



NSW School-Link Action Plan

2020 - 2025



NSW
School-Link
Health and Education Working Together



NSW MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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- NSW Department of Education including the Learning and Wellbeing Directorate, members of the NSW School Counselling Service and Networked Specialist Facilitators.
- NSW Child and Youth Mental Health Services, particularly CYMHS Directors and Managers.
- NSW School-Link Coordinators, who form the essential backbone of NSW School-Link.





Glossary

CYMHS	Child and Youth Mental Health Services
CMOs	Community Managed Organisations
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DoE	NSW Department of Education
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice
<i>Got It!</i>	Getting on Track in Time!
IDMH	Intellectual and Developmental Disability Mental Health
JH&FMHN	Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer
LHD	Local Health District
MHB	Mental Health Branch
MH-CYP	MH-Children and Young People
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NSF	Network Specialist Facilitator
NSW	New South Wales
OOHC	Out of Home Care
PHN	Primary Health Network
SLC	School-Link Coordinator
SPE	Senior Psychologist, Education
TAFE	Technical and Further Education



Introduction

The NSW Government understands the importance of addressing the mental health needs of children and young people.

The school setting provides an ideal opportunity for Health and Education to work together to identify mental health concerns early and provide pathways to treatment and support for children and young people with mental health concerns.

Many mental health problems emerge in the younger years, with half of all lifetime experience of mental illness beginning by age 14 and three-quarters by age 24 (Ronald C. Kessler, et al., 2005). Almost one in seven (13.9%) 4-17 year-olds were assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months. This is equivalent to approximately 190,000 school aged children in NSW (Lawrence D, 2015).

Evidence shows that students with mental disorders have:

- Poorer NAPLAN results;
- More absences from school; and
- Lower levels of connectedness to school and engagement with school work.

(Goodsell B, 2017)

They also experience gaps in achievement at school – by Year 9 students with a mental disorder are on average 1.5 - 2.8 years behind students with no mental disorder (Goodsell B, 2017).

Through working across Health and Education, NSW School-Link has the potential to improve access to care and support for children and young people with mental health concerns, and to facilitate their continued engagement in education.

“Schools are recognised as important locations for addressing student wellbeing, because of their reach and familiarity to students and families, and the opportunities they afford for mental health promotion and prevention”

(NSW Mental Health Commission, 2014)

Key Focus of School-Link

Early intervention

The need for early intervention is well recognised, with signs of vulnerability to mental health concerns often clear by the time a child turns six. Ensuring that mental health concerns are identified early reduces the potential burden and impact on quality of life for a young person and their family and maximises their ability to live a meaningful and contributing life.

NSW School-Link works to identify mental health concerns early and navigate timely access to services to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

“Plenty of strong evidence tells us it is possible to promote good mental health in our community and prevent much mental illness, particularly in young people. And if the signs of distress are already apparent, the course of illness can be improved if we get in early to offer support before people’s lives are badly affected.”

(NSW Mental Health Commission, Living well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW, 2014)



NSW School-Link Goal and Objectives

Goal

NSW School-Link facilitates collaboration between education, health and other services to support school-aged children and young people to achieve optimal mental health and remain engaged in education.

Objectives

- Children and young people with mental health concerns are identified early and have appropriate and timely access to wellbeing support and specialist mental health services
- Increased collaboration between mental health professionals and education staff in responding to children and young people with mental health concerns
- Education staff and mental health professionals are more confident and better able to deliver coordinated care to children and young people with mental health concerns.

Facilitating improved pathways to care

NSW School-Link Coordinators can facilitate access to appropriate treatment and support options for children and young people identified as having mental health concerns. This includes pathways to specialist mental health services such as Child and Youth Mental Health Services [CYMHS] as well as headspace Centres and other relevant community managed mental health services.

