

LIFE TRANSITIONS AND YOUTH PATHWAYS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Summary



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Youth Health Forum's recommendations for the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care / Minister for Education.

Navigation support: When young people move into the adult health system, it is vast, complex and very difficult to navigate. As it is unfamiliar to us, we can become lost and not receive the services we need, due to these challenges in navigating the system.

- Federal Government fund a national nurse navigator program that sits alongside hospitals to support and empower young people when they transition into the adult health system. An example of a successful federal program is the McGrath Foundation's Breast Cancer Nurse program.
- Government to review the Healthdirect website using a co-design approach to update it and make it more user-friendly and youth appropriate.

Youth age consistency across jurisdictions: Young people experience challenges in accessing health services due to their age as they can be classified differently between health services across States and Territories.

- Minister to work with States and Territories to determine a nationally consistent patient centred approach for young people accessing services in the health system that factors in mental maturity. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a reference point for these discussions.

Affordable access: Affordability of health service access is a challenge for many young people, particularly as they transition from adolescence and a reliance on parents into early adulthood.

- Provide young people aged 14 – 22 with a concession card to improve access to bulkbilled services and to make them eligible for the threshold and safety net limits to reduce the financial barriers to care.
- The Government has recently doubled the number of psychology sessions available with a Medicare rebate. We recommend allowing young people the autonomy to determine whether they are receiving 10 fully-funded sessions (no gap) compared to the nationally-allocated 20 partly-reimbursed sessions. This will have no change in cost to Government from currently allocated model, but will increase access and flexibility for young people who cannot afford co-payments.

Digital Healthcare Delivery: Young people living in remote and regional areas have significantly benefited from the changes to service delivery introduced during the Australian COVID-19 pandemic response. Providing more services through a digital channel has aligned services more closely to younger consumers' expectations, as well as being more cost effective. Access to a digitally delivered service requires good internet access to be equitable.

- Consumers should have access to health services, referrals, prescriptions and notifications via telehealth, phone, email or text and this should be supported with relevant MBS items.
- Ensure access to basic internet services for all Australians through updates of the Universal Service Guarantee. Currently, the Universal Service Guarantee is very 'household' based and this excludes people who may be experiencing homelessness and may not be able to access through public networks e.g. public libraries have been closed during parts of 2020.

Inclusive Delivery: Access to health services from Culturally And Linguistically Diverse young people is heavily dependent on their ability to access Translating and Interpreting Services and there are opportunities to improve these services for us and our communities.

- Government conduct a comprehensive review of interpreter and translation services in Australia to determine whether it meets current community needs.
- Government to provide funding for increased access to translation services. For example support for the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) to allow consumers to use the service for more than 1 hour to allow more flexibility
- Government mandate that all medical centres and GPs offer the service where a consumer requests or requires an interpreter
- Government to ensure TIS and health based translators have the required health or medical translation training to be able to interpret effectively and be respectful of privacy and patient confidentiality.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background & Rationale

In youth, there is a unique opportunity to establish health for life by equipping young people with the tools they need to get help when they need it, and by supporting young people to speak up about how they can live their healthiest possible lives. The 2020 Youth Health Forum (YHF) was created to make young people's ideas and experiences part of our national discussions about services for young Australians. It was co-hosted by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) and the Wellbeing Health & Youth (WH&Y) NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence and supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. The Youth Health Forum Report, produced by CHF and WH&Y, is based on the discussions, insights and ideas of YHF delegates.

Policy Context

In 2020, the federal Youth Taskforce was created to advise the Minister for Youth on the policy and programs available for young people across government agencies and finding ways to involve more young people in developing policies that affect them. CHF and WH&Y strongly support the Minister for Health's vision of ensuring that Australian young people have the best opportunities to fulfill their potential. In order to achieve this, we need to amplify the voices of Australia's young people, to ensure that they can readily access the right service at the right time.

Evidence Context

Healthcare professionals across Australia have long recognised the problem of young people falling through the gaps of a health system that wasn't designed for them. The Access studies were created to understand young people's experiences of accessing health services. The studies focused on several marginalised groups, with about one-third of young people recruited into the study from one or more of the following backgrounds: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, homeless, of refugee background, living in rural/remote locations, sexuality and/or gender diverse. The young people in the studies identified multiple barriers to accessing health services: structural (e.g. cost and practical issues); attitudinal (e.g. worries or concerns about using health services) and barriers relating to emerging autonomy and adulthood (e.g. parental involvement and knowing where to go).

Methods

This report used three methods of data collection:

1. Review of the academic literature on access, usage and obstacles to healthcare services for young people in Australia.
2. Review of national and international examples of healthcare services designed for and/or with young people.
3. Consultation with sixty Youth Health Forum delegates recruited from around Australia.

Findings & Recommendations

Based on evidence developed by the WH&Y Centre of Research Excellence team, and in consultation with CHF youth leaders, six key challenges were identified, workshopped and ultimately used to form the basis of recommendations for improving youth pathways into health services in Australia.

1. The six key challenges were:
2. Trusting healthcare services
3. Transitioning to adult healthcare
4. Navigating the healthcare system
5. Delivering digital healthcare
6. Building a more equitable system
7. Developing health literacy

In recognition that many of the important issues underlying obstacles to healthcare services were common to several of the challenge topics, the youth leaders from the six YHF Working Groups consolidated their recommendations into cross-cutting themes. The Youth Health Forum's recommendations for the Federal Minister for Health are:

1. Age consistency across jurisdictions
2. Navigation support
3. Affordable access
4. Digital Healthcare Delivery
5. Inclusive Delivery

FINDINGS

The Six Key Challenges

There are many challenges to designing youth-friendly healthcare services that are accessible to all young people, but some of these stand out as areas that we can address here and now. Based on evidence developed by the WH&Y Centre of Research Excellence team, and in consultation with YHF youth leaders, six key challenges were identified, workshopped and ultimately used to form the basis of recommendations for improving youth pathways into health services in Australia.

The challenges were:

- Challenge No. 1: Trusting healthcare services
- Challenge No. 2: Transitioning to adult healthcare
- Challenge No. 3: Navigating the healthcare system
- Challenge No. 4: Delivering digital healthcare
- Challenge No. 5: Building a more equitable system
- Challenge No. 6: Developing health literacy