

Provide support within and beyond the early learning service or school

If a child or young person requires support because of a mental health condition, it's important to understand your role as an educator.

Early Support

This module is the third of the three Be You Professional Learning modules in the Early Support domain.

The **Notice**, **Inquire** and **Provide** modules are designed to be completed in order as the information in the later ones builds on your learning from the earlier ones.

If you are yet to complete the Notice and Inquire modules, Be You recommends you complete them first before proceeding with the Provide module.

A coordinated approach

The earlier a child or young person receives support for emotional, behavioural or social difficulties, the better their chance of overcoming them. This reduces the likelihood of more serious mental health conditions. Your responsibility is to understand the policies and procedures relevant to your role.

However, to support the children and young people in your care effectively, it's also useful to have a good understanding of the supports available and the most appropriate time for you or the relevant member of your learning community to contact them.

Mental health support and services

There are two key tools to support learning communities following community trauma.

This module explores the stepped care approach to mental health support and how a learning community may be involved.

These may include:

- Prevention strategies: teaching daily strategies for mental health (such as eating well, sleeping well, keeping active, and nurturing supportive social networks).



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- Stress management strategies: teaching strategies to support children and young people through stressful situations (for example, conflict resolution skills, relaxation and mindfulness strategies).
- Universal (or primary health care) services: you're part of the universal service system, which includes student wellbeing coordinators, school counsellors, early learning service support staff, child and family health nurses, school nurses, and general practitioners (GPs). These services may provide assistance themselves or determine whether someone might need more specialised support.

External supports may include:

- Secondary health care services: such as psychologists, paediatricians, psychiatrists, social workers, family support workers and allied health professionals. These health professionals provide various services, such as face-to-face counselling, play therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) or medication.
- Tertiary health care (or specialist) services: such as specialist paediatric clinics, family therapy services, Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS or CAMHS) or hospital inpatient services. These services are for children and young people experiencing complex and severe mental health issues or are at high risk of harm.

A child or young person may receive support from multiple services. They may also move up and down the tiers depending on their needs. If you're unsure where an individual fits and what support they need, speak with your wellbeing team or lead educator.

Support help-seeking

Creating a mental health support network for your learning community means you'll have support when needed. This ensures your knowledge is current, well researched and of high quality. Help-seeking means actively seeking help from other people. It involves communicating to get help – including understanding, advice, information, treatment and general support – in response to a mental health issue, condition or distressing experience.

You support children and young people's mental health when you:

- are aware of relevant health services – who's available and what they offer – so that you can speak with credibility about the help available
- assist with referrals and offer to attend sessions if needed
- work to clarify issues with children, young people and families to determine if professional support is needed.

A whole-service approach to supporting mental health

More than half the children and young people who receive mental health support are referred through the education sector. It makes sense to build relationships with service providers outside of crisis situations.

By being aware of available options, your learning community can facilitate appropriate support, reducing the distress to you, children, young people and families. It also improves their experience and longer-term prospects. By linking and mobilising their resources, learning communities and health and community services can achieve significant positive outcomes for children and young people.

By completing the Provide module, you will be able to:

- appreciate the role of educators in providing mental health support to children and young people
- understand the stepped care approach to mental health support and the barriers to seeking support
- use a whole learning community approach to provide early support for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- take steps to prepare yourself to provide mental health support to children and young people.