

Be You Handbook for Leaders: *Early learning services*



Welcome

As a leader, you're all about supporting children to flourish. **So are we.**

Working closely with children and educators, you're in a great position to promote wellbeing.

This handbook provides an overview of how early learning service leaders can get the most out of Be You to:

- create a service where all children and educators thrive
- support your own mental health and wellbeing
- establish an Action Team to share Be You implementation responsibilities
- help you address national standards and regulatory requirements.

This handbook is designed for directors and other leaders within your service. We also have a [Be You Handbook for Educators](#) you can share with your team members.

Self-care

On the Be You website, you may come across content that you find distressing. We will do our best to flag this content and provide resources where you can find support.

If you experience any uncomfortable feelings or find yourself needing support, please take action. You can speak to a trusted friend or family member or call one of the following numbers: Beyond Blue on 1300 22 46 36, Lifeline on 13 11 14, 13YARN on 13 92 76 or SANE Australia on 1800 18 72 63.



Be You acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the Lands on which we work, play and learn. We recognise their deep and ongoing connection to Country and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices.

We pay our respect to Elders, past and present, and extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

To learn more about the Country you're on, visit the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) [Map of Indigenous Australia](#)

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What is Be You?

Be You is a national initiative for educators that aims to promote and protect positive mental health in children and young people.

Early childhood educators are not expected to be mental health professionals. But you are in a position to potentially notice the signs of emerging mental health issues, have conversations with families and provide appropriate support.

As a leader, you also play an important role in creating a positive, inclusive and responsive learning community – and Be You is here for you.

Be You provides a online learning modules, tools and resources to enhance leaders' and educators' mental health knowledge and skills.

Services that register with Be You (see [page 13](#)) also have have free access to tailored advice from a Be You Consultant. We also provide tools for a holistic and proactive approach to mental health and wellbeing, that considers your service's unique needs and processes.

Be You is completely free and available to every educator, early learning service and school in Australia.

Learn more [about Be You](#).

Why do we need Be You?

Educators are increasingly reporting that more children and young people are facing mental health and wellbeing issues. These challenges can have lasting impacts.

Early intervention may improve a child's mental health and lifetime outcomes. Furthermore, positive mental health and wellbeing can support effective learning and provide children with solid foundations for managing challenges.

The Be You whole learning community approach gives early learning services the framework, tools and ongoing support to help create a proactive and responsive learning environment where everyone can thrive.

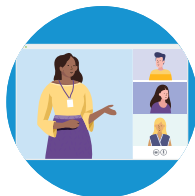
"Be You isn't a linear program that you tick and flick through. It's a platter of resources that you are able to access when you need them. And the modules are structured in such a way that you can revisit, or research, or find the evidence behind some of the research when it's meaningful for you."

– Discovery Early Learning Service

Be You offers



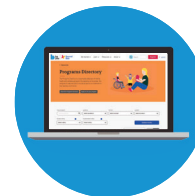
Support from
Be You Consultants



Events



Professional
Learning modules



A directory of social and
emotional learning programs



Fact Sheets



Educator wellbeing
resources



Inclusive practice
resources



Practical planning and
implementation tools

Why should I get involved?

There are many great reasons to join Be You.

These benefits extend to everyone in your early learning service: children, team members and families.

The benefits of a whole learning community approach

For you



- [Practical tools and resources that can support your wellbeing as a leader.](#)
- [Tools and resources](#) to create and sustain learning environments where your team members can flourish and thrive. These can be tailored to suit your service's needs.
- [Practical actions to enhance workplace culture.](#) This can lead to greater job satisfaction and better staff retention.
- [Resources to support preparing for and responding to critical incidents, such as natural disasters.](#)
- Flexible, free [professional development](#) that can support you and your team members to address [national standards and regulatory requirements](#).
- Support to establish [Action Teams](#), so your educators have the capacity, confidence and skills to apply a whole learning community approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Real-world examples of [Be You success stories](#).
- Access to [Be You Consultants](#) who can offer expert advice, tailored critical incident support and guidance in implementing a whole-service approach to wellbeing.

For your team members



- Free online [Professional Learning](#) for a deeper understanding of common mental health issues and the impacts they can have on behaviour.
- Confidence to engage with students and families about mental health and wellbeing topics.
- [Wellbeing tools to support their mental health.](#)
- [Resources for pre-service educators.](#)
- Practical resources to support them in [observing and documenting behaviours](#) that may cause concern.
- An environment where all team members feel empowered and supported to work towards better mental health.
- Examples of [practical strategies](#) to support children at different developmental stages and create smoother transitions between stages of learning.