“With one in seven children and young people experiencing a mental health issue each year, and half of all mental health disorders emerging before the age of 14, schools have an important role in student wellbeing and mental health”.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning (NSW Nationals, 2019)**



The importance of collaboration and partnership

Collaboration between health and education professionals provides a unique opportunity to support children and young people to remain mentally healthy and engaged in education. NSW School-Link provides an effective vehicle for this collaboration across educational settings, strengthened by evidence of the effectiveness of school-based social and emotional learning programs.

The need for greater integration between mental health and other services is also well recognised. Coordinated efforts to facilitate mental health working in partnership with schools will contribute to coordinated care and improved integration.

Schools are responsible for identifying concerns and working with students and families to improve educational outcomes; they are a gateway into the mental healthcare system for those who need more intense services and they need to work with mental healthcare professionals to support their students

(Productivity Commission, 2019)

Meeting the diversity of needs

NSW School-Link aims to meet the diverse needs of local communities through working with particular priority populations who may be disadvantaged by a range of factors, including geographical location, parental mental illness, socio-economic circumstances, language background or cultural background.

Providing culturally sensitive mental health programs and responses for families from diverse backgrounds is critical. NSW School-Link Coordinators can help to achieve this by continuing to support pathways into and strengthening partnerships with specialist mental health services, such as the Transcultural Mental Health Centre, Aboriginal Mental Health Services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, CYMHS, STARTTS (Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) and Community Managed Organisations (CMOs).

Suicide Prevention – Towards Zero Suicides

The history of NSW School-Link is steeped in the prevention of Youth Suicide. The initiative emerged in response to a spate of suicides in the late nineties and has continued to prioritise the prevention of suicide in young people over the last two decades.

NSW School-Link joins the Australian and NSW Governments in their journey Towards Zero Suicides and recognises the importance of mental health services and education working together to achieve this goal.

School-Link Coordinators play an integral role in connecting schools, CYMHS and other community organisations with the information, support, connections and coordination that is required both in the aftermath of a suicide or suicide attempt.

Collaboration is key for the success of suicide prevention and postvention. School-Link Coordinators work closely with headspace in Schools (*Be You*), CYMHS, DoE and other schools to provide comprehensive and coordinated support to school communities affected by suicide.



School-Link Strategic Objectives and Activities

NSW School-Link has evolved over time. Whilst its fundamental purpose has not changed, revised goals, objectives and activities have been developed to reflect the current context.

Goal

NSW School-Link facilitates collaboration between education, health and other stakeholders to support school-aged children and young people to achieve optimal mental health and remain engaged in education.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Children and young people with mental health concerns are identified early and have appropriate and timely access to wellbeing support and specialist mental health services

Activities

Deliverables

Coordinate access to clinical advice and specialist mental health services to improve support for children and young people with complex mental health concerns, particularly those experiencing barriers to access

- Provide advice and consultation for key stakeholders to assist staff to navigate local service pathways
- Provide consultation and support to schools and CYMHS to access appropriate support in health, community and education settings for children and young people with mental health concerns
- Assist mental health professionals and education staff to escalate and address breakdowns in interdepartmental communication and/or address barriers to access
- Facilitate review of complex cases, bringing together key service providers to improve coordination of care and service responses
- Support key agencies to identify and respond to children and young people from priority populations who require a mental health service, for example those at risk of moving into OOHC

Provide consultation and liaison services to support individual students and families to manage key transition periods, for example return to school following an inpatient stay or moving between school settings and/or custodial settings

- Provide consultation to relevant mental health professionals and education staff with regard to individual students and their families
- Collaborate with Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Juvenile Justice and Justice Health in relation to vulnerable and at-risk children and young people to support key transitions
- Coordinate and/or support joint safety planning for students returning to school after a significant mental health episode
- Collaborate with schools to develop individual care plans for students with mental health concerns.

