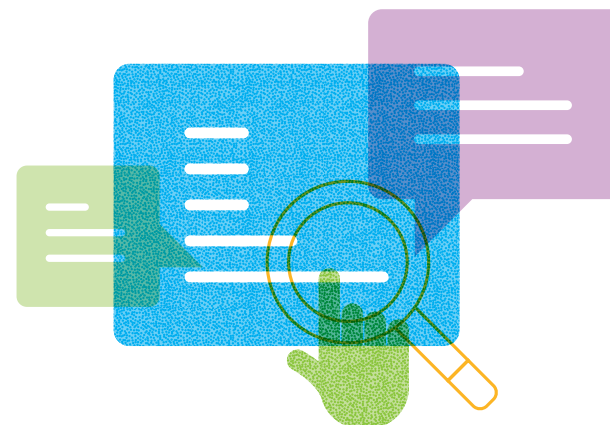


Recruitment and retention of privately contracted allied health practitioners in youth mental health services



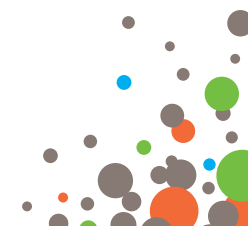
Youth mental health services value their multi-disciplinary workforces, however many are finding it difficult to recruit and retain privately-contracted allied health practitioners.

This discussion guide considers some factors influencing the mental health service workforce and offers ways and guidelines for improving the recruitment and retention of private contractors.

Sector influences

Factors influencing the youth mental health workforce

- ... Workforce shortages
- ... Competition for limited workforce
- ... Difference in potential income between public and private sectors
- ... Social and economic trends – rise in education standards, more informed communities, new career pathways etc
- ... Demanding nature of the work
- ... High community expectations
- ... Demand for flexibility within the workplace
- ... Mental health service reform and transformation
- ... Organisational changes that impact on leadership opportunities, career pathways and work patterns
- ... Competition for funding
- ... Desire for innovation and reform
- ... Information technology – young people undertake their own research and shop around for services



Benefits

Benefits of working in multi-stream funded services for youth

- ... Supported entry into private practice
- ... Supportive work environments and collaborative care
- ... Knowledge sharing and peer support
- ... Membership of a multi-disciplinary team
- ... Varied, stimulating work – exposure to a wide range of diagnoses and issues faced by young people
- ... Availability of secondary consultations
- ... Commitment to on-going learning
- ... Family friendly work environments
- ... Preference for working with adolescents and/or in disadvantaged communities

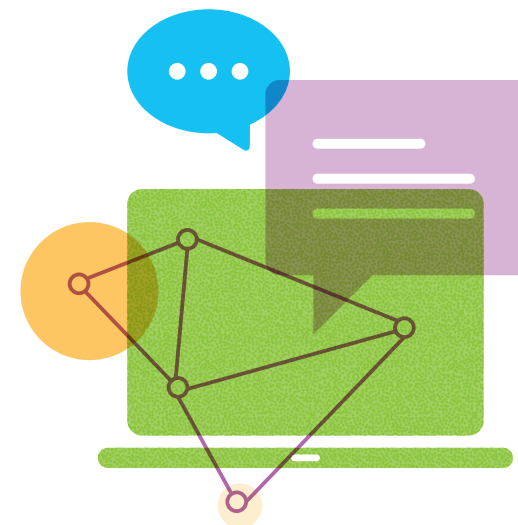
Employment barriers

Be mindful of some reasons employees leave a workplace

- ... Workplace is not what they expected
- ... Mismatch between job expectations and employee skills
- ... Lack of coaching and feedback
- ... Too little opportunity for growth and career advancement
- ... Employee is bored and unchallenged
- ... Their contributions are not recognised
- ... Employee feels devalued and unrecognised
- ... Stress from workload and lack of work/life balance
- ... Loss of confidence and trust in key leadership roles in organisation
- ... Relationships with manager and/or co-workers
- ... Organisation's overall culture
- ... Lack of resources to assist with work demands (e.g. IT access)
- ... Inflexible work hours

Additional barriers specific to the youth mental health sector

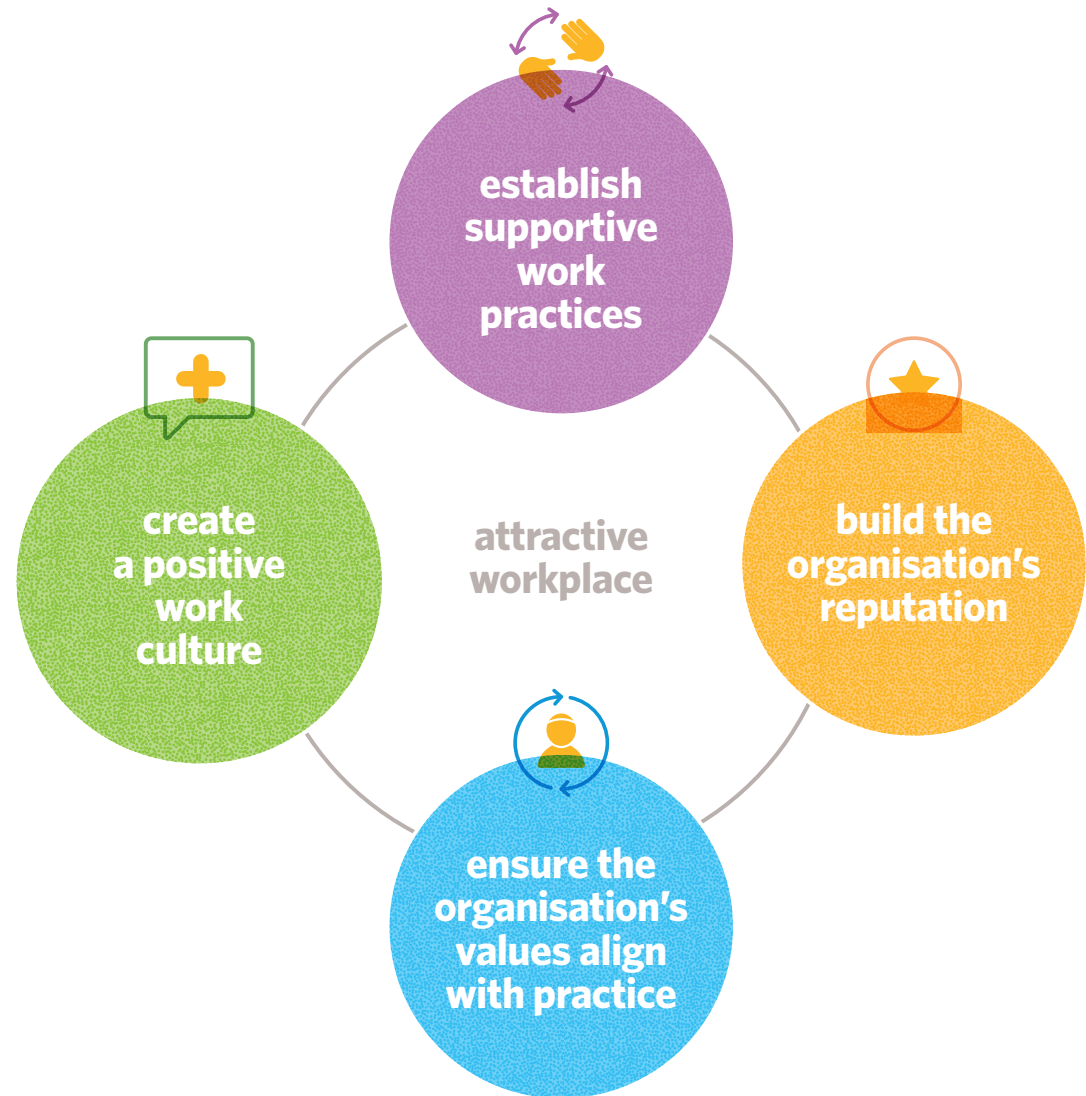
- ... Challenging and complex consultations – complex presentations
- ... Earning capacity in comparison to work within high-earning or independent income populations where a private gap fee is common
- ... Frustrations caused by cancelled appointments and do not attend that impact on earnings and where cancellation fees are uncommon



Making your service more attractive to private contractors

By capitalising on the benefits of diversely-funded services and addressing employment barriers where possible, services are more likely to recruit and retain private contractors. The culture of the organisation, its values and the support provided are key considerations for private contractors.

Providing students with positive placement experiences will increase the likelihood of them seeking contracts at the service when qualified. If the organisation has a positive reputation it will be a more desirable workplace.



Establish supportive work practices

- ... Value a multi-disciplinary team
- ... Establish peer support connections between providers
- ... Match the health provider's core skills with young people
- ... Provide comprehensive induction and orientation programs
- ... Provide supportive contract management – clarify roles and responsibilities for all parties including insurance expectations, explain organisational processes and systems requirements etc
- ... Work as a team to regularly review feedback and audit clinical outcomes
- ... Provide high quality administration support and ensure practice management systems support ease of appointment scheduling and maximum income generation
- ... Provide peer supervision and ensure systems are in-place for secondary consultations for challenging or high-risk young people
- ... Provide opportunities for teams to regularly de-brief, trouble-shoot and share learnings (successes and failures)
- ... Provide private providers with constructive feedback (positive and negative)
- ... Support career advancement and celebrate staff moving to new positions