The benefits of a whole learning community approach

For the children in your service

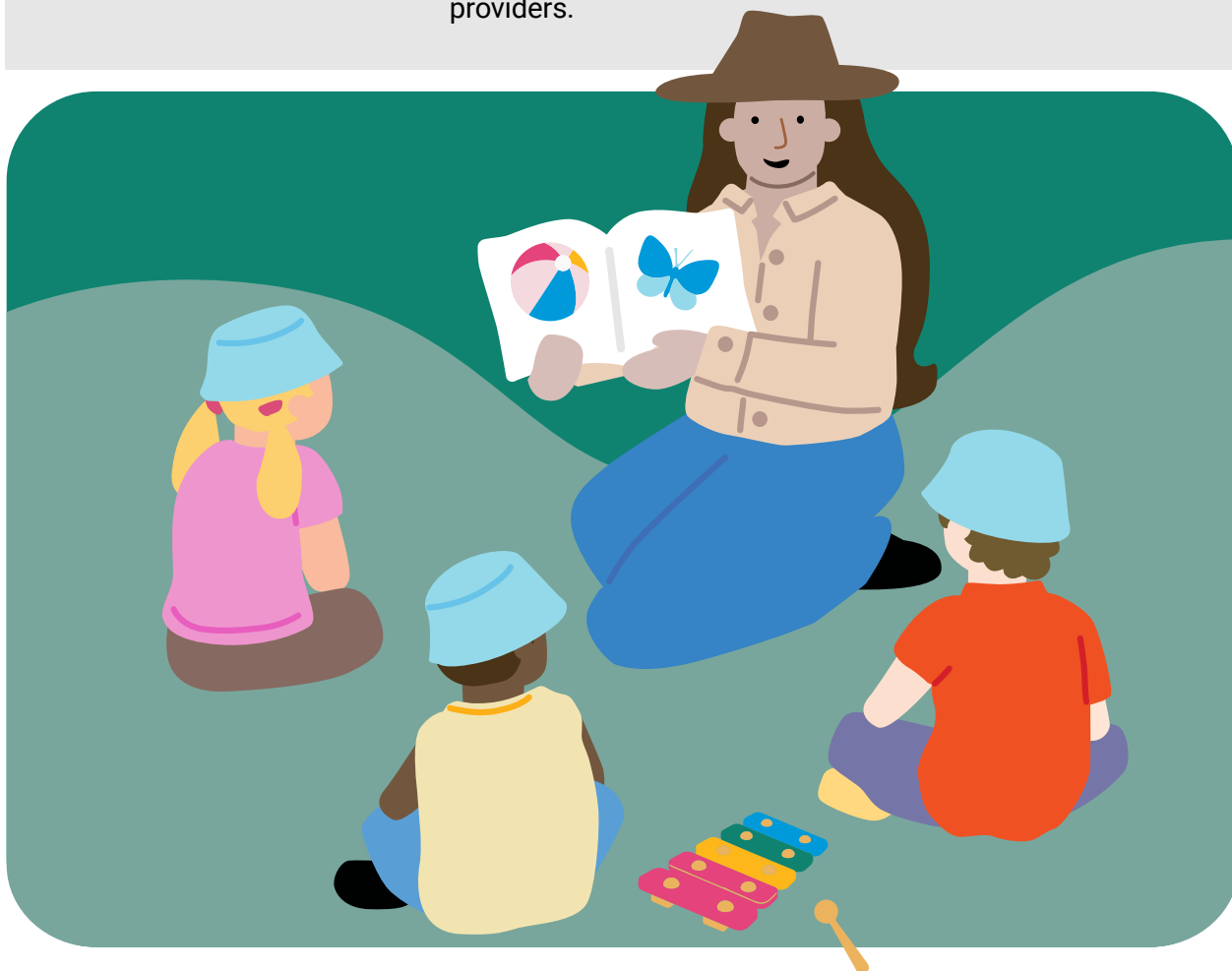


- Enhanced social and emotional wellbeing.
- Improved engagement.
- A positive and supportive learning environment.
- Improved support and earlier intervention if mental health issues emerge.
- Increased resilience and capacity to manage emotions and challenges as they arise.
- An environment where children feel safe and supported to speak up if something is bothering them.

