

Mind Australia Limited

Virtual Step Up Step Down

**Brief report: Virtual SUSD in Queensland
Logan and Caboolture YSUSD, July 2021-Feb 2022**

February 2022

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Snapshot of outcomes, Queensland VSUSD

July 2021-February 2022

Program engagement

The program achieved good uptake, with 63% clients accepting the virtual support offered to them (Logan 43%; Caboolture 88%). Commitments to study and the client's living situation were barriers to participation for some. Many clients did not provide a reason for not taking up the invitation to VSUSD. Some factors that encouraged engagement included: having an existing trusted relationship with Mind services and developing early rapport; wanting to continue working with support worker on recovery goals; access to technology and a safe environment to participate.

Who joined the program?

Most participants were female (n=21; Male: n=1; Other: n=2) and nearly half were aged under 18 (21 of 24 were under 20). Of the 13 clients aged 18 or over, six were unemployed, five were in casual (m=3) or part time (n=2) employment, and two were students. One client was of Aboriginal descent.

Program impacts

Across Logan and Caboolture VSUSDs, all 24 clients completed at least one digital Outcome Measures survey. As numbers were small, we compared entrance and exit surveys cross-sectionally (before and after not matched by individual client). Due to the low numbers of surveys we did not have the statistical power to find significant differences, but recovery and wellbeing were generally higher in client survey responses given after than before VSUSD participation in several key indicators, including Kessler 6 scores that measure levels of psychological distress, and showed similar patterns as among VSUSD in the previously reported period (June 2020-June 21). On average, clients tended to feel more able to cope day to day and manage everyday tasks after accessing the virtual services than before.

Satisfaction

Client satisfaction was very high, with clients reporting they felt listened to and respected, and had a say in the program. Average likelihood of recommending the service was 8.3/10.

Experience of virtual supports

The common themes in Virtual service clients' open-ended responses and client and carer testimonials were consistent with those reported for the earlier period, and were mainly positive: a safety net; keep doing what you are doing; and, building capacity – a pathway to independence.

Conclusions

Overall, VSUSD was accessible and beneficial for clients from younger populations and demonstrated virtual services to be a cost-contained program that valuably augmented residential and face to face services. The service worked optimally when flexibly integrated with residential SUSD, for instance, as a "waitlist" alternative, a post-discharge support or an alternative if SUSD was not possible.

This report

The Queensland Government provided funding to Mind Australia through its COVID-19 Grant Fund to deliver virtual services from July 2020 to June 2021. The purpose of the funding was to help build community health resilience and preparedness to face the impact of COVID-19. The services were aligned with existing Step Up Step Down services in five Health Service Districts. After the initial VSUSD program ended in July 2021, VSUSD was offered July 2021-February 2022 at two sites with existing Mind youth YSUSD services: Caboolture and Logan. The VSUSD service model was flexible and varied between the two participating sites. In this report, we present information about the client experience and impact of the Virtual Step Up Step Down (VSUSD) program run at these two sites, July 2021 - February 2022.

Who accessed Virtual SUSD?

