



OVER A THIRD OF
15-19-YEAR-OLDS
ARE CONCERNED
ABOUT COPING
WITH MENTAL
HEALTH ISSUES¹

HEADFYRST

SALVATION ARMY YOUTHLINK AND HEADSPACE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES - HEADFYRST

The headfyrst program is a collaborative service between the Salvation Army Youthlink and selected headspace Youth Mental Health Centres in Western and South Western Sydney. This innovative and free service helps 12-25-year-olds experiencing a dependency on alcohol and other drugs along with mental health issues. headfyrst aims to provide resources, counselling and support to help young people work through their recovery journey. The Western Sydney headfyrst centres are based in Castle Hill, Parramatta and Mt Drutt.

Commissioning mental health services are a priority for WentWest to ensure that Western Sydney communities can access quality, timely and affordable mental health care suited to their needs.

Max* is 15-years-old and was referred to the headfyrst program by his school, with consent from his parents. He displayed symptoms of anxiety and anger, had poor attendance at school and had been caught smoking on school grounds. headfyrst worked with Max to understand the root cause of his recent behaviour. A psychosocial assessment found that Max was using cigarettes to cope with his parent's recent divorce and increased feelings of pressure to look after and provide for his mother and younger siblings. Max identified key objectives to work on throughout his headfyrst sessions, including; to gain a better understanding of his thoughts, feelings and behaviours, to improve the relationship with his mother, to learn mindfulness to combat his anxiety and anger, and adopt healthy coping mechanisms to replace his AOD dependency.

headfyrst used cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and Motivational Interviewing to empower Mas to achieve his goals. Psychoeducation was also provided to the client's mother on teenage emotional and brain development to help her understand her son better and find positive ways of supporting him.

After eight treatment sessions, Max reported that he had a better understanding of his emotions and thought processes and that he felt closer to his family members. He also felt more motivated to attend school and was putting more effort into his classes. He has made a significant reduction in his smoking behaviours and no longer craves or feels the need for cigarettes.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of this client.

1. Mission Australia (2020), *Youth Survey Report 2020*