For your learning community



- A flexible approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. This includes complementing existing continuous improvement cycles and addresses important legislative priorities, standards and requirements.
- Fostering a positive, supportive and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity.
- Stronger, more collaborative relationships with families and the broader community.
- Strengthened links and networks with mental health service providers.



How does Be You align with education and care sector priorities?

Be You can help your service meet national, state and territory requirements, priorities and standards.

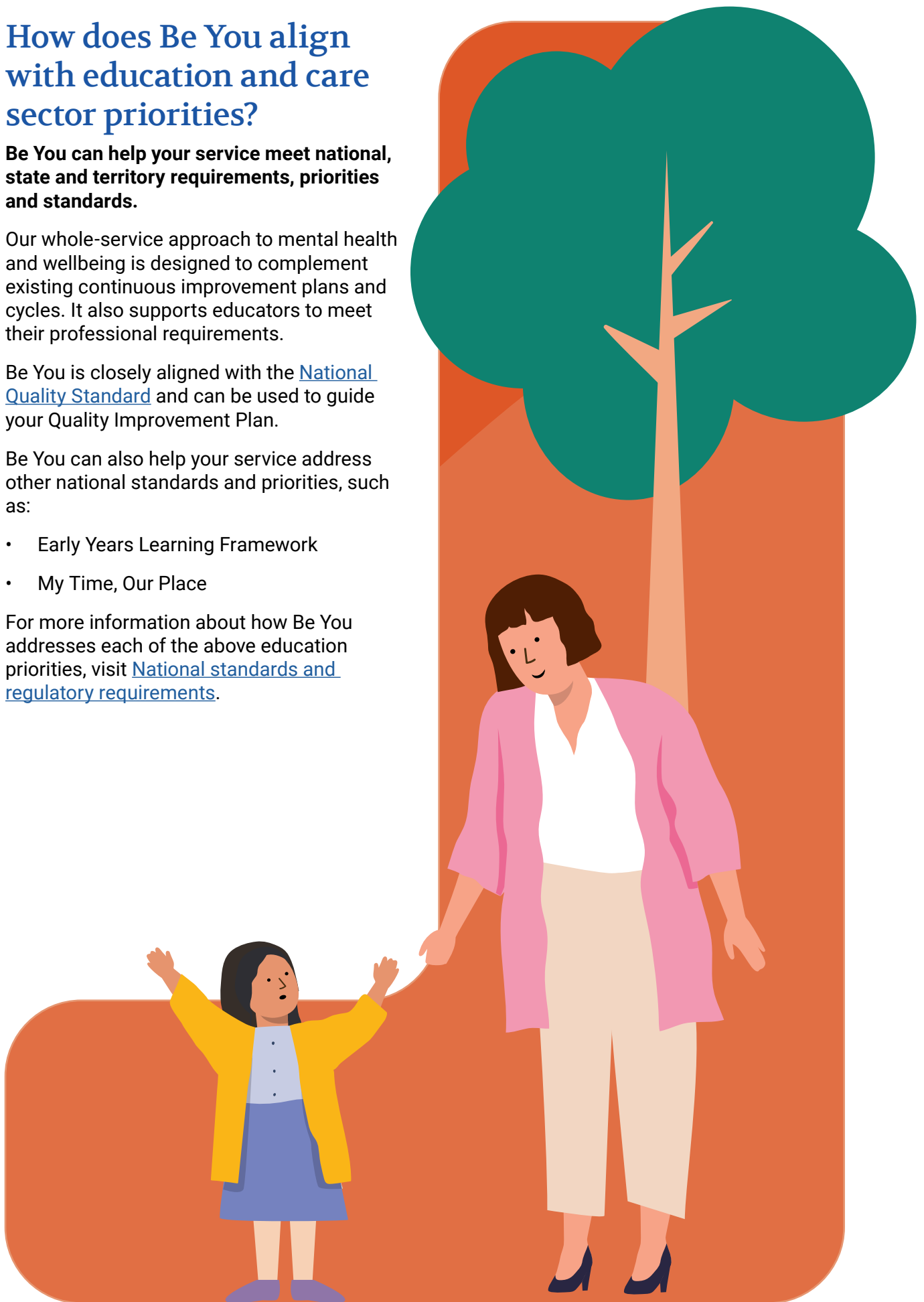
Our whole-service approach to mental health and wellbeing is designed to complement existing continuous improvement plans and cycles. It also supports educators to meet their professional requirements.