Lead, support, coordinate and connect relevant agencies in facilitating a coordinated response to significant mental health events affecting school communities, particularly trauma or suicide

- Support the development, documentation and implementation of local interagency processes for responding to significant mental health events affecting the school community
- Share appropriate information with relevant services including DoE, CYMHS and *Be You* about significant mental health/traumatic events
- Facilitate access to clinical care and support for children and young people involved

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Increased collaboration between mental health professionals, specialist services and education staff in responding to children and young people with mental health concerns

Activities

Deliverables

Identify, document and promote referral pathways between education settings and mental health/wellbeing services for children and young people with mental health concerns

- Develop and maintain referral maps/pathways of local services and promote maps/pathways in partnership with schools, CYMHS, CMOs and other mental health and wellbeing services
- Provide information and advice to schools and CYMHS to support relevant staff to navigate referral pathways
- Promote/disseminate information about referral pathways to local networks
- Develop resources/tools to improve communication and referral processes between services

Develop partnerships to facilitate smooth transitions and collaborative care

- Facilitate formal and informal information sharing through regular meetings between School-Link Coordinators, SPEs, Health Service Managers, PHNs and relevant other services
- Conduct networking forums to enable school counselling staff, network specialist facilitators and mental health professionals to develop productive working relationships
- Ensure a local School-Link planning and advisory function is in place
- Develop and oversee local joint projects aligned with identified needs
- Advocate for collaborative safety planning between Health and Education

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Education staff and mental health professionals are more confident and better able to deliver coordinated care to children and young people with mental health concerns

Activities

Deliverables

Provide access to quality capacity building opportunities for education staff and mental health professionals

- Conduct or utilise needs assessment/gap analysis to define capacity building priorities
- Develop local capacity building plans in partnership with key local stakeholders
- Develop, deliver or support targeted, evidence-based capacity building programs/initiatives [e.g. train the trainer models, mental health first aid, Project Air, *Got It!* and conferences]
- Develop and disseminate relevant resources and information
- Contribute to building the evidence base in relation to capacity building for NSW School-Link

Overview

“Mental health is increasingly viewed as a shared responsibility requiring integrated approaches across government and the broader sector”.

(NSW Ministry of Health, 2018)

NSW School-Link is a collaboration between NSW Health and NSW Department of Education (DoE) and aims to improve access to wellbeing support and specialist mental health services for children and young people with mental health concerns and their families.

The NSW Ministry of Health funds Local Health Districts and Specialty Networks to employ School-Link Coordinators to implement NSW School-Link across approximately 3,000 NSW schools and TAFEs in partnership with teachers, school counselling staff and specialist mental health workers. At a statewide level, NSW School-Link is managed by MH-Children and Young People (MH-CYP), NSW Ministry of Health, in partnership with the DoE.

NSW School-Link was established in 1999 and has grown and matured over its 20 years of operation. During this time there have been significant developments in mental health initiatives in the education sector as well as growth in the development of community-based services for children and young people with mental health concerns, including headspace and *Be You*.

This current Strategic Action Plan builds on previous efforts and optimises the strengths of NSW School-Link. It provides direction for NSW School-Link to 2025 and outlines strategic priorities and expected activities. This plan has been developed in response to the findings of a review of the previous School-Link Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2017. A Project Reference Group has overseen this process which has been shaped by extensive consultations with key stakeholders from DoE, NSW Health, Independent and Catholic Schools, TAFE and *Be You*.





Scope of NSW School-Link

The focus of NSW School-Link is school-aged children with mental health concerns and their families regardless of their educational setting. Whilst the work of NSW School-Link aligns primarily with the formal partnership with DoE and local Mental Health Services, NSW School-Link activities may also include TAFEs, Catholic and Independent schools. However, it is acknowledged that working with these settings may be constrained by resourcing, differing organisational structures and the absence of a formal agreement.



Priority Populations

While NSW School-Link provides support for all children and young people in school with mental health concerns, it recognises that some groups of children and young people have increased risk of mental illness, including those living in Out of Home Care (OOHC) and those in contact with the juvenile justice system. Intervening early provides an opportunity to positively affect the life trajectory of vulnerable children and young people.

