



INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS)

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEADSPACE

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Orygen acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to their Country, which continue to be important to First Nations people living today.

Orygen would like to recognise the headspace IPS vocational specialists, headspace centre staff, and

young people across Australia whose experiences and perspectives informed the Workforce Development Framework. Orygen would also like to thank IPS program partners, headspace National (hN), the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), representatives from the Career Development Association Australia (CDAA), and Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA).

Orygen also acknowledges all other individuals and organisational representatives who contributed to the development of the Workforce Development Framework for headspace.

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INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS)

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEADSPACE

BACKGROUND

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is considered the most effective and evidence-based model of employment support for people living with mental ill-health.⁽¹⁾ IPS involves the co-location of vocational specialists with mental health teams who work collaboratively to support individuals into employment.

IPS is a highly defined form of supported employment and has eight core Practice Principles. A summary of the Practice Principles are:

- **Focus on Competitive Employment:** IPS services are committed to competitive employment as an attainable goal for participants with mental ill-health seeking employment.
- **Eligibility Based on Participants Choice:** Participants are not excluded from the IPS service on the basis of readiness, diagnoses, symptoms, substance use history, psychiatric hospitalisations, level of disability, or legal system involvement.
- **Integration of Rehabilitation and Mental Health Services:** The IPS model is based on a close integration of mental health treatment teams, including clinical care.
- **Attention to Participant Preferences:** Services are based on participants' preferences and choices, rather than headspaces' judgements.
- **Personalised Benefits Counselling:** Vocational Specialists help participants obtain personalised, understandable, and accurate information about their government entitlements. (Fear of losing benefits is a major barrier to employment).

- **Rapid Job Search:** The IPS model is based on a rapid job search approach to help participants obtain jobs directly, rather than providing lengthy pre-employment assessment, training, and counselling.
- **Systematic Job Development:** Vocational Specialists build an employer network based on participants' interests, developing relationships and partnerships with local employers.
- **Time-Unlimited and Individualised Support:** Follow-along supports are individualised and are continued for as long as the participant wants and needs the support.⁽²⁾

IPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2014, Orygen released the report *'Tell them they're dreaming: Work, Education and Young People with Mental Illness in Australia'*, highlighting the evidence for IPS and recommending a trial of the IPS model to provide vocational support to young people accessing headspace.⁽³⁾

The headspace model

headspace centres provide an integrated, youth-friendly service to young people (12 to 25 years) requiring support for their mental health, general health, alcohol and other drug use, and vocational needs.⁽⁴⁾

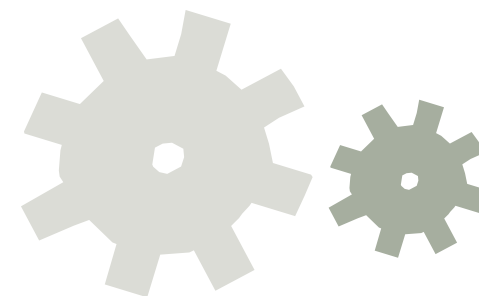
The headspace centre network is supported by headspace National, and each headspace centre is operated by an independent organisation (lead agency), which manages the premises, employs staff, engages with the community, and develops partnerships with other agencies.⁽⁴⁾

In 2016, the Australian Government allocated funding to trial IPS services at 14 headspace sites. Since the initial trial, the IPS program has experienced significant growth, with the program expanded to 24 centres in 2019 and a further 26 centres in 2021. A total of 50 headspace centres currently offer IPS.⁽⁵⁾

Thirty-seven (37) independent organisations (lead agencies) deliver the IPS program in headspace centres, and several organisations support the delivery including Orygen, the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), and headspace National (hN).

An evaluation of the headspace IPS trial found that the outcomes achieved during the trial varied across headspace sites, with the individual attributes of IPS vocational specialists acting as barriers or enablers to outcomes.⁽⁶⁾

There is considerable variation in approaches to workforce development for IPS vocational specialists, with the independent management of headspace centres meaning access to training can vary between sites and lead agencies.



Critical to the success of IPS in headspace is a workforce with the specific skills required to effectively deliver the IPS model for young people, while ensuring the foundational principles of IPS are maintained.

In 2021, Orygen was engaged by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to support the expansion of IPS in headspace centres through the development and implementation of an IPS Workforce Development Framework. The IPS Workforce Development Framework aims to increase and retain IPS workforce availability, capacity, and capability to deliver IPS programs in headspace, ultimately improving vocational recovery outcomes for young people experiencing mental ill-health.