Be You is closely aligned with the [National Quality Standard](#) and can be used to guide your Quality Improvement Plan.

Be You can also help your service address other national standards and priorities, such as:

- Early Years Learning Framework
- My Time, Our Place

For more information about how Be You addresses each of the above education priorities, visit [National standards and regulatory requirements](#).



What resources are available?

Resources to support a whole learning community approach to wellbeing.

Be You Consultants

You aren't alone.

By working closely with your Action Team, [Be You Consultants](#) tailor their support to your learning community. These experts provide valuable guidance about using Be You resources and taking action in your service.

Be You Dashboards

Helpful information, at a glance.

Leaders and Action Team Leaders at registered Be You Learning Communities have a personalised Dashboard with access to Be You implementation tools.

Be You Events

Learn from experts and connect with leaders.

Hear from Be You Consultants, subject matter experts and educators across Australia at [our events](#).

Observation and help-seeking tools

Practical tools for educators.

The [BETLS Observation Tool](#) and [Mental Health Continuum](#), can guide you in recording observations and recognising patterns of behaviour. Our [Mental health services and supports page](#) and printable posters can encourage conversations around help-seeking.

Fact Sheets

Learn more about mental health topics.

[Be You Fact Sheets](#) provide information about a range of mental health and wellbeing subjects.

Natural disasters

Support recovery after traumatic events.

Explore Be You [tools and resources](#) that can support educators to look after your own wellbeing, build resilience, plan for natural disasters and support recovery for children and team members.

First Nations perspectives

Embed culturally responsive practices in your learning community.

These [resources](#) have been co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and organisations. They promote respectful, meaningful engagement and celebrate First Nations cultures.

Disability inclusion

Promote belonging and celebrate strengths.

Be You [disability inclusion](#) resources range from handy tip sheets about preferred language and busting myths, to an in-depth guide about embedding inclusive practices in your learning community.

Read practical advice about what you can do to create an inclusive environment in [Leading an inclusive learning community](#).

Programs Directory

Enhance what you're doing with Be You.

The [directory](#) is a searchable database of wellbeing and social and emotional learning programs available across Australia.

How can Be You support my team's wellbeing – and mine?

Educating children can be very rewarding, but it's not always easy.

A whole-service approach to improving mental health and wellbeing doesn't just focus on children – it also considers you and your team members.

Self-care is important, but we know that workplace wellbeing requires a team effort.

As a leader, you play an important role in embedding wellbeing practices and fostering an environment where everyone can thrive.

Be You has lots of educator wellbeing resources to support you.

Wellbeing tools for leaders

Be You recognises that leaders can face complex and isolating challenges.

[Wellbeing tools for leaders](#) has tools, videos and advice to help you prioritise your mental health.

There is also helpful information about [creating a staff wellbeing policy](#) and tools to support a whole learning community approach to wellbeing.

Wellbeing tools for educators

A range of [tools and resources](#) you can share with your staff members.

This includes tools and advice about self-care, managing stress and actively contributing to a mentally healthy learning community.

Beyond Self-care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide

Based on the latest research, this [guide](#) is designed for leaders and Action Teams.

includes case studies, reflection activities and practical actions to help you and your staff members thrive.

This guide is designed to help leaders and Action Teams:

- think about all the factors that contribute to educator wellbeing
- rethink the roles individual educators and leaders play within a whole-service approach to wellbeing.
- consider practical steps you can take towards building a thriving workplace.

Ultimately, workplace wellbeing is a leadership responsibility, and change is most effective when it comes from the top.

Does your service have access to an Employee Assistance Program and other relevant support services? Ensure you promote them and that they are readily accessible for your staff members.

By modelling and championing positive mental health and wellbeing you send an incredibly powerful message to your entire learning community.

The Be You framework

Our flexible framework allows you to guide your professional development and actions based on your service's needs.

At the heart of Be You is a content framework that provides a structure for our [Professional Learning](#) and practical information about actions services can take to implement a whole-service approach to mental health and wellbeing.