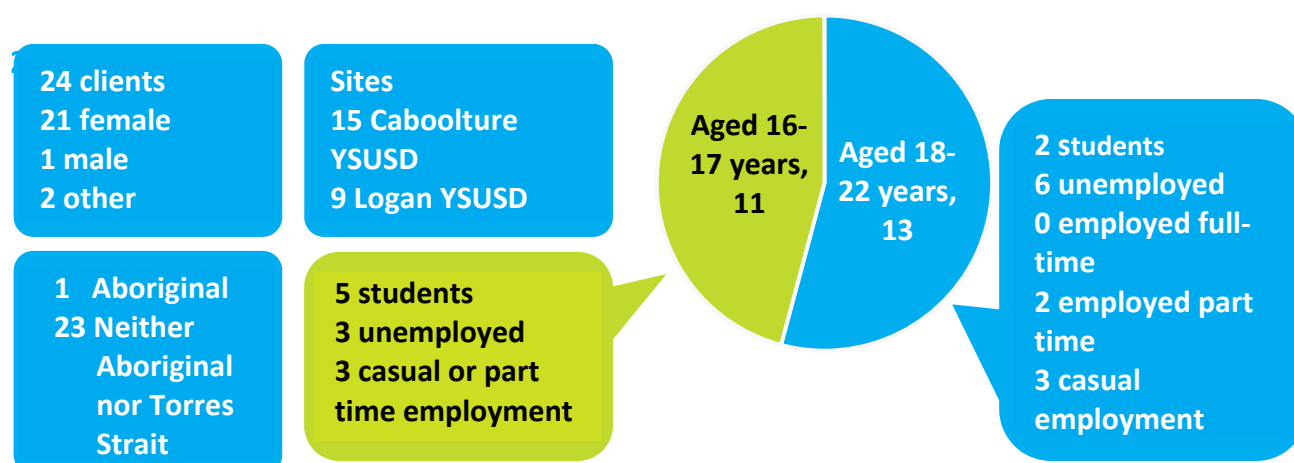
1. Uptake and viability

VSUSD was offered at two sites with existing Mind YSUSD services: Caboolture and Logan. VSUSD was relatively popular, with uptake rates of 63%, with 10 out of 23 clients (44%) accepting the virtual support offered to them at Logan, and 15 out of 17 clients (88%) accepting at Caboolture.

Most clients were women (n=21) with only one male and 2 clients who identified as non-binary or who preferred to self-describe gender participating. One client of 24 identified as Aboriginal. Nearly half of VSUSD clients were aged 16 to 17.

Staff invited clients to share their reasons for declining an offer of virtual support but few clients responded (one refused due to work commitments, another was not interested). Establishing early rapport with clients through in-person induction or localised services, and follow-up on the initial offer, may have encouraged engagement. Participating clients identified a range of factors that encouraged their engagement with VSUSD:

- having an existing trusted relationship with Mind services and developing early rapport with their virtual support worker was a significant factor in joining the program
- wanting to continue working on recovery goals and support transition home from SUSD
- access to technology and a safe environment to participate
- clients found the virtual platform convenient and flexible around their schedule



Client outcomes

3. Outcome Measures July 2021-February 2022

Across the two services offering VSUSD, 24 clients completed digital Outcome Measures surveys. One client accessed VSUSD on more than one occasion. 19 survey responses were completed when clients entered a virtual service, while 10 survey responses were completed when clients left a virtual service. Due to the low number of clients who completed both before and after surveys (n=5), we were unable to compare paired before and after responses. Instead, we made a cross-sectional comparison of client responses given *before* their program *and* client responses given *after* their Virtual SUSD participation. As the results are cross-sectional, caution should be used in drawing conclusions about individual client improvement over the course of program participation

Client outcomes

Psychological distress
Managing daily living
Knowledge and awareness of mental health
Coping and resilience
Social ease
Family relationships
Hope and recovery
Personal goals
Support networks
Service satisfaction
Mind diversity and inclusion

Improved mental health

Numbers of surveys were too low to find significant differences between responses made by clients before the program and those made after leaving the program. However, we found a trend to improvement in several key indicators, including Kessler 6 scores that measure levels of psychological distress. Similar to previous findings, and findings for youth services generally, while client Kessler 6 scores were lower at exit than entrance to the program, the average score remained above the cut-off for being likely to experience mental ill-health.

However, client responses given after the program indicated clients tended to feel less sad, nervous, restless, and like everything was an effort than clients who had completed the survey before accessing Virtual SUSD services.

↓ Psychological distress

↑ Hopeful
Cope day to day

Recovery

On average, client's felt more able to cope day to day and manage everyday tasks after accessing the virtual services than before.

Satisfaction

Client satisfaction with the virtual service was very high, with clients reporting they always felt listened to and respected by staff, and mostly had a say in how the service was run.

Clients also felt they were informed about their service and all clients reported their privacy and confidentiality were always respected, and agreed they felt safe.

8.3/10

Likelihood of
recommending Mind

On average, clients agreed that Mind offered a welcoming service for everyone, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, those from diverse cultures, and those living with a disability.

All surveyed clients would recommend Mind services to their family or friends, with a high average likelihood of recommending the service of 8.3 out of 10.

Implementation and client experience of virtual services

4. Client comments

To further evaluate perceived program effectiveness, we analysed qualitative feedback from clients' responses to open-ended service satisfaction items included in the client Outcome Measures Survey (n=10)

When clients were leaving the service, we asked them open-ended questions, including: *Is there anything else you would like to tell us, such as what you like most about the service? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?*

Client responses were broadly consistent with the common themes identified in virtual service clients' open-ended responses from the earlier evaluation period. These themes were mainly positive:

A safety net - safeguarding against falling through the cracks

'Keep doing what you are doing' - maintaining continuity of support

Building capacity – a pathway to independence

'It was helpful to talk to someone like a normal person instead of confusing hospital language'
- Virtual services client

'I like everything about the service, I've improved so much and have recommended SUSD to friends in similar situations.'
- Virtual services client

Service Improvements and suggestions

Clients made several recommendations for service improvement:

'I wish the support went for longer. Its different to when I was in SUSD because you would be there in real life, but on virtual its harder to get used to the online stuff.'

