

Early psychosis program makes recovery a reality for young people

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Credit: Orygen

Researchers from Orygen, Australia's center of excellence in youth

mental health, analyzed data from 1252 young people across Australia who attended the headspace Early Psychosis program for treatment for a first episode of psychosis (FEP) or being at a high risk of developing psychosis—termed Ultra High Risk (UHR).

Their analysis found that at the end of six months there was a considerable improvement in clinical and functional outcomes in both groups. Young [people](#) at UHR showed a greater reduction in [psychological distress](#), while young people with FEP experienced a greater reduction in psychosis symptoms.

The findings are published in the current issue of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry.

Orygen's Dr. Ellie Brown, who led the study, said it was one of the largest to look at young people in real-world early psychosis clinical settings.

"We wanted to know how well early psychosis programs work for young people outside of a highly controlled research environment. This research showed us that they do work and that recovery is possible," she said.

"We were pleased to see recovery illustrated so clearly in the very [positive outcomes](#) for the young people who had received care at the headspace Early Psychosis [program](#)."

The headspace Early Psychosis program is based on the early intervention model developed by Orygen in the early 1990s for treating young people experiencing psychosis. It involves supporting a young person as early as possible in their illness.

"The program provides evidence-based psychological treatments,

medication, and support to help the young person get well and engage in school or work. Involving [family members](#) is also a key component of care," Dr. Brown said.

"These programs offer young people with complex mental ill-health a sustained, holistic and evidence-based model of care."

Dr. Brown said the positive results of the research should prompt calls for headspace Early Psychosis programs to be established in Tasmania and the ACT, areas of the country where they are currently absent.

"Our results show that early psychosis programs work—they're helping young people get better," she said.

The study results also highlighted that after a young person's [mental health](#) improved, there was continued and sustained improvement in how they functioned in their day to day lives, Dr. Brown said.

"We asked questions about friendships, study and work. This is important, because young people in these services are no different to [young people](#) anywhere. They want to work; they want to study and they want to live the life that they aspire to."

More information: Ellie Brown et al, The clinical and functional outcomes of a large naturalistic cohort of young people accessing national early psychosis services, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/00048674211061285](https://doi.org/10.1177/00048674211061285)

Provided by Orygen

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