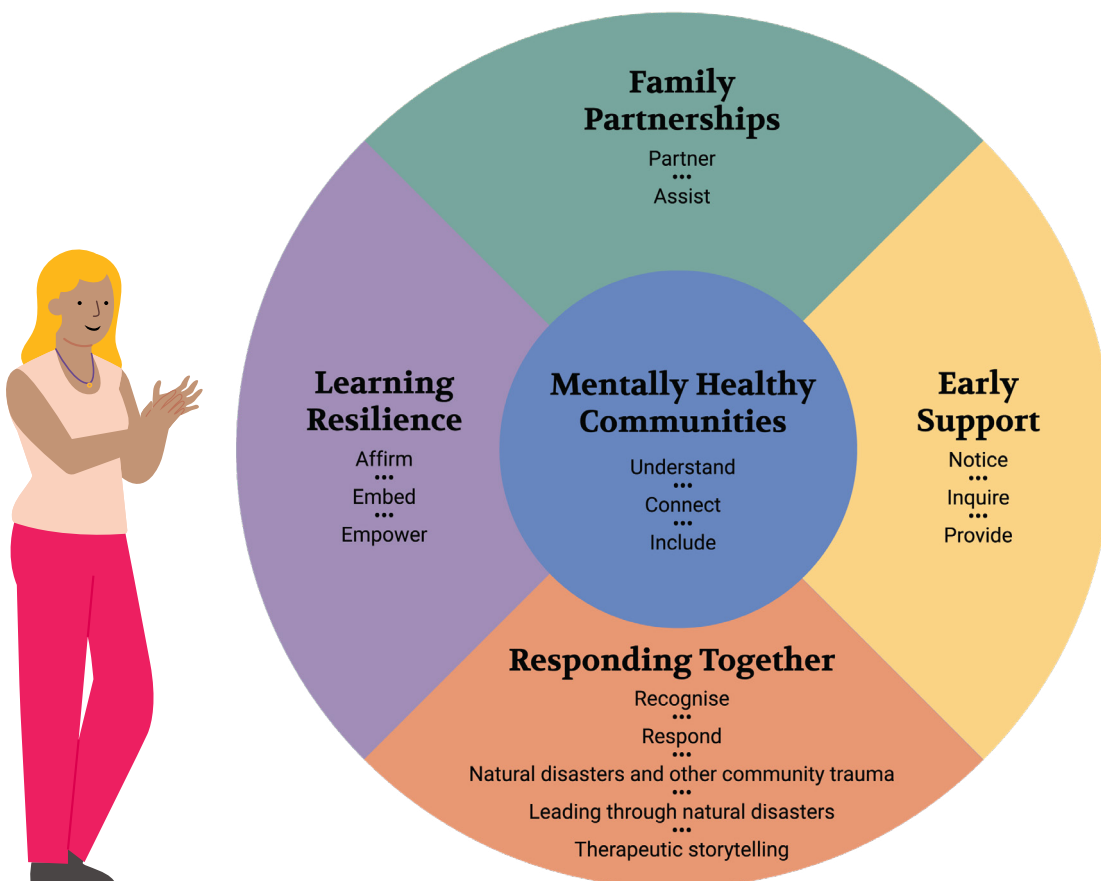
Be You has 5 domains – [Mentally Healthy Communities](#), [Family Partnerships](#), [Learning Resilience](#), [Early Support](#) and [Responding Together](#) – that explore promotion, prevention, early intervention, intervention, response and recovery.

Our learning modules delve into the domain topics, helping leaders and educators increase your understanding of mental health and wellbeing. The modules include case studies and reflection questions to help you apply what you have learnt.

You can start with the domain that suits you and your service best. This usually depends your level of knowledge and experience, your areas of interest and your learning community's needs.

"The Fact Sheets and Professional Learning modules have been helpful for us as leaders to get professional knowledge but, for educators, it's a more informal approach tailoring it to their needs."
– Bright Sun Family Day Care

Professional Learning domains and modules



Be You Professional Learning

Domain	What is it about?
<p>Mentally Healthy Communities</p> <p>Modules:</p> <p>Understand</p> <p>Connect</p> <p>Include</p>	<p>Understanding mental health and wellbeing is key to supporting children and creating a thriving learning community.</p> <p>Modules in this domain explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health and wellbeing, and how they can be influenced by risk and protective factors • connection, belonging and inclusion and how they contribute to thriving early learning services.
<p>Family Partnerships</p> <p>Modules:</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Assist</p>	<p>A child's family and home environment play important roles in their development.</p> <p>Modules in this domain explore how educators can strengthen relationships with families to support their child's mental health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Learning Resilience</p> <p>Modules:</p> <p>Affirm</p> <p>Embed</p> <p>Empower</p>	<p>Social and emotional learning (SEL) is about developing the ability to care for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations.</p> <p>Modules in this domain provide educators with an in-depth understanding of social and emotional learning.</p> <p>They explore how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach social and emotional skills • foster resilience in education settings • create an empowering environment for children to nurture independence.