PURPOSE

The IPS Workforce Development Framework outlines actions – including training and learning, peer-to-peer learning, career pathways, and recruitment support – to improve the quality, recruitment, and retention of IPS vocational specialists in headspace centres.

Workforce development focussed on improving skills and capabilities alone will be insufficient to strengthen the IPS workforce. This Framework also addresses the motivation, capability and opportunity for IPS vocational specialists to implement high-quality IPS programs in headspace centres.

The Framework is supported by an IPS Vocational Specialist Competency Framework outlining expectations of the IPS workforce, and to support headspace managers and supervisors to recruit and

manage the performance and development of IPS vocational specialists.

The IPS Workforce Development Framework for headspace has been informed by:

- A survey and consultations with IPS vocational specialists and headspace clinical service managers to identify opportunities for workforce development to increase IPS worker capability to deliver IPS.
- A survey of headspace clinical service managers and other managers to understand recruitment and retention challenges for IPS programs.
- A survey of young people with experience receiving support to find work or study through a youth mental health service, a job provider, or other organisation in order to understand the skills and experiences that IPS workers need to work well with young people.
- Interviews with key stakeholders at hN, WAAMH, Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA), and Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA).
- A review of academic and grey literature on IPS workforce development.

IPS WORKFORCE IN HEADSPACE

As of October 2022, there were 116 IPS vocational specialists fully integrated into headspace centres across Australia. IPS vocational specialists are typically managed by headspace clinical services or centre managers, and each lead agency is responsible for its own recruitment process and staff management.

IPS vocational support services, including career development, are provided in tandem with clinical support to address barriers to education and/or employment. The IPS model allows vocational specialists the opportunity to support young people intensively with rapid job search and tailoring the service to each young person's preferences.(7)

The IPS vocational specialist role requires a broad range of skills – working with young people experiencing mental ill-health, working in a clinical mental health setting, and working with employers and education providers. There is no single career pathway or minimum qualification to become an IPS vocational specialist.

The 2019 KPMG evaluation of the IPS trial in headspace found the background and experience of IPS vocational specialists was highly varied.(8) This was echoed in the survey results and consultations with IPS vocational specialists that informed this IPS Workforce Development Framework for headspace.

The survey indicated that the educational backgrounds of this workforce covered a wide range of study areas. Most common were community and social services courses, including social work and youth work, and mental health fields such as counselling and psychology. A smaller number of workers had qualifications in employment services and career development. The qualification level of IPS vocational specialists also varied considerably across the workforce.

The most frequent response for previous roles was working for an employment service provider such as jobactive or Disability Employment Services.

Table 1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

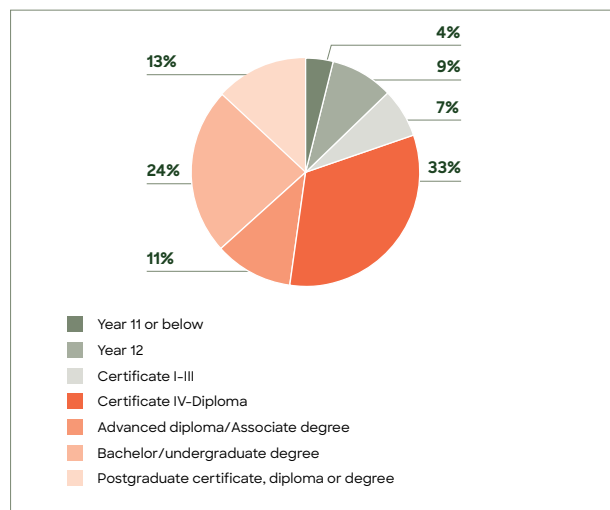
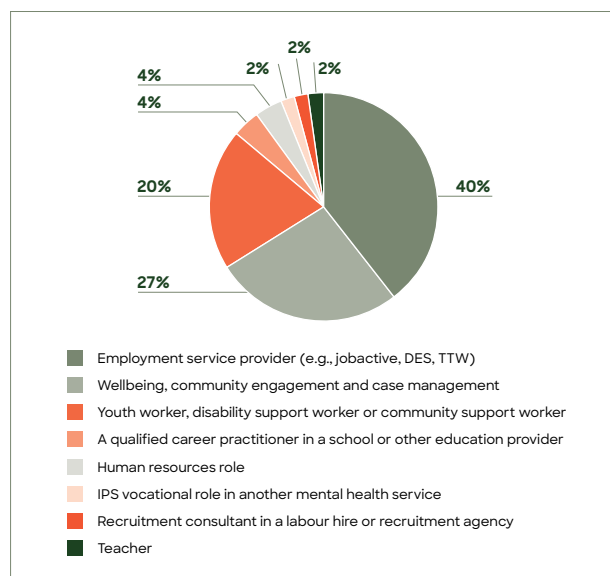


Table 2. What was your role before commencing as an IPS Vocational specialist at headspace?



