

**Combined WYC Community Team and Whittlesea Secondary School Wellbeing Meeting
Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday 30 July 2020
9.00am – 10.30am**

ATTENDEES

Rebecca Ganicoche	Adriana Pugliese	Kath Scott
Michelle Fitzsimmons	Diane Sardo	Fiona Dumitrache
Dean Marando	Sally Tyrrell	Sali Robinson
Amanda Dipasquantonio	Blair Colwell	Richard Craig
Sarah Quirk	Emma Soloai	Candice Butler
Jansu Gaz	Holly Teagle	Liz Wyndham
Geraldine Porter	Yasir Mahmed	Kathy Pompetti
Kim Stadtmiller	Helen Mecozzi	Laura Cornwell
Tamara Howlett	Phillipa McLean	Brooke Streatfield
Stephanie Mitchell	Adam Jones	Ben Smith
Christine Panagiotou	Kostas Tsingas	Leanne Halsall
Jasmine Ouaida	Maryanne Panucci	Paul Huggett
Rebecca Ferris	Nicki Nelis	Kathryn Wakeling
Stephen McPherson	Seth Brown	Amy Corcoran
Sandra McKechnie	Tania Pyle	Elise Keith
Chantelle Gianinotti	Tiffany Griffith	Jedda Chapman
Lisa Wellington	Paul Papadatos	Kerrie Heenan
Audrey Dalton-Power	Troy Johnson	Sunshine Cross
Carol Clark	Laz Zaekis	

APOLOGIES

Annette Jurisch	Adriana Lancuba	Ken Goss
Sofie Cross	Gus Ozluk	

Acknowledgement of Country

In opening this meeting, we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional owners of the Land on which this meeting is held. We respectfully recognise Elders both past and present.

1. Acknowledgement of Country and introductions

Laura welcomed all to the meeting and Kim acknowledged the traditional owners of the land. Introductions were made.

2. Current & emerging impacts of COVID-19

Laura outlined the purpose of the meeting as providing the opportunity for school wellbeing staff and representatives from service providers and the broader community to:

- hear from schools and services regarding current and emerging impacts of COVID-19 on young people and identify trends/themes and experiences that have presented for students, teachers and the school community as a whole
- Identify priorities and explore opportunities for schools and services to address needs collaboratively.

3. Schools: observations, challenges & opportunities

Laura identified a number of themes as a result of conversations with school staff as a result of remote learning:

- While there has been some improvement with student engagement, remote learning is still challenging for some. This is due to varying reasons such as lack of access to tools for learning such as technology or devices, and school being the 'safe-place' and/or escape for some students.
- Factors affecting student engagement also include challenges relating to socio-economic situation, English as a second language, disability and ATSI background.
- Participation and attendance differs and tracking progress of students is difficult.
- Social isolation and peer relationships have been disrupted
- Mental health issues such as anxiety and depression for young people, family members
- Increased parental stress, family violence incidents and lack of structure/ stability
- Increased incidences of online bullying and trolling and unresolved conflicts amongst young people
- Some young people don't have the maturity for understanding the complexities of the pandemic
- Disruption of routine impacting student progress and behaviours
- Impacts on teachers and staff due to the new and different ways of operating, and though teachers have adapted well, it has been a stressful time.

There have been some positives from the remote learning experiences, but the second lockdown has been difficult for many.

Laura opened the discussion to school representatives to provide further comment on their observations and experiences:

- Mental health seems to be in crisis with presentations of OD/ self harm at Emergency. Young People are being discharged from these hospital presentations without further linkage to mental health services/ supports, appointments or resources;
- Kerrie: Universities still driving the year 11 and 12 agenda by continuing to insist on ATARs: the trauma many year 12s are experiencing to meet requirements. Year 12s also being impacted by a sense of loss due to not being able to celebrate milestones (18th birthdays, graduations, formals etc)
- Nicole: The Pavilion has unique challenges with lack of student compliance in social distancing and using masks – and students sharing cigs. Many students have disengaged. Increased Workload for teachers as they are having to accommodate for teaching both onsite and online. Recommendation for schools to have OH&S officer to liaise with leadership about working conditions to ensure safety of staff. Access to IT devices, furniture and stationary through the State School Relief funding scheme.
- Leanne: Schools are better prepared second time around as teachers realised that during the first round of remote learning there was too much focus upon educational/ academic content– this has been reduced and there is now more focus upon wellbeing; a wellbeing grid has been created which also looked at the physical, emotional, creativity and connection components to assist with well-being. (Leanne offered to share the resource).
- Tamara: students indicated that after the first round of remote learning they appreciated their time at school: this time it has hit harder. Noticing a dropping off of engagement during the second lockdown.
- Maryanne: asked if there were any indications of needs regarding assistance for digital literacy support for parents/ carers as there is funding available.
<https://djpr.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/precincts-suburbs-and-regions/lets-stay-connected>

4. Service providers: observations, challenges & opportunities

Kim noted some of the observations and challenges noted by services:

- Increased demand, longer waiting lists for services in general
- Evidence of increase in early school leavers and greater disengagement
- Loss of jobs and / or less hours

Kim also noted that there had been reports of:

- students acting as carers for younger siblings;
- concerns about uncertainty of the future;
- young people not receiving the same level of supports;
- Inability to access mandatory work placements for VET VCAL students.

Kim opened up the discussion for service providers to comment on how services are currently managing referrals and service delivery; and what observations, challenges they have made during the COVID period.

Brite is a pathways program that supports young people with a disability to gain employment with a discovery approach for a 2 year period. Challenges have included finding work placements; trying to avoid the overwhelming nature of constant negative media reminders, and trying to remain optimistic. In the process of adapting to online activity and have been running program and services for young people online via zoom. For further information you can contact Paul via email ppapadatos@brite.com.au or phone 0428 882 240.

Baseline for Young People (City of Whittlesea) is a generalist youth service that runs youth programs. We have a number of programs online for young people aged 10 - 25 years old who live, go to school or have a connection to the Whittlesea area. We are very interested in adapting how we can now work with schools in lieu of the face to face programs we have previously run with students. Sally stated that they provide year 6 to 7 transition program and a new online program is available – please promote in schools.

Please contact 9404 8800 or baseline@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

City of Whittlesea

Kathy Pompetti is the Partnerships and Project Officer at the City of Whittlesea. Her role involves supporting the Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership and is available to support agencies to connect into Council. You can contact Kathy via email kathy.pompetti@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Diane Sardo from **MatchWorks** in Epping. Diane has been working to fill roles for our local community that are signed up to MatchWorks via Centrelink. There are new roles each day to fill and referrals via Employment Consultants. Communicating with phone, email and zoom with employers and clients and fellow staff members whilst working from home. dianes@matchworks.com.au

Reconnect program at **PRACE** (Department of Education funded service). Still no word on whether Reconnect will receive additional funding for 2020 to open up more Reconnect places, they are currently only offering information/advice/referral using an active waitlist model. Commencing August, PRACE will provide an online course in partnership with Bendigo Kangan TAFE (2 days per week, for 6 weeks) for early school leavers to provide job search skills and other guidance for young people around the world of work. Please contact Adriana via email apuqliese@prace.vic.edu.au for more information.

Parents Next Program with Job Prospects, a services initiative funded by Department of Education, Skills and Employment - the referrals from Centrelink were down which is opposite to Job Active where referrals dramatically increased, also some parents payment allowances changed from Parenting Payment to Job Seeker Payments due to high benefits. Parents show 'stress' and 'frustration' with going back to home schooling environment, we can also observe in motivation of many clients went down since lock-downs/ restrictions, lots of goals set are shattered. The effects of COVID-19 is uncertain and has affected clients as they are not sure what to do or what to expect.

