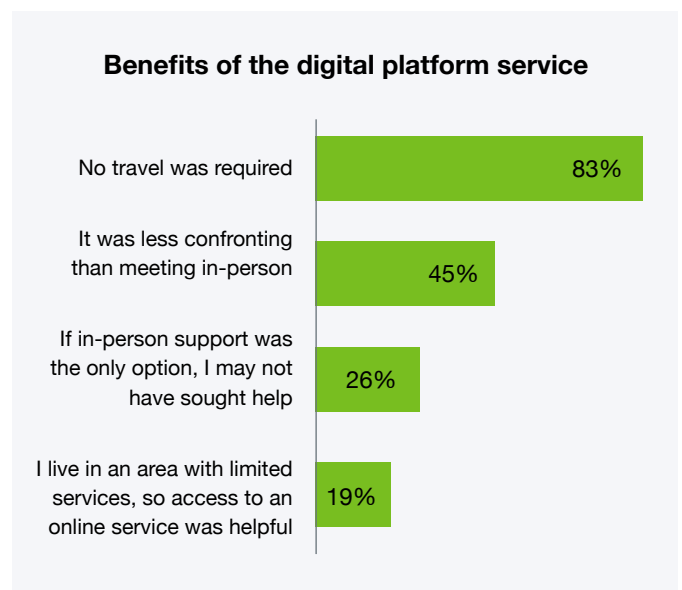
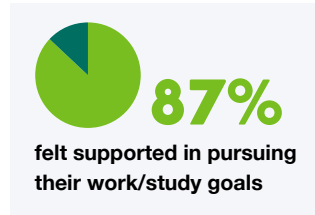


Figure 1.  
Benefits of the digital platform service (n=274)

## Young people feel supported in pursuing their work and study goals

headspace Work and Study Online not only equips young people with the necessary skills and knowledge but also empowers them to actively participate in work or study opportunities.



Feedback from young people highlights the effectiveness of headspace Work and Study Online in supporting them to identify and pursue their work and study goals, as illustrated by the following:

- 85 per cent agreed that the service had helped them to identify their work/study goals
- 87 per cent agreed that they felt supported in pursuing their work/study goals
- 80 per cent agreed that the service helped them feel confident that they can achieve their work/study goals
- 70 per cent agreed that the service helped them gain skills that will assist with their work/study goals

*“My advisor honestly helped me so much with day to day stuff but also long term goals and my inner values.”*

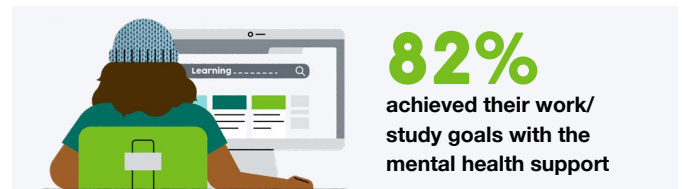
(Qld, female, aged 23)

*“I want to thank the staff who really encouraged, believed in me and helped me get to where I am today. I’m working and studying in an area of interest I love and I couldn’t have done it without their support and guidance.”*

(Vic, female, aged 22)

## Young people appreciate the integrated clinical support

One in three (34%) young people surveyed had received mental health support from a headspace Work and Study Online clinician. Additionally, when asked about seeking mental health support from another service, 42 per cent reported receiving support from another headspace service such as a headspace centre or eheadspace. While over half (55%) had received assistance from other mental health support providers.



Young people were positive about the clinical integration of the service and the support they received to improve their mental health, as illustrated by the following:

- 82 per cent agreed that the mental health support assisted them in achieving their work/study goals
- 77 per cent agreed that they had developed skills/learned tools to support their mental health that they can use in the future
- 92 per cent agreed that it was beneficial to have mental health support and work/study support from the same service.