Consultations suggested these factors combine to create a diverse workforce. This is one of the strengths of IPS – different IPS vocational specialists bring their individual competencies and experiences to the role. However, it also creates a risk that young people do not receive a consistent IPS approach.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Evidence also suggests that recruitment and retention are challenges for headspace sites. The trial evaluation identified a relatively high turnover of staff at sites providing IPS services, and in the survey of managers it was reported the average duration in role is less than two years.

74 per cent of IPS managers report IPS vocational specialists typically leave the role within two years.

Hiring managers also reported considerable variation in the quality of applicants for IPS vocational specialist roles, with the majority describing challenges in recruiting appropriately skilled people.

64 per cent of IPS managers report a lack of candidates with the right skills, experience or qualifications to undertake IPS work.

The key skills and experiences managers sought when recruiting for IPS roles were:

- experience working with young people,
- good practical skills (communication, coaching, information, and stakeholder management), and
- experience working with employers and supporting young people's career development.

Managers were less likely to seek candidates with experience working in mental health or disability employment programs, or experience working in a clinical setting.

Previous research into youth-focused IPS services have noted that staff training is a challenge to program fidelity.⁽⁹⁾ Consultations with managers indicated additional education and training opportunities would be the biggest enabler to improving the retention of IPS vocational specialists, with a greater sense of community between IPS vocational specialists and headspace staff also likely to lead to improved retention rates.

IPS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEADSPACE

OUR VISION



IPS vocational specialists have the competencies, motivation, and opportunity to deliver a high quality IPS service, enabling young people with mental ill-health to be active and ongoing participants in education or employment.

FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

The IPS Workforce Development Framework seeks to improve IPS workforce availability, capacity, and capability to deliver the IPS program in headspace through four key focus areas:



1. TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING



2. PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING



3. STRENGTHENING RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND PATHWAYS



4. CAREER PATHWAYS





1. TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING

Training is a core activity of the IPS Workforce Development Framework for headspace and provides opportunities for IPS vocational specialists to improve their competencies, as well as the quality and consistency of their work. IPS vocational specialists and headspace managers report clear opportunities to strengthen the learning and development of IPS vocational specialists. In addition to improving the quality of service-delivery, hiring managers felt that additional training opportunities would be likely to improve retention of the IPS workforce.

Consistent themes emerged from the focus groups and evidence review about opportunities for improvement, including:

- understanding young people and their mental health needs;
- developing employment and education placement and support skills;
- career-planning, support and advice; and
- developing specific skills and knowledge to deliver the unique components of the IPS model.

With considerable variation in the formal qualifications held by IPS vocational specialists – and recognising the diversity of skills and competencies within the IPS workforce – micro-credentials were identified as the most cost-effective and flexible training option to maximise engagement from such a diverse group of learners.

Micro-credentials are skill-specific certifications that offer flexibility to undertake further education and training to support career development outside of the framework of a formal qualification. Training will be developed to blend online education with real-world exercises and activities to test skills and reflect on how those skills could contribute to practice.

Micro-credentials will:

- support IPS vocational specialists to undertake training in the areas in which they most want to specialise or need to develop skills;
- enable flexible access to training, providing real-world opportunities to refine skills; and
- provide formal recognition of competency.

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL OUTCOMES/BENEFITS |
|---|----------------|---|
| Micro-credentials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPS micro-credential course outline and structure developed. • Develop competency-based micro-credentials mapped to the IPS supported employment fidelity scale. • Open micro-credential learning to IPS vocational specialists. • Award micro-credentials to IPS vocational specialists who successfully complete learning. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPS vocational specialists improve skills, increase confidence, and have a greater understanding of working in youth mental health settings. • IPS vocational specialists improve service delivery and vocational outcomes for young people experiencing mental ill-health. • Existing IPS vocational specialists and skilled jobseekers recognise IPS as a valuable and attractive career pathway. |



2. PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

IPS vocational specialists described feeling isolated working independently or in a small team and valued opportunities to network with other IPS vocational specialists. Peer-to-peer learning provides opportunities for IPS vocational specialists to learn from one another, becoming “experts by doing.”