Early Support

Modules:

[Notice](#)

[Inquire](#)

[Provide](#)

Educators are in a powerful position to notice and support children who might be showing signs of mental health issues.

Modules in this domain explore how to:

- recognising behaviours that may indicate early signs of mental health issues
- talk to children and families about these issues
- provide appropriate and timely support.

Responding Together

Modules:

[Recognise](#)

[Respond](#)

[Natural disasters and other community trauma](#)

[Leading through natural disasters and other community trauma](#)

[Therapeutic storytelling](#)

Learning communities play an important role in responding to critical incidents, such as natural disasters.

Modules in this domain explore the importance of preparing for critical incidents, working together to limit the possible impacts and supporting recovery.

The [Leading through natural disasters and other community trauma](#) module is designed for service leaders and explores your role in responding to such events.



How can my service get involved in Be You?

As individuals

Educators can access Professional Learning, Fact Sheets and other resources to support mental health and wellbeing in their everyday practice.

[Register](#) as an individual at any time.

As a whole-service approach

Be You has the most impact when it is implemented by the whole service (see [page 14](#)). As a leader, you play a critical role in the success of Be You at your service. This includes:

- communicating the importance of the initiative
- leading by example
- ensuring planning, processes and budget are in place to support the Action Team and Action Team Leader in implementing Be You.

For Be You to be effective, it needs to be championed by leaders.

Become a Be You Learning Community

Take a whole-service approach to Be You.

1. **confirm** your leadership support for a whole learning community approach to Be You
2. **appoint** an Action Team Leader (see [page 15](#)). They will need to register as an individual Be You user. During registration, your Action Team Leader will be prompted to 'Search for your learning community'. If it doesn't appear, they can select 'I can't find my early learning service, school or tertiary institution' to add your service's details.
3. ensure you **register** with Be You and select leader when describing your role
4. **select** members of your Action Team (see [page 16](#))
5. **explore** the Be You Implementation Cycle (see [page 14](#)), [Tools for Action Teams](#), other Be You resources, supports and Professional Learning to meet your service's needs
6. **encourage** your educators to register as individuals and explore Be You.

Learn more about registering as a [Be You Learning Community](#).