For further information please contact Yasir Mahmud - Team Leader North West & East Parents Next Program via email ymahmud@jobprospects.com.au

LifeConnect suicide prevention and support after suicide. They run wellbeing workshops including resilience and suicide prevention workshops online (recognising the signs/having the conversations)

For further information contact Amy via email amy.corcoran@neaminational.org.au or go onto their website <https://www.neaminational.org.au/lifeconnect/>

Candice Butler – YSAS: providing phone-based support – though as the situation eased they were able to offer face to face; capacity for emergency support. Trends noted included a drop off of referrals during the first wave (usually, Hume and Whittlesea have largest number of referrals): maybe due to YROs redeployed to other COVID specific activities. Received increase in self referrals and from parents. Waitlist has jumped significantly during second wave. Engagement over the phone worked well for many. Young people entering homelessness system led to fears about lack of compliance with restrictions and being vulnerable. Drug and alcohol issues increased – used as coping mechanism – and due to not being able to access, there were cases of forced detox, mental health issues is the flow on; switching substances also problematic.

For further information contact Candice via email CButler@ysas.org.au

Victoria Police

Geraldine Porter, Inspector, Vic Police: concerned about lack of referrals and will follow up.

WCC

Audrey Dalton-Power, Whittlesea Community Connections: youth engagement worker for Empower program – doesn't have a great waitlist and has flexibility to work with any young person aged 12 to 25 who is disengaged from education. Zoom link consultations – also can help with university students.

For further information contact Audrey via email apower@whittleseacc.org.au

Dean, Whittlesea Community Connections: noting online fatigue and burnout as a significant issue. Kate Halstead is doing research regarding impact of COVID on young people khalstead@whittleseacc.org.au

5. Identify priorities and explore opportunities for schools and services to address needs collaboratively

Laura and Kim invited members to identify priorities and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Kathryn Wakeling – Mental Health Practitioner at Edgars Creek spoke about the role out of this program; stated that the community services poster and this meeting was most beneficial in connecting with services. Mental Health Practitioners will be rolled out in every school.

Adriana Pugliese – Reconnect Program, PRACE: has noted a flux of early school leavers referring to the program. PRACE is offering pathways to employment through Kangan.

Liz Wyndham also mentioned the LIFT program and eheadspace as useful programs – also Swinburne offers online support for anxiety related to COVID.

6. Youth Mental Health Forum – Youth Advisory Committee

The Whittlesea Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) comprised of 15 young people aged between 12 – 25 years old. Mental Health & wellbeing was the highest priority for YAC members for 2020. The YAC identified the following priorities:

- Young people need access to better information about what mental health problems are – access to stories of lived experience are the best approach.
- It's difficult to know where to go to access support and what services are available to young people. For example, YAC members didn't know that headspace Greensborough is also located at Plenty Valley and they don't know what the YFlex service is.
- Young people don't know what all the different mental health professionals do and why there are so many different professionals and how they all fit together to support young people's mental health.

Proposal for an event to be offered to schools that includes:

- Presentations of lived experience, could include speakers from Batyr, CMY, headspace Ambassadors.

- A panel of mental health workers from the local service system, could include a Psychiatrist, a Psychologist, an Occupational Therapist and a Peer Worker. Aim would be to give an overview of their service, what their work as a MH professional involves, when young people access this support and how to access this support – and the person's career path.
- It is proposed that a resource booklet would be provided with activities and further information about resources to accompany the event.
- Workshops to be held by Baseline during the following weeks that young people can sign up for.

A brief questionnaire will be sent to schools

Kerrie – loves the concept and as evidenced from feedback from the Community Safety project last year, students are looking for opportunities to support young people in their own school.

Further details regarding the online youth mental health forum will be circulated soon.

For further information please contact Liz Wyndham via email liz.wyndham@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or phone 0407 670 185.

7. Closing statements & next steps

Laura and Kim closed the meeting asking for feedback regarding the value of bringing together of the networks (service providers and school wellbeing staff) for another meeting during term 4. It was suggested that specific themes and areas needing support could be a focal point of the next meeting if this was seen as most beneficial (ie presentation or professional development on a particular topic).

Next Meeting:

Date: TBA

Venue: TBA

Next Meeting: WYC Community Team

Date: 9 September 2020 (1pm – 2.30pm)

Venue: TBA