NSW School-Link has identified the following priority populations as being at higher risk of mental health concerns and/or experiencing greater barriers to accessing mental health services:

Aboriginal children and young people

Aboriginal people have higher rates of mental illness, suicide and psychological distress - more than twice those of the general population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017).





Children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+)

A disproportionate number of people who identify as LGBTIQ+ have poorer mental health outcomes and a higher risk of self harm and suicidal behaviour compared to their peers. (National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2016).

Children and young people living in rural and remote NSW

The overall prevalence of mental illness is broadly similar in rural and urban NSW, but the suicide rate is considerably higher in rural areas, particularly among younger men, and Aboriginal people (Senate Community Affairs Committee , 2018). Although people who live in regional, rural and remote areas experience mental health concerns at about the same rate as those in the cities they face greater challenges. This is due to the difficulty of accessing the support they need and the greater visibility of mental concerns in a smaller community, which may lead to stigma and the fear or reality of discrimination.

Children and young people from migrant or refugee backgrounds

The refugee population face issues including previous torture and trauma and adverse experiences of forced migration and resettlement that may make them more vulnerable to mental health concerns such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety and substance misuse (Murray, 2008). Children and young people from migrant backgrounds may experience a range of

psychological issues associated with settling in a new country compounded by barriers to accessing services due to their or their families lack of understanding of the Health system.

Children and young people who have experienced childhood trauma including those in OOHC/Kinship Care

The experience of childhood trauma greatly increases the risk of mental illness and can have long lasting effects on health and wellbeing. Children in alternate care, whether placed with relatives or foster parents have been reported as having exceptionally poor mental health relative to the general population, presenting with multiple and complex difficulties including conduct problems, attachment disturbance, attention-deficit/hyperactivity, trauma related anxiety and sexual behaviours (Tarren-Sweeny, 2006).

Children and young people with a disability

People with disability, particularly those with an intellectual disability, experience higher rates of mental health problems and mental illness yet have significantly lower rates of treatment of mental health problems compared with the general population (Einfeld SL, 2006).





Specialist NSW School-Link Services

NSW School-Link has two specialist services that operate statewide, these are Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network School-Link (the Network School-Link) and Intellectual and Developmental Disability Mental Health School-Link (IDDMH School-Link). Both services:

- provide expert advice, consultation services and mental health information regarding children and young people with IDDMH or those young people in contact with the criminal justice system
- assist with navigating support options for specialist populations
- assist with transition from custodial/specialist settings to community/mainstream schools
- provide specialist capacity building for school staff including School Learning and Support Officers

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network School-Link (the Network)

This specialised program supports the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in contact, or at risk of contact, with the NSW criminal justice system. This specialised program works with young people in custody and in the community across NSW, by providing:

- clinical consultation for complex mental health needs
- streamlined pathways and support for transition from custodial to community settings
- capacity building programs for clinical staff across different departments
- collaboration mechanisms between School-Link Coordinators from all local health districts
- school-based mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention programs in custodial and community settings

The Network School-Link program works in strong partnership with child and adolescent mental health, Youth Justice and Education services, as well as the Network's Aboriginal Mental Health Clinical Lead to provide culturally safe services and support for young people.



The program also provides support to a range of other services in Adolescent Health, across four streams: Pre-Custody, Custody, Forensic Hospital and Post-Release.

Intellectual and Developmental Disability Mental Health School-Link

IDDMH School-Link (delivered through The Children's Hospital at Westmead) is a state-wide specialty, augmenting the work of the local School-Link Coordinators to improve the mental health outcomes for children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities who experience mental health problems at a rate of three to four times their typically developing peers. Activities that address the specific needs of children with an intellectual or developmental disability include:

- professional development on mental health and intellectual/developmental disability for school and CYMHS staff. Examples include online webinars, free online journal, website, e-list and other professional developmental opportunities such as workshops and conferences

- promotion of mental health prevention and early intervention programs for children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including research where gaps arise
- pathways to care consultations and complex case reviews
- linkages to the Intellectual Disability/Mental Health Tertiary Specialty Hub, a statewide tertiary level service to support paediatricians, CYMHS or LHD mental health clinicians with complex, acute or atypical cases

It is important for LHD based School-Link Coordinators to support the Specialist School-Link services. This can be through support for specialist statewide initiatives and resources, promotion of specialist services to local networks and mindfulness of the populations they service.



