

X-Tending our Reach: Engaging Young People with Significant Barriers

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Background:

X-Tend Intensive Outreach Program is an initiative that offers an alternative outreach model for young people aged 13-17 within a 150km radius who are at risk or engaged in the legal system and/or facing significant adversity and disengagement from traditional supports and institutions. The program, which began operating in September 2020, was developed by Mater Clarence Street in response to the unique needs of young people who have multiple complexities and systems involvement.

Approach:

X-Tend's core approach is based on the view that a therapeutic relationship is paramount and can be considered as an intervention. The program seeks to meet young people where they are at and respond to their immediate needs through being persistent, consistent, and creative in engagement. The ability to be flexible and/or intensive in the level of support provided allows young people to have alternative options and stay connected to support.

Outcome:

X-Tend is a program that has been making significant strides in supporting young individuals. Since its inception, it has supported 66 young people with a significant engagement rate of 93% among referred participants. Notable challenges have included differing service frameworks and the ongoing disadvantage experienced by young people. Navigating the current youth justice climate has also presented additional challenges, such as engaging with young people in statutory settings.

Innovation and Significance:

The program recognises the need for flexibility, adaptability, and proactive navigation of systemic factors to better address the complex needs of this vulnerable demographic. X-Tend's approach allows for young people who have had an over involvement in statutory systems to access healthcare treatment suitable to their circumstances and rebuild trust with healthcare providers, including Alcohol and Other Drugs services. X-Tend's success in engaging young people with significant barriers is a testament to the program's dedication to providing support to a cohort that has been labelled as "too difficult".