Tables

Table 1. Mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) of Outcome Measures psychological distress scores (Kessler 6) by time surveys were completed (T1 – enter VSUSD; T2 – exit VSUSD)

Survey item type	Survey item	Score on scale [#]		Difference between Time 1 (entry) and Time 2 (exit) in the full sample (n=25) [^]				
		Time 1 n=19 M (SD)	Time 2 n=10 M (SD)	Cohen's d	N	t	df	p [*]
Kessler 6 items Psychological distress (5 point Likert Scale from 1 none of the time – 5 all of the time)	Sad. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel so sad nothing could cheer you up?	3.17 (1.04)	2.56 (1.33)	0.51	27	1.31	25	.203
	Nervous. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel nervous?	3.56 (1.04)	3.33 (0.87)	0.24	27	0.55	25	.587
	Restless. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel restless or fidgety?	3.72 (0.90)	3.33 (1.12)	0.39	27	0.98	25	.336
	Hopeful. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel hopeful?	3.44 (1.10)	3.67 (1.41)	0.18	27	0.41	25	.656
	Effort. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel that everything was an effort?	3.67 (1.28)	3.56 (1.33)	0.08	27	0.21	25	.836
	Worthwhile. During the past 1 week how much of the time did you feel worthwhile?	3.59 (1.12)	3.33 (1.22)	0.22	26	0.54	24	.598
	Kessler 6 Score (sum of 6 items, 2 reverse scored: hopeful; worthwhile)	21.06 (5.39)	19.78 (6.51)	0.22	26	0.54	24	.596

Table 2. Mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) of Outcome Measures recovery scale scores by time surveys were completed (T1 – enter VSUSD; T2 – exit VSUSD)

Survey item type	Survey item	Score on scale [#]		Difference between Time 1 (entry) and Time 2 (exit) in the full sample (n=25) [^]				
		Time 1 n=19 M (SD)	Time 2 n=10 M (SD)	Cohen's d	N	t	df	p [*]
Coping, resilience	Coping. How well do feel like you are coping day to day? (1 not well – 5 Very well)	2.61 (1.04)	2.89 (1.23)	0.25	27	0.61	25	.548
Know of Mental health	Know. How much do you feel like you know about your mental health? (1 not very much – 5 a great deal)	3.33 (1.37)	3.11 (1.54)	0.15	27	0.38	25	.706
Managing daily living	Tasks. How well can you manage your day-to-day tasks and activities? (1 not well at all – 5 very well)	2.72 (0.83)	2.78 (0.83)	0.07	27	0.87	25	.056
Social ease	Others. How comfortable do you feel around other people? (1 not at all – 5 extremely)	2.89 (1.02)	3.00 (1.32)	0.09	27	0.81	25	.111
Family relations	Family. How much does your family relationships positively support your mental health? (1 not very much – 5 a great deal)	3.00 (1.50)	2.22 (1.30)	0.56	26	0.20	24	.778
Hope and recovery	Hope. How much do have hopes and dreams for the future? (1 not at all – 5 very much)	3.33 (1.09)	3.11 (0.78)	0.24	27	0.59	25	.222
Personal goals	Goals. During my time at PARC, I have worked towards a personal goal. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	Not measured at Time 1	4.20 (0.63)					
Support networks	Services. During my time at PARC, I was provided with help to access support. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	Not measured at Time 1	4.10 (0.88)					

[#] All T1 and T2 surveys were included when calculating group means. [^] Unpaired scores were excluded from paired samples t-tests. ^{*} Significant at alpha level of .05

Table 3. Mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) of clients' service satisfaction scores (T2 – exit)

Survey item type	Survey item	Scores on scales [#]
		Time 2 n=10 M (SD)
Service evaluation and client satisfaction	Staff in the service have listened to me. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.80 (0.42)
	Staff at Mind treated me with respect. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.90 (0.32)
	Had a Say. I have had a say in how the service was run. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.40 (0.70)
	I was given enough information and was able to make decisions about the way I am supported by Mind. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.60 (0.70)
	My privacy and confidentiality was respected. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	5.00 (0.00)
	I feel safe at the Mind service. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.70 (0.48)
	I feel feedback on the service is welcomed. <i>(1 never – 5 always)</i>	4.80 (0.42)
	Mind Commitment. This [statement] is true, in my experience. <i>(1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)</i>	4.80 (0.42)
Likely to recommend	Recommend. How likely are you to recommend Mind's services to a friend or family member? <i>[1=Not at all likely to 10=Extremely likely]</i>	8.3 (1.70)

[#] All T1 and T2 surveys were included when calculating group means

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