*“My clinical advisor was really excellent and encouraging in my journey and I felt that I was truly and personally supported by her. It was great.”*

(ACT, female, aged 19)

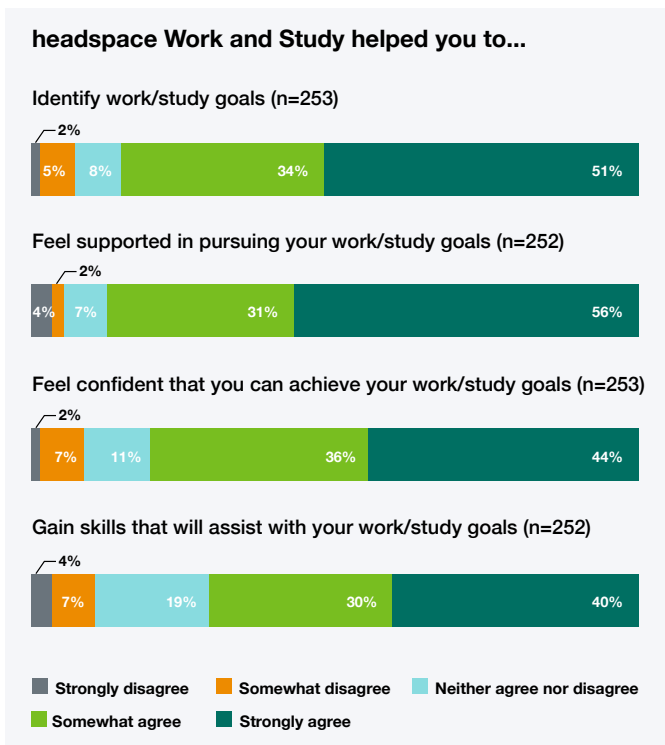


Figure 2. Supporting work and study goals of young people

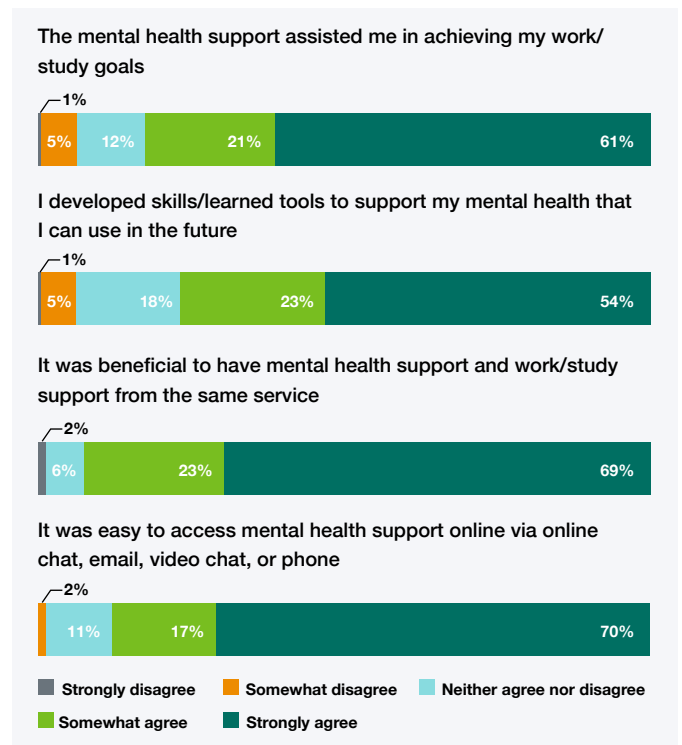
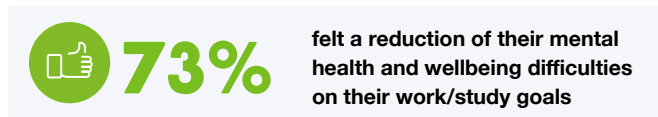


Figure 3. Experience with headspace Work and Study Clinical Advisors (n=84)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Figures in these charts sometimes sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

## Young people report reduced impact of mental health difficulties on their work and study goals

Young people expressed feeling supported in managing their mental health and wellbeing through the assistance offered by the service, even if they didn't specifically receive support from a Work and Study Online Clinician.