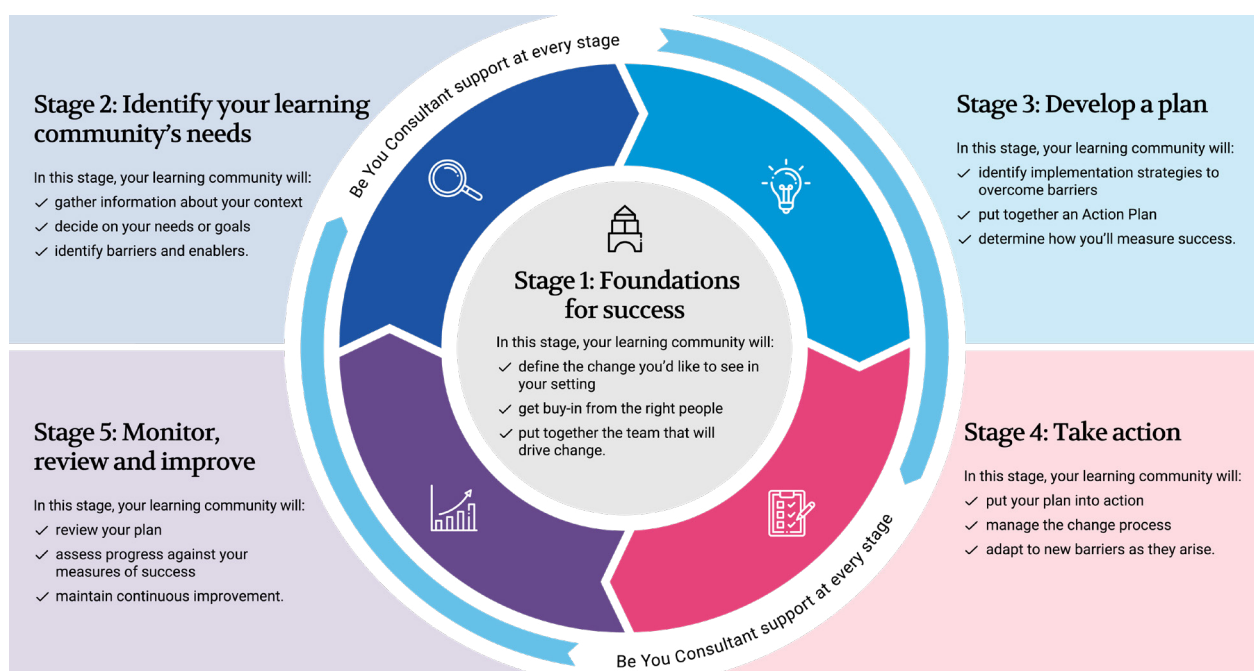


How do we implement Be You at our service?

The Be You Implementation Cycle

The Be You Implementation Cycle provides the structure for a whole learning community approach to mental health and wellbeing. The cycle has 5 stages to guide leaders and Action Teams through processes and actions to implement sustainable change.

In fact, Be You will work best if it forms a key component of your service's existing strategic planning and continuous improvement plan.



Planning for Implementation

Our [Planning for Implementation](#) modules are brief introductions to each stage of the Be You Implementation Cycle.

Topics explored in the modules include:

- defining the change you want to see
- the important role leaders play
- how to gather insights about your service's needs and areas for growth
- creating a roadmap for change
- how to reflect on and review progress.

Tools for Action Teams

These [planning and implementation tools](#) can support you and your Action Team to bring the Be You Implementation Cycle to life in your service.

On the next few pages, you'll find an overview of:

- Action Teams and Action Team Leaders
- what your Action Team can do at each stage of the Implementation Cycle
- Be You resources to use at each stage
- how you, as a leader, can support your Action Team throughout the cycle.

Where do we begin?

A whole-service approach starts with an Action Team.

As a leader, you play a critical role in the success of Be You at your service – but you're not alone.

Once your service has registered with Be You, creating an Action Team will empower educators and community members to drive sustainable change.

When you begin, consider how you might best support staff – especially the Action Team – to champion Be You.

You may need to build professional learning time into meeting schedules and staff development plans. You may also wish to consider how Be You fits into your broader service strategic direction and continuous improvement plan.

Action Team Leaders

Selecting Action Team Leaders and having a motivated group of people to work with them is crucial to ensuring a sustainable approach to mental health and wellbeing.

When selecting an Action Team Leader, service leaders may wish to consider:

- Does your service have someone already working in the wellbeing space who has the capacity to take on this role?
- Who has the interest and skill to drive implementation of Be You?
- Who will be able to motivate others to implement Be You?

Action Team Leaders don't have to be service leaders. The person chosen may depend on your service's size and circumstances. You can have more than one Action Team Leader.

It's important that Action Team Leaders have the time, capacity, resourcing and support to implement Be You.

The Action Team Leader is expected to:

- ✓ Check in with your Be You Consultant
- ✓ Coordinate and support the Action Team
- ✓ Access Be You planning and implementation tools
- ✓ Communicate regularly with service leaders
- ✓ Work with service leaders and the Action team to drive a whole learning community approach
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality when required and manage sensitive information carefully and appropriately.

The Action Team Leader is not expected to:

- ✗ Hold sole responsibility for the service's approach to wellbeing. As a service leader, your involvement is vital
- ✗ Be a mental health expert or act as a clinician
- ✗ Work beyond their capacity. As a service leader, ensure you discuss time and resource requirements with them
- ✗ Be the only ones making changes to their practices
- ✗ Manage critical incident responses on their own.

TOP TIP: If your Action Team Leader decides to leave your service, make sure they have a handover with you, your Be You Consultant and the new Action Team Leader. This will ensure a smooth transition and that your service will continue to have access to Be You planning and implementation tools.

Your Be You Action Team

A whole-service approach to mental health and wellbeing is a team effort.

While Action Team Leaders are the main point of contact for Be You Consultants and have access to [planning and implementation tools](#), it's important that they are supported by an Action Team.

You may already have a wellbeing team that can implement Be You in line with their existing work.

There are several things to consider when deciding who will be part of the Action Team:

- An effective team will have diverse membership, encouraging broad perspectives.
- Each person should represent a particular group within the service. For example, the leadership team, support staff, families, the welfare or wellbeing team and cultural or community groups.
- Your Action Team should have at least 3 members to share the work and provide diverse perspectives.

TOP TIP: When new team members join your service, make sure you introduce them to your Action Team and the work your service is doing with Be You.

This can motivate them to take part in your whole-service approach to wellbeing.

They may also have skills, interests and perspectives that can enhance your Action Team.



The Action Team is expected to:

- ✔ Attend scheduled meetings, take part in discussions and complete assigned tasks
- ✔ Support the Action Team Leader and their fellow Action Team members
- ✔ Support your service through each stage of the Be You Implementation Cycle
- ✔ Work with service leaders and the Action Team Leader to gather insights, design the Action Plan and put it into action
- ✔ Champion Be You: promote the benefits, get people excited and share successes.

The Action Team is not expected to:

- ✘ Hold sole responsibility for the service's approach to wellbeing. As a service leader, your involvement is vital
- ✘ Be mental health experts or act as clinicians
- ✘ Work in isolation from service leadership
- ✘ Work beyond their capacity. As a service leader, ensure you discuss time and resource requirements with them
- ✘ Manage critical incident responses on their own. In most cases, this is the responsibility of service leadership and Emergency Response Teams.

As a service leader, how can I support our Action Team during each implementation stage?

Stage	What does the Action Team do during this stage?	How can leaders support these activities?
1: Foundations for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register the early learning service as a Be You Learning Community • Form an Action Team • Connect with the service's Be You Consultant • Determine how the Action Team will have meetings and work together • Complete the Planning for Implementation modules and refer to the Action Team Handbook • Explore the Be You Action Team Leader Dashboard • Consider how to keep the whole learning community engaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register with Be You as a leader • Support the Action Team Leader in putting together an Action Team • Ensure the Action Team Leader and Team are allocated time and resources for meetings and other Be You activities • If available, attend meetings to show your support • Complete the Planning for Implementation modules, noting advice about the role you play as a leader • Explore the Dashboard with the Action Team • Display Be You signage and publicise the Statement of Commitment within your community.
2: Identify your learning community's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with service leaders to gather information across the learning community using Be You tools such as the Implementation and Reflection Tool (IRT) and Be You Surveys • Work with the service's Be You Consultant to interpret survey results and other insights gathered. • Work with service leaders to identify your service's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the Action Team decide who should be consulted within the broader community • Take part in IRT reflections • Provide available, relevant data. For example, wellbeing survey results, family portal data analytics and incident reports. • Help the Action Team identify priority areas for action in your service.

Stage	What does the Action Team do during this stage?	How can leaders support these activities?
3: Develop a plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the needs identified in Stage 2, work with service leaders to consider actions the learning community can take. Use Be You resources such as the Actions Catalogue and Cultural Actions Catalogue Work with service leaders to develop an Action Plan addressing priority areas Share the Action Plan with all educators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate about current service priorities, share service goals and current actions Work with the Action Team to develop your service's Action Plan Ensure that there is sufficient budget (if required), resourcing and time allocated for planned activities Assist the Action Team to identify implementation challenges and possible solutions Champion the Action Plan within your community, including discussing it with necessary stakeholders.
4: Take action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement activities in the Action Plan Get the rest of the learning community involved Work collaboratively as an Action Team and support those who are implementing and experiencing change Monitor progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that the Action Team have the time, budget and resources they need to implement the Action Plan effectively Encourage all staff to complete Professional Learning modules and support Be You activities Assist the Action Team to overcome any challenges that arise during implementation Ensure that relevant stakeholders are kept up to date on progress

Stage	What does the Action Team do during this stage?	How can leaders support these activities?
5: Monitor, review and improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly monitor the service's progress Conduct a formal review of the Action Plan Celebrate and share achievements Develop the next Action Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the Action Team to collect relevant data Support the Action Team with any changes that need to be made following the review of your Action Plan Celebrate achievements and recognise the work of your staff, especially the Action Team Communicate progress within your service Work with the Action Team to develop the next plan.

"Start with the Be You Surveys, get your baseline data straight away because that will then give you somewhere to work from. And then down the track when you have time to reflect you'll be amazed at the journey you've made."

– Coolbinia Primary School

Time to get started

You're making a powerful commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and educators.

Ready to get started? Register online now. You can start Be You Professional Learning modules and explore the tools and resources outlined in this handbook.

If you're ready to take a whole learning community approach to Be You, visit **Become a Be You Learning Community**

Have any questions about Be You? Contact us.



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