A photograph of a man in a dark shirt interacting with several young children on a blue metal playground structure. The children are sitting on a wooden bench. In the background, another child is walking away. The scene is outdoors with trees and foliage.

Educators Handbook: *Early Learning Services*

Welcome

As an educator, you're all about helping children and young people to flourish. **So are we.**

If you're an educator at an early learning service, this Handbook is for you. Working closely with children and their families, you're in a great position to help drive positive change and promote mental health.

How to use this Handbook

This Handbook is designed to launch you on your Be You journey. You'll get an overview of what Be You is, the benefits to you as an educator and information on how you can get involved.

If you're working in a school, take a look at the [Educators Handbook for Primary and Secondary Schools](#). We also have [handbooks specifically aimed at pre-service educators](#) in both early learning and primary and secondary schools. Finally, there are also [handbooks designed for leaders](#) in early learning services and primary and secondary schools.

What is Be You?

Be You is a national initiative for educators, aimed at promoting and protecting positive mental health in children and young people. Our vision is for an education system in which every learning community is positive, inclusive and resilient, and where every child, young person, staff member, and family can achieve their best possible mental health.

Be You empowers educators by supporting them to develop their mental health skills and knