

Boystown

Boystown has almost 50 years experience working with disadvantaged and at-risk young people, children and families. Its mission is 'to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life'.

The organisation provides help and reassurance to those experiencing life challenges that include: physical and emotional abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, homelessness, low literacy, long-term unemployment and mental illness.

Boystown recognises that each person is unique, with their own needs. To help address this, the organisation provides a wide range of face-to-face services for young people who are experiencing social exclusion and isolation. These services include accommodation responses to homeless families, parenting programs, and training and employment programs.

Since March 2001, Boystown has also operated Kids Helpline; Australia's only 24/7 telephone, email and real-time web-based counselling and support service specifically for young people aged five to 25 years, with special capacity for young people with mental health issues.

Every day, Kids Helpline counsellors speak with at least 11 young people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. In 2008, this represented a 45 per cent increase over the preceding two years.

Boystown supports these individuals through a mix of early intervention and crisis services tailored to each individual's needs, including the choice to speak with either a male or female counsellor and to arrange to speak again with the same counsellor to work through the young person's issues.

In 2008, counsellors provided 50,979 telephone, web and email counselling sessions. Suicide-related issues accounted for 8.6 per cent of these sessions. Some 389 contacts were with young people with an immediate intention of suicide or who were making an attempt whilst talking with a Kids Helpline counsellor. One in two counselling sessions regarding suicide-related concerns were with young people who were engaged with Kids Helpline in either ongoing counselling or intensive support with a case management plan.