Create a positive work culture

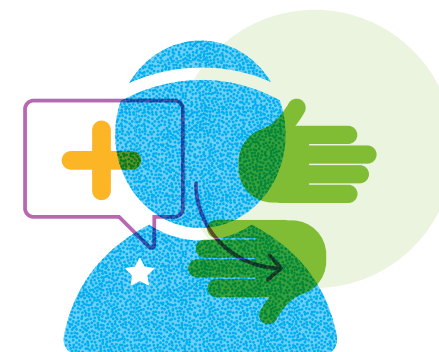
- ... Create an environment of ongoing learning that includes information sharing, reviews of the latest evidence and professional development opportunities in various formats
- ... Respect skills and expertise
- ... Embed youth participation as a core part of the service
- ... Promote innovative models of care
- ... Provide family-friendly, flexible work hours and conditions
- ... Build a positive team culture – team building activities, social events, morning teas etc
- ... Provide family inclusive practice

Ensure the organisation's values align with practice

- ... Work across the organisation to ensure and regularly check that values align with practice and culture e.g. trust, respect, collaboration, empowerment, youth and family inclusive, strengths-based, holistic, inclusive, team-based etc.

Build the organisation's reputation

- ... Ensure everyone is committed to promoting the organisation's brand
- ... Work with universities to provide allied health student placements and graduate programs
- ... Ensure student placements are positive experiences – provide good orientation, supervision, training and ongoing support
- ... Provide students with exposure to a wide-range of experiences – crisis assessment, engagement, counselling, brief interventions, group programs etc
- ... Celebrate your successes and share stories amongst the sector
- ... Conduct exit interviews with staff to understand why they are moving on and address any issues they raise
- ... Maintain a strong online presence and ensure your website has a detailed careers section



Creating a youth-friendly welcome to your mental health service



Seeking help for mental health problems is not easy, and may be especially difficult for young people. Mental health service providers need to do everything they can to create a positive experience for young people and their families, from the minute they walk in the door or contact your service.

Your reception area and administration staff set the tone and make the important first impression. This guide has considerations and ideas for making that impression a positive one.

A positive & welcoming environment

- ... Maintain an inviting and comfortable waiting room with multiple points of interest for young people (e.g. colouring desks, youth magazines, puzzles)
- ... Smile and greet visitors in a friendly, welcoming way and engage them in appropriate, light-hearted conversations
- ... Monitor your body language, make eye-contact and give visitors your full attention
- ... Design the Reception space to be as welcoming as possible (e.g. ensure there is plenty of natural light, avoid screens or small spaces etc.)
- ... Display a statement which indicates what a young person or family member can expect from the service

Clear, compassionate communication

- ... Provide honest and transparent communication
- ... Keep your language simple – avoid clinical jargon
- ... Ensure young people and families feel heard
- ... Maintain clear boundaries for what staff can and cannot say/do within the Reception area
- ... Check with the visitor that you've been understood
- ... Offer support if appropriate, but avoid providing any clinical advice
- ... Provide access to interpreters, or if appropriate, allow a family member or friend to interpret
- ... Develop 'scripts' to support the delivery of particular information (e.g. explaining confidentiality to different audiences)



Mutual respect

- ... Create an inclusive environment that is welcoming of all young people, families, visitors & staff members (e.g. poster wall with images of diverse young people and families, art work by young people etc.)
- ... Be trustworthy, reliable and accountable – don't promise what you can't deliver (e.g. give realistic wait times)
- ... Act with compassion and empathy whilst recognising the limitations of the reception role
- ... Be culturally sensitive and create a 'culturally safe' and welcoming space that is appropriate for the demographics of your local community (e.g. observe celebrations such as NAIDOC Week, offer a prayer room)

Adaptability

- ... Ensure all staff act professionally and understand their boundaries
- ... Have a plan for managing various situations (e.g. duress, busy periods, challenging people) but remain flexible.
- ... Expect unusual things to occur
- ... Have a range of strategies for diffusing difficult situations
- ... Be aware of and manage the waiting room 'vibe' and noise level
- ... Ensure all staff understand the policies and procedures for offering and cancelling appointments

Privacy & confidentiality

- ... Respect the privacy of young people and their families at all times and in all situations, including during staff conversations
- ... Appreciate that every young person has the right to have their information kept safe
- ... Explain all processes and forms to young people and how their information will be used and stored
- ... Determine the best ways to communicate with each young person and record preferences on medical records
- ... Be mindful of what personal information you share about yourself with young people and their families

Self-care

- ... Recognise the challenges of the reception role and understand your own limitations
- ... Encourage staff to seek support when needed, both from each other and from the broader clinical team
- ... Be aware of your own emotions and those of other staff members
- ... Work with the strengths of staff and delegate tasks appropriately
- ... Provide opportunities for team bonding
- ... Regularly debrief and reflect as a team – check-in with one another
- ... Role-play different scenarios with colleagues, give feedback and share ideas on management strategies