Key roles and stakeholder relationships

NSW School-Link brings together the expertise of two large complex systems to make a difference to the mental health of children and young people, and to facilitate continued and meaningful engagement in education.

Successful implementation relies on effective collaboration and an understanding of the respective environments, opportunities and constraints of the health and education settings.

Education and Health have signed a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] demonstrating joint commitment to NSW School-Link.

NSW Health

NSW Health recognises the importance of working in partnership with Education to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes within the school setting.

MH-Children and Young People (MH-CYP)

MH-Children and Young People (MH-CYP) is a unit of the Mental Health Branch (MHB), NSW Health. It has a statewide brief to provide leadership and support for specialist childrens' and young people's mental health programs and services.

Broadly, the NSW School-Link Program Manager provides statewide leadership and support for the implementation and monitoring of the NSW School-Link strategic objectives and related activities.

More specifically, the NSW School-Link Program Manager:

- assists in the implementation of the NSW School-Link Strategic Action Plan at a state level
- provides updates on NSW School-Link including reporting to the Child and Youth Mental Health Advisory Committee
- supports and participates in the Health and Education CYMHS Steering Committee (the governance committee guiding both NSW School-Link and *Got It!*)
- supports the development of and access to

resources to assist in the delivery of NSW School-Link

- provides ongoing support to local health districts to assist in the local delivery of NSW School-Link
- provides leadership and expert advice on NSW School-Link
- represents NSW School-Link at the State and National level
- prepares written materials including briefing notes, ministerial responses, speech notes and correspondence in relation to NSW School-Link

MH-CYP also provides support and resources to assist in the local implementation of NSW School-Link. This includes:

- NSW School-Link Forums (including professional development)
- e-learning for CYMHS Clinicians and School Counselling staff (School-Link Online Resource and Project Air Adolescent Intervention e-learning)
- resources for supporting school staff including Project Air for Schools train the trainer program and the Adolescent Intervention Guide for working with young people with complex mental health problems
- Mental Health Workforce Development Website (including resources and a School-Link community of practice)
- NSW School-Link Animated Film
- Induction Package for NSW School-Link Coordinators
- video-conferencing facilities for communication between NSW School-Link Coordinators

NSW School-Link Coordinators

NSW School-Link Coordinators are Specialist Mental Health consultants and are an essential part of the infrastructure of NSW School-Link. NSW School-Link Coordinators operate across the State and have specialist knowledge and expertise to support schools, TAFEs and CYMHS to assist children and young people with mental health concerns in education settings.

NSW School-Link collaborates with the NSW School Counselling Service and School Services staff including Learning and Wellbeing Coordinators and Networked Specialist Facilitators to support the wellbeing and mental health of students.

NSW Department of Education

Schools are recognised as important locations for addressing student wellbeing, because of their reach and familiarity to students and families, and the opportunities they afford for mental health promotion and prevention.

Since 2015, there has been an increased focus on wellbeing and suicide prevention and there is significant planning underway to deliver further evidence-based programs for students as well as build the mental health literacy of teachers, so they can recognise and respond to children and young people needing assistance with their mental health.

The DoE works closely with the Ministry of Health and a range of partners to improve the wellbeing and mental health of students.

NSW School Counselling Service

The NSW School Counselling Service is a school-based psychology service. The school counselling service works collaboratively with learning and support teams, parents and carers, and other agencies, to develop appropriate school based support for students. School counselling staff provide counselling to students, individually and in groups, and where appropriate, refer students to other agencies. They also carry out cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural assessment of students.

