

Youthlink

Youthlink is an early intervention youth support service provided by YFS Ltd and funded by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. Youthlink works with vulnerable young people aged 8-21 who are at risk of disconnection and living in Logan and Redlands (including Bay Islands). It seeks to build young people's resilience and strengthen their connections to family, support networks and community.



Evaluation approach

The evaluation was conducted by Paul Testro Consultancy. It focused on both the implementation of the program and the client outcomes achieved. A mixed methods approach was taken, drawing on:



Youthlink program documentation

Program data from the 2017-18 financial year for 303 clients



Interviews with 24 young people using the service and 17 parents



Interviews with 12 staff

30 case file reviews.

Walking with young people on their journey

Services are delivered within a framework that respects young people and their families, is relationship-based and strives to assist them to realise their potential.

Key features include:

- building relationships with young people
- actively reaching out to young people
- taking an individualised and flexible response
- working alongside young people in a planned and purposeful manner
- working with young people in the context of their family
- engaging young people in assessing needs, identifying goals and reviewing progress
- emphasising young people being in the 'driver's seat'
- working collaboratively with organisations
- being hopeful about young people and their futures.

Characteristics of young people

59% were aged 15-17

56% were male

29% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

5% were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Common referral reasons

80% risk of disengagement and from school, training and/or employment

61% risk of disconnection from family, community or support networks.

Client Outcomes

The Youth Wellbeing Common Assessment Tool is used by staff in collaboration with young people to assess a young person's strengths and needs.

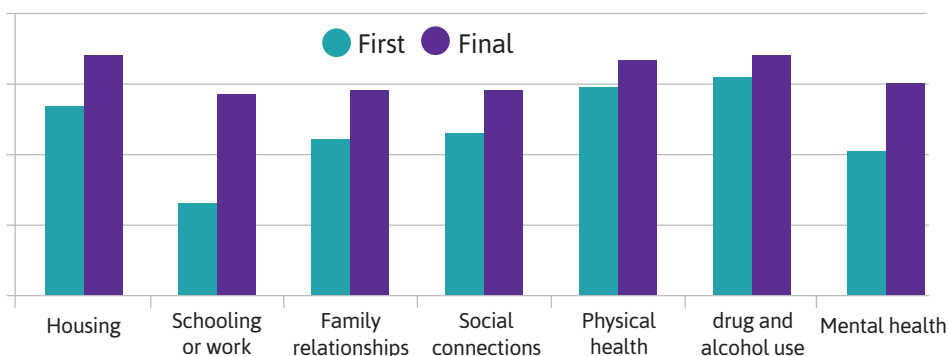
The findings indicate that young people are generally experiencing positive outcomes from participating in the program.

79%

of young people improved their circumstances, connections and skills over time.

The largest improvements were in relation to schooling or work, mental health and housing.

Comparison of youth wellbeing scores on entry and exit



Connection to culture

Culture is central to a young people's identity, safety belonging and well being.¹ Yet a number of young people and their parents did not identify cultural connection as an area of need or something the service could help them with.

While Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people accessing the service were positive about their experience and many appear to have benefited from the service, a smaller proportion showed improvements in overall wellbeing than non-Indigenous young people (71% compared to 81%).

Continuing to build capacity to understand and connect young people with their culture is a priority area for Youthlink.

SNAICC. (2013). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Cultural Needs. Melbourne.

All participating young people said they would recommend Youthlink

You can trust them

I wouldn't be here today without YFS

They can help you out of a bad place

It is a good service, they can really help



Success factors

Factors contributing to effective implementation of Youthlink include:

- a shared sense of purpose
- a values-led and relationship-based approach
- responsiveness to individual needs and connection to community
- strong leadership and committed staff
- clear processes to promote service quality
- team work and cohesiveness
- coordination with other service providers.

Increasing demand and service gaps

A significant level of unmet need was identified.

112 young people were eligible for a service but there was no vacancy for ongoing support available within Youthlink. Demand for services is increasing in growth areas (Jimboomba and Yarrabilba) and a lack of other services in Redlands and the Islands was noted.

Young people's access to appropriate counselling was the most prominent service gap identified.

For more information contact communications@yfs.org.au