ReachOut's 2022–23 Social Impact Report: Overview

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Overview

ReachOut has been supporting mental health and wellbeing for Australian young people for over 25 years. Young people and their parents, carers and teachers need accessible and relevant information about the mental health challenges they face. Through digital-first services and products, we meet young people where they are – online. We provide accessible website and social media content and peer-led services to deliver mental health information, tips and self-help, community connections and professional non-clinical support, including support through lived-experience peer workers.

> ReachOut's purpose is to be a trusted and safe digital space that empowers young people to feel better

In 2021, we began our journey to refine and enhance our approach to demonstrating ReachOut's impact. In early 2022, we developed a new Social Impact Model that captures our unique role in the mental health support system for young people, and from this we built a bespoke Social Impact Framework (SIF). In July 2022, we began data collection addressing the SIF indicators. Our social impact approach rests on the Theory of Change, which provides a logical and evidence-based connection that links our services to their impacts.

Our first *Social Impact Report*

ReachOut's 2022–23 Social Impact Report captures key results across the three dimensions of our Social Impact Model – **reach, engagement** and **outcomes** – for the 2022–23 financial year. We use data that has been captured through digital and social analytics services (including Google Analytics), our user surveys (both site-pop-ups and annual surveys) and direct feedback from our 1:1 digital support users. [1]

This report demonstrates how we are *reaching those who need us*, how users are *engaging with the support* options we offer, and how they are *experiencing positive outcomes* through using our products and services.

Our impact highlights

Reach

The social impact data we have collected for this report shows we reach Australian young people across a **diverse range of backgrounds and experiences**. Young people with a **high need for mental health support** are accessing ReachOut, as are those who **find it hard to get support elsewhere**. The parents and carers using our services come from a **range of family types** and backgrounds, including sole parents and those in blended or shared-care families.

In 2022–23:

1200 Over **1,200** people used our 1:1 digital support services PeerChat and Parent Coaching.

45% of our youth users had a '**possible serious mental illness**'. [2]

47% of our youth users and **24%** of parents/carers using Coaching **couldn't afford professional help**.

34% of our youth users were **sexuality diverse (non-straight)**.

11% of our youth users were **trans/gender diverse**.

7% of our youth users were **First Nations**.

22% of our youth users and **10%** of parent/carer content users spoke a **language other than English**. [3]

[1] PeerChat and Parent/Carer Coaching; [2] Using the Kessler 6 scale; [3] Source for this and above: 2023 user surveys.

Engagement

Our social impact data also tells a story of high levels of engagement and satisfaction with our products and services. Our users find our content and socials trustworthy and credible. Many of the users of our website, online communities and PeerChat follow us on social media. Our Youth Online Community is a place young people want to come back to, with *returning users* forming almost a third of unique visitors.

33% of our youth users followed ReachOut on **Instagram, TikTok or Facebook**.

84% of our youth users rated our **social media** posts as *trustworthy* and *credible*.

91% of our youth users rated our **youth content** as *easy to understand* and **90%** rated it as *useful*. [4]

94% of Parents/Carers were satisfied with **Coaching**. [5]

90% of Parent/Carers would *recommend* **our website** to others. [6]

Outcomes

In addition, our 2023 surveys have shown that ReachOut delivers positive outcomes for those who use our products and services, with our users reporting improvements across our outcome domains. **Mental health literacy** is supported by ReachOut's psycho-educational website and services - users reported that our web content and resources helped to improve their understanding of mental health conditions and challenges and provided practical tips for support. [7] ReachOut also helped young people to **better understand themselves** and their own experiences, and to feel better by providing immediate **relief from negative feelings**.

Users of our online communities and new PeerChat services reported increased **connection** and **validation** of their experiences, and this can help to reduce stigma around mental health challenges [8]. ReachOut's self-help and non-clinical approach was successful in supporting youth users to try new things to support their mental health, which supports young people's **agency**.

In 2022–23, ReachOut helped young people to:

feel better:
53% *felt calmer;* **52%** *felt more positive;* **50%** *felt less anxious or worried*

better **understand their feelings** and experiences: **72%**

improve their **mental health literacy: 69%**

feel validated:
62% *felt okay about what they are going through;* **62%** *felt more able to talk to someone about it*

gain agency:
50% *used self-help strategies;* **61%** *learnt practical self-help tips;* **61%** *tried new things themselves to support their wellbeing* [9]; **42%** *spoke to someone they trusted;* **32%** *sought professional help following engagement with ReachOut.*

[4] Source: 2023 Youth User Survey; [5] Of those who completed the program. Source: Service data; [6] Source: 2023 Parent/Carer User Survey; [7] 2023 user surveys; [8] Hu, T., Zheng, X. & Huang, M. (2020). 'Absence and presence of human interaction: The relationship between loneliness and empathy'. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 768; Prescott, J., Rathbone, A. & Hanley, T. (2020). 'Online mental health communities, self-efficacy and transition to further support'. Mental Health Review Journal, 25(4), 329–344. [9] The above three outcomes are an average across Content and Online Community user responses. The 'feel better' outcome is across all services for young people. Source: 2023 Youth User Survey.

> *'It's very practical information that seems to understand some of the big parenting challenges many of us face: there isn't a lot out there like this.'*
>
> **(Parent/Carer, 2023 User Survey)**

76% of Youth Online Community users felt **less alone** and **more connected**.

70% of Parents/Carers said ReachOut content helped them feel **ready to try something new**.

86% of Parent/Carer Coaching participants felt more confident about **recognising mental health problems** in their teen. [10]

87% of Parents/Carers felt they **understood** their teens' experiences **better**.

How ReachOut is making a difference

Our first *Social Impact Report* has highlighted the ways in which ReachOut has supported young people's mental health and wellbeing. It shows how we play a critical role in providing equitable access to mental health, as a digital, non-clinical service, with our websites and communities having no service or cost barriers to entry. Our model enables us to reach large audiences and to engage them with our free resources, products and services. We connect with hard-to-reach or vulnerable young people and their parents and carers.

Young people are able to gain immediate relief using our website, tapping into our communities or connecting with our peer workers – all of which can help them to:

- shift negative feelings
- achieve clarity of mind and feel validated about what they have been experiencing
- try new self-help tips themselves
- seek help from other professional services or from family or community members.

Our social impact data demonstrates that young people who are seeking support feel high levels of trust in, and satisfaction with, our services, and they see these as relevant to their needs.

Our report provides clear evidence of our contribution to youth mental health and wellbeing and will help to guide and progress our work in the coming years. More detailed information can be found our full report here.

> *'[ReachOut] has helped me find information to help [me] cope, more than anyone else has. I can find information and advice on my own terms.'*
>
> **(Young person aged 14–25 years, 2023 User Survey)**

[10] Service data, based on completion of two or more sessions.

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