National Education Initiative *Be You*

Commonwealth funded *Be You*, operated by Beyond Blue aims to transform Australia's approach to supporting children's and young people's mental health in early learning services and schools, from early years to 18.

Be You Consultants are available to support secondary schools to undertake suicide prevention, postvention planning and response activities tailored for their school needs.

They can also assist primary and secondary schools to:

- plan a whole school approach which focuses on positive mental health promotion, the prevention of poor mental health and early intervention for students experiencing mental health difficulties through the implementation of *Be You*

- access evidence based, quality professional learning online for free
- access the *Be You* Learning Community including planning and implementation tools, action plan templates and evaluation tools, other resources to support your school to enable and create positive change within your school

The National Workforce Support Program (Emerging Minds), is also part of this initiative. Emerging Minds focuses on providing education and training to clinicians and non-clinicians working with children between the ages of 0-12 outside of the education space.



Governance

The number of programs and the depth of the collaboration between Health and Education has only increased from year to year. Fundamental to NSW School-Link is a collaborative approach between key agencies at both statewide and local levels. To reflect this, governance arrangements are in place to guide operations, ensure clarity about roles and responsibilities and ensure appropriate accountability mechanisms.

The NSW Department of Education and NSW Ministry of Health have signed a Supporting Student Health and Wellbeing Memorandum of Understanding 2021 – 2024 which provides an overarching state-level framework for the agencies' collaborative approach to maintain and strengthen student health and wellbeing across NSW.

The MoU formalises a more systemic, sector wide and integrated approach to collaboration and outlines shared strategic goals and aspirations. Under this there will be an annual Work Plan that will capture specific initiatives delivered in partnership.

Statewide governance

The agencies' commitment to a more integrated approach is reflected in a state-level Governance Framework that will facilitate centralised escalation of issues.

The Governance Framework includes:

- Regular reports provided to the signatories to the Work Plan, who are supported by their Executives within the Wellbeing Partnership Governance Group, with meetings held as needed, and;
- Regular meetings of a Wellbeing Partnership Strategic Group which will act as the central escalation point for any issues arising from the MoU.

Implementation groups are formed to meet as needed to focus on priorities identified in the annual work plan.



Local Governance

NSW Health and the Department of Education expect that any regional, district and local MoUs and or other partnership arrangements will reflect the overarching objectives and guiding principles of this MoU.

Local governance structures within each local health district provide direction and guidance for the implementation of NSW School-Link, for example local School-Link Steering Committees with representatives from DoE, NSW School-Link Coordinators, Local headspace and other key partners.

School-Link Coordinators form part of Child and Youth Mental Health Services within Local Health Districts (LHDs). Line management responsibility rests with the relevant mental health leadership in the LHD.



Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting against the NSW School-Link strategic priorities will be guided by the NSW School-Link Evaluation and Monitoring Implementation Plan.

School-Link Coordinators will develop local implementation plans aligned with the strategic priorities and tailored to respond to locally identified needs, and report annually to MH-CYP on activity and progress. MH-CYP will compile annual reports of activity and progress across NSW School-Link.

MH-CYP will coordinate statewide evaluation processes for the program, including through qualitative and quantitative approaches.



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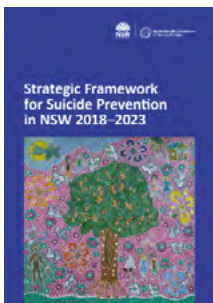


Appendix 1

Policy Context

The NSW School-Link model is based on research which identifies schools as an appropriate setting for the prevention of and early intervention in mental health concerns in children and young people (K.E. Hoagwood, 2007).

The work of NSW School-Link aligns with key NSW and Commonwealth policies, including those outlined below.



Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan

(Department of Health, 2017)

The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan has a strong focus on integration, in recognition that many people living with mental illness interface with multiple services. Under Priority Area 1, the Plan calls for connecting health and areas including education. It also suggests extending integration into prevention and early intervention.



Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024

(NSW Mental Health Commission, 2014)

The NSW Mental Health Commission's Plan acknowledges that mental health concerns can be prevented or improved through school-based approaches and that positive participation in school helps promote resilience and wellbeing in children. The Plan calls for early identification and intervention, as well as an integrated service response among school-based programs, community-based services and specialist child and adolescent mental health services.

Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2018-2023

(NSW Mental Health Commission, 2018)

The NSW Government has made a major commitment to preventing and reducing the incidence of suicide in NSW communities through the *Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2018-2023*. The Strategic Framework was launched in October 2018 to build on existing programs and set the direction for new and future actions.

The Strategic Framework establishes a whole of government, whole of community approach to the prevention of suicides and suicide attempts. There are many activities already occurring that make broad contributions to the prevention of suicide. For the first time, these activities have been formally linked together in an approach that places greater emphasis on integration and collaboration between all levels of government, individuals and communities, the non-government and private sector, and people with lived experience.



NSW Strategic Framework and Workforce Plan for Mental Health: 2018 – 2022

(Mental Health Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, 2018)

The NSW Strategic Framework and Workforce Plan for Mental Health provides overarching guidance for NSW Health strategic action in mental health. The Framework focuses on achieving three goals:

1. Holistic, person-centred care
2. Safe, high quality care; and
3. Connected Care

The Framework recognises that the health needs of people with lived experience of mental health concerns are delivered by a range of health and non-health agencies. Action 3.2.3 focuses on the role of NSW School-Link in implementing training for health and school staff to develop skills in collaborative care for students with complex mental health needs.



NSW State Health Plan Towards 2021

(NSW Health, 2014)

NSW 2021 highlights a focus on illness prevention, including a strong focus on mental health, in order to reduce the burden of chronic disease on the health system and keep our community active and healthy. The work of NSW School-Link aligns with this State plan focus; through the early identification and access to treatment for mental health concerns.



NSW Youth Health Framework

(NSW Health, 2017)

The NSW Youth Health Framework recognises that multiple agencies have a role in promoting the health and wellbeing of young people, advocating for enhanced links between Health and primary care and schools to identify young people at risk and provide opportunities for early intervention. The Framework acknowledges the key role of NSW School-Link Coordinators in liaising between education and mental health services.



The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-2022

(COAG, 2012)

The COAG Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform provides a pathway towards achieving the vision of an Australian society that values good mental health and wellbeing.

It advocates for the implementation of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing programs in school communities and a key strategy is to build the competency of education workers and institutions to identify and respond effectively to early signs of mental health concerns.



The Wellbeing Framework for Schools (NSW Department of Education, 2015)

This Framework outlines for school communities the domains of cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing through the themes of Connect, Succeed and Thrive. The framework also presents evidence-based approaches for improving wellbeing. NSW School-Link aligns well with the Framework which highlights that wellbeing, or the lack of it, can affect a student’s engagement and success in learning. It acknowledges that counselling and wellbeing services provide essential expertise to schools and communities to guide student growth and development.



Connected Communities Strategy (NSW Department of Education, 2011)

The strategy positions schools as community hubs. It broadens the influence of the community and school leadership, to play a role in the delivery of key services and in supporting children and young people from birth through school into further training, study and employment.

The strategy has been informed by advice from the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), a broad consultation process with key stakeholders and research about extended service schools and place-based approaches to service delivery and community development.



The First 2000 Days Framework (NSW Health, 2019)

The First 2000 Days Framework emphasises the importance of all children having the best start to life and highlights evidence that exposure to particular stressors and adverse experiences in early life increases the probability of poor health and wellbeing later in life. Risk factors include the presence of mental health concerns. The Framework supports targeted early intervention to enable families to receive support at the level they need and the opportunity to give children the best possible start in life physically, developmentally, socially and emotionally.



