

10th October 2022

World Mental Health Day – youth mental health a key concern

“The compounding challenges faced by children and young people affecting their mental health and wellbeing are unprecedented, and it’s never been more important to invest into their mental health and wellbeing, said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

Today is World Mental day, with the theme - Make mental health and wellbeing for all a global priority with an opportunity to ensure that everyone including children and young people have access to mental health services.

“Help seeking can take many forms, practical factors such as location, availability and immediacy of services available may affect access to mental health services, commented Ms Adams.

Kids Helpline has mobilised efforts to reach more children and young people a reality by growing My Circle, a new frontier for mental health support, targeting emotional, social and the mental wellbeing of 13–25 year old young people. My Circle is moderated by a professional counsellor, supporting young people and focusses on the two most common topics young people contact Kids Helpline about: emotional discord and mental wellbeing.

“Significantly the provision of the Kids Helpline My Circle platform, made possible through funding by Bupa Foundation and supported by the University of Sydney’s Cyberpsychology Research Group, is a preventative, early intervention program offering greater access for hard-to-reach young people experiencing greater than moderate levels of distress,” continued Ms Adams.

Over the past year, the powerful impact of My Circle has seen daily activity double from 150 to 300 young people logging in per day. The platform is available 24/7 for young people to gain support on range of topics from daily frustrations to mental health.

“This 100% increase in demand is not surprising as online support services like My Circle have become an important source of early intervention for young people struggling with mental health concerns, whom research shows spend a lot of their time online and are the least likely to seek professional help when needed.

“Young people are widely known to be the least likely to seek professional support, preferring to self-manage or approach informal support people for help. By working closely with young people to understand their help-seeking preferences, My Circle has been designed in a way that upholds standards of member safety, information accuracy, and purposeful interaction that allows young people to connect with others like them for informal support in a safer way online.

“The digital delivery of the service allows young people to overcome anxiety they may have about seeking help and geographic barriers that would otherwise prevent them coming together in the first place.

“These service design principles have helped to build My Circle’s 5,800+ member online community and are cited by members as core reasons for using the service,” continued Ms Adams.

My Circle has also been well-positioned to provide mental health support to young people since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, over the course of the coronavirus pandemic, demand for mental health services have increased across Australia as young people and their loved ones have fallen ill and been required to enter regular community lockdowns – resulting in an unprecedented level of social isolation with substantial mental health consequences.

“My Circle continues to respond to increasing demand by using an open community that allows young people immediate access to support. By focusing on facilitating peer-to-peer support to each other, Kids Helpline clinical moderators can use their time to support many people at once, reserving one-to-one support conversations to identify and refer members who would benefit from counselling,” Ms Adams concluded.

Powered by **yourtown**, Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, confidential 24/7 support service that protects and safeguards the mental health of children and young people in Australia by providing young people with a choice of counselling options and accessible self-help tools when and where they need them.

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For more information or to arrange a media interview, please contact Maree Reason-Cain, **yourtown** Corporate Affairs & Media Manager.



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about yourtown

yourtown is a trusted provider of services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, long term unemployment, prevention of youth suicide, child protection, as well as support for those experiencing family and domestic violence.

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