Opportunities for IPS vocational specialists to connect and learn from each other include:

MENTORING

As the IPS programs in headspace centres has now been running for several years, there are opportunities for more-established IPS vocational specialists to provide mentoring to less experienced sites and those new to the IPS workforce. There is some evidence that this is currently happening on an ad hoc basis, within lead agencies or through personal networks. Evidence from other IPS implementations suggests that mentoring between similar sites is valuable.⁽¹⁰⁾

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

IPS teams in headspace are small and operate in settings that are predominantly clinical. During the focus groups, several IPS vocational specialists indicated they felt relatively isolated in their role. There is a potential power differential between clinical and non-clinical staff in a headspace setting that can be exacerbated when the non-clinical workforce does not have a psychologically safe space to debrief. Many IPS vocational specialists also report to a staff member without vocational expertise. As a result, there are likely missed opportunities for reflection on vocational and IPS-specific practice.

External professional support would provide IPS vocational specialists with the opportunity to access expert support from a vocational perspective. Professional support could be provided online in a group setting (enabling group reflective practice) or one-on-one. A clear structure for professional support and guidelines for IPS professional support facilitators would be helpful to guide and support IPS vocational specialists to reflect on their practice. Facilitators could also assist IPS vocational specialists to develop broader perspectives while providing a space in which to discover possibilities for personal and professional growth. Professional support differs to the role of an the IPS supervisor overseeing and managing IPS workers at their sites. IPS supervisors are more focused on immediate performance management, and administrative tasks – professional support provides IPS workers with expert guidance on their practice and a space to develop and test new skills.

CONFERENCES AND AWARDS

Bringing people together provides opportunities to showcase excellence, share good practice, and provide supportive networks for IPS vocational specialists. Focus group participants indicated they would be keen to learn more about the latest IPS research evidence and hear from expert speakers. headspace currently hosts a national conference for headspace centres and it would be beneficial for IPS headspace sites to have the opportunity to share their unique experiences and learn about the latest research and program innovations, for example, vocational peer work, in an in-person setting, supported by an awards and recognition program. Industry awards support good practice by motivating IPS vocational specialists and headspace centres to demonstrate, share and reward excellence.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

headspace National has established state-wide IPS Community of Practice meetings. However, focus group participants suggested there were opportunities to strengthen the workforce-development focus of these communities of practice through regular sessions focused on the workforce-development needs identified by IPS vocational specialists, connecting to other ongoing education opportunities – for example micro-credentials.

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL OUTCOMES/BENEFITS |
|--|----------------|---|
| IPS vocational specialist mentoring program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tools and resources to support an IPS vocational specialist mentoring program in consultation with headspace and lead agencies. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS vocational specialists report stronger networks and support. headspace recognised as a supportive work environment for IPS vocational specialists. |
| IPS vocational specialist professional support program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop IPS professional support guidelines. Recruit IPS vocational specialists for pilot of IPS professional support program. Pilot IPS professional support program. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS vocational specialists improve skills, increase confidence, and have a greater understanding of working in youth mental health settings. IPS vocational specialists improve service delivery and vocational outcomes for young people experiencing mental ill-health. Existing IPS vocational specialists and skilled jobseekers recognise IPS as a valuable and attractive career pathway. headspace centres retain skilled IPS vocational specialists. |
| IPS Communities of Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate structured workforce-development content into existing hN IPS Communities of Practice meetings. | Orygen and hN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS vocational specialists improve skills, increase confidence, and have a greater understanding of working in youth mental health settings. IPS vocational specialists report stronger networks and supports, and report headspace as a supportive work environment. |
| IPS conference and awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS program to feature at the annual headspace conference with opportunities to share workforce training and career opportunities. Develop an IPS award program that rewards excellence in IPS. | hN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing IPS vocational specialists and skilled jobseekers recognise IPS as a valuable and attractive career pathway. IPS vocational specialists report stronger networks and support. headspace retains skilled IPS vocational specialists. headspace recognised as a supportive work environment for IPS vocational specialists |





3. STRENGTHENING RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND PATHWAYS

A lack of a consistency in recruitment processes across headspace centres makes it challenging for hiring managers to determine the appropriate skills for the role. Currently, hiring managers report a lack of clarity about who to recruit, through which pathways, and how to appropriately remunerate

IPS vocational specialists. Many are unsure of the pitch and focus of the role, or the candidate skills and experiences likely to lead to high-quality IPS vocational specialists. A lack of clarity about recruitment pathways means that the IPS vocational specialist role is not well-known or understood among strong potential candidates.