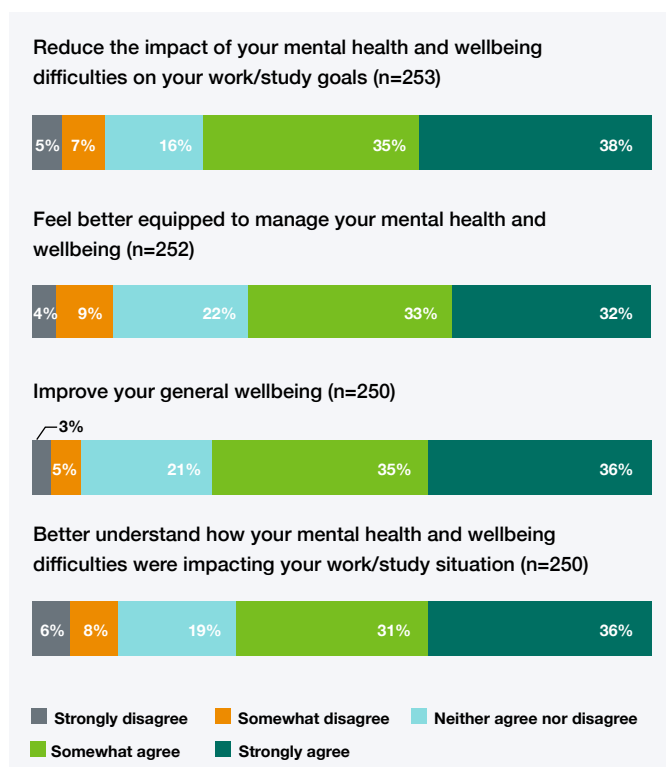


The majority of young people reported an improvement in their ability to manage their mental health and general wellbeing, and gaining a better understanding about how mental health influences their work or study situation:

- 73 per cent agreed that the service helped reduce the impact of their mental health and wellbeing difficulties on their work/study goals
- 65 per cent agreed that that the service had better equipped them to manage their mental health and wellbeing
- 71 per cent agreed that the service improved their general wellbeing
- 67 per cent agreed that the service helped them to understand how their mental health and wellbeing difficulties were impacting their work/study situation.

***“The headspace work and study team helped me prioritise my mental health and wellbeing and realistically assess my work goals.”***

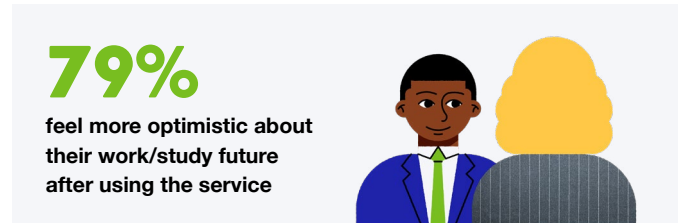
(NSW, gender diverse, aged 21)



**Figure 4.** Improvements to mental health and wellbeing of young people<sup>2</sup>

## Young people report increased confidence and optimism about their future

Positive feedback from young people highlights the service's impact in building confidence and fostering resilience, and equipping young people with valuable tools for future work and study opportunities.

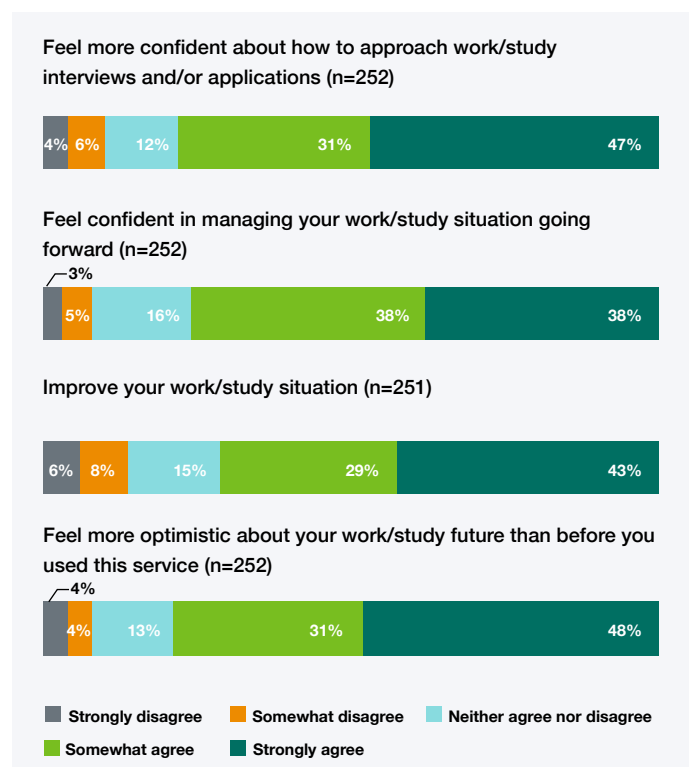


This is demonstrated through:

- 78 per cent agreed that they feel more confident about how to approach work/study interviews and/or applications
- 76 per cent agreed that they feel confident in managing their work/study situation going forward
- 72 per cent agreed that the service helped them improve their work/study situation
- 79 per cent agreed that they feel more optimistic about their work/study future than before they used the service

***“Built up confidence by resolving and understanding the things that held me back.”***

(SA, male, aged 19)



**Figure 5.** Building the confidence of young people<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Figures in these charts sometimes sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

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## Young people are highly satisfied

Young people are satisfied with the processes that are in place as part of headspace Work and Study Online, including staff engagement, availability of contact hours, and the appropriateness of support they received. The following results indicate that young people felt that the program had the right balance of support, making it accessible and directly applicable to their needs:

- 86 per cent agreed that they received help for their specific needs
- 87 per cent agreed that the help they received was valuable
- 89 per cent agreed that they could access assistance at times convenient to them.

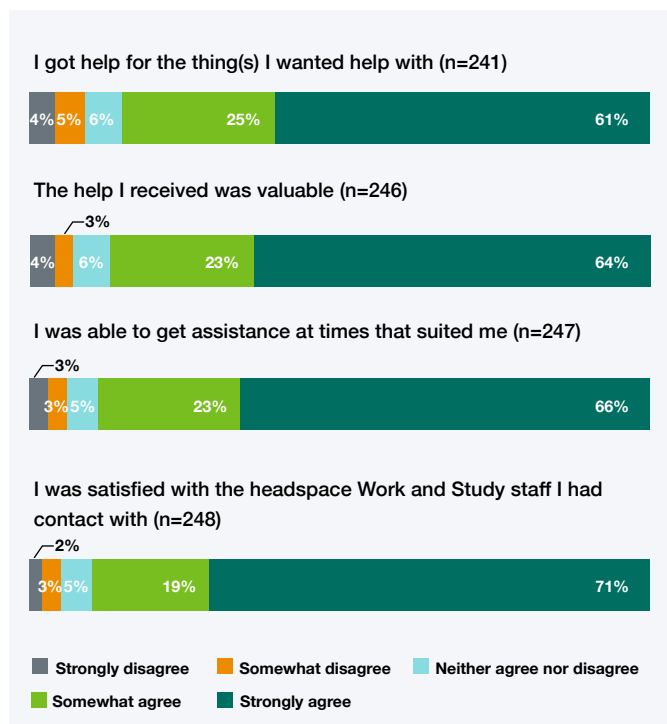


Figure 6. Overall satisfaction of young people<sup>4</sup>

*“It was an amazing support that I got from headspace. And the person I talked to was so helpful as well, she was patient and would let me take my time.”*  
(NSW, female, aged 21)

*“Amazing support system, was able to leave a job that was mentally affecting. Was able to find another job within a month that I absolutely love, wouldn’t have been able to do it and be where I am now without headspace.”*  
(Vic, female, aged 21)

Young people also expressed value in the following features of the program:



Figure 7. Key service attributes (n=248)

<sup>4</sup>Figures in these charts sometimes sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

## Methods used

Data for this snapshot were collected from the headspace Work and Study Online evaluation survey, administered through a Qualtrics online survey. Young people were invited to complete the voluntary survey if they commenced with the service between 30 April 2022 and 30 April 2023. Between 1 July 2023 and 25 July 2023, 276 surveys were completed by young people.

This study received ethics approval (QA2023077) from Melbourne Health.

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headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.