As lead agencies and individual centres are responsible for the recruitment of IPS vocational specialists – many hiring managers do not have a vocational support background.

Strengthening recruitment pathways, resources and support for hiring managers, and implementing recruitment campaigns that promote IPS roles within headspace would help establish a more consistent approach to IPS recruitment and support centres to find strong candidates. National recruitment campaigns would showcase IPS vocational work as an attractive career pathway in order to generate interest in IPS roles when local opportunities become available.

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL OUTCOMES/BENEFITS |
|---|----------------|---|
| Promote IPS roles to potential candidates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote content providing an overview of the IPS role Promote IPS job opportunities through standard communication channels | Orygen and hN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring managers receive improved quality applications from skilled jobseekers. IPS roles recognised as an attractive career pathway for jobseekers. |
| IPS recruitment materials developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop standardised position descriptions and recruitment material. Develop an indicative pay and benefits scale. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring managers receive improved quality applications from skilled jobseekers. Hiring managers report increased confidence in recruiting appropriate candidates. |
| IPS hiring manager recruitment support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop recruitment support resources. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring managers receive improved quality applications from skilled jobseekers. Hiring managers report increased confidence to recruit appropriate candidates. |



4. CAREER PATHWAYS

A lack of career development and progression is one of the most significant barriers to IPS vocational specialist retention. While IPS vocational specialists identify many positives about working in these roles, they consistently identified that there are limited career pathways within the IPS sector. This is partly a structural limitation of the current size of the IPS program in headspace – there are only a small number of available senior positions. However, there are opportunities for IPS vocational specialists to grow in their role, developing skills and expertise to keep their role diverse, skilled and interesting.

42 per cent of IPS vocational specialists surveyed believe there are limited career progression opportunities.

Participants in the focus groups discussed several additional roles they may be interested in pursuing, including:

- professional support and mentoring roles;
- IPS workforce development and training roles;
- IPS research;
- advocacy for the expansion of the IPS program; and
- fidelity reviewers.

When managers were asked why IPS vocational specialists leave the role, the most common response was that staff leave for roles with better career pathways, progression and/or development, and due to salary expectations. As IPS within headspace grows, there will likely be more career development opportunities. As these new roles emerge, it is important that IPS vocational specialists feel supported and qualified to undertake these roles. Advanced micro-credentials will provide structured opportunities to support advanced skill development.

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL OUTCOMES/BENEFITS |
|---|----------------|--|
| Advanced IPS competencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a range of advanced micro-credentials. • Develop pathway to obtaining advanced micro-credentials. | Orygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPS vocational specialists develop advanced skills and confidence to undertake emerging IPS roles in headspace. • Existing IPS vocational specialists and skilled jobseekers perceive IPS as an attractive career pathway. • headspace retains skilled IPS vocational specialists. |

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EVALUATION AND ONGOING LEARNING

Orygen has developed a draft evaluation framework for understanding the implementation of the Workforce Development Framework, and emerging outcomes in the life of the current contract (2022-24). Outcomes are based on a *Theory of Change* designed to understand how the Workforce Development Framework will improve outcomes for IPS vocational specialists, the IPS profession, and young people.

Ultimately, it is hoped the Workforce Development Framework for headspace delivers improved outcomes for young people. However, it is not anticipated that these outcomes will be evident within the timeframe of this evaluation.

Intended outcomes for the Workforce Development Framework for headspace are outlined in the table below. These will be tested through an outcome evaluation conducted by Orygen. There may additionally be unintended outcomes evident through implementation.

| OUTCOMES FOR IPS VOCATIONAL SPECIALISTS | OUTCOMES FOR THE OUTER SETTING | OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILL-HEALTH |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS Vocational Specialists have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased confidence; improved skills for working in youth mental health settings; improved placement and support skills; and stronger networks and support. IPS work is recognised as an attractive career pathway for current and potential IPS vocational specialists. There is increased understanding and awareness of IPS among potential IPS vocational specialists. headspace is a supportive work environment for IPS vocational specialists. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPS vocational specialists deliver a high-quality service aligned to the <i>IPS supported employment fidelity scale</i>. headspace retains skilled IPS vocational specialists. Employers and education providers support IPS placements. IPS is routinely provided as part of a multidisciplinary youth mental health response. Skilled professionals want to be IPS vocational specialists. IPS is a recognised and valued discipline. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people experiencing mental ill-health attain education and employment. Young people experiencing mental ill-health maintain education and employment. Young people experiencing mental ill-health feel a reduction in symptoms. Young people experiencing mental ill-health experience an improvement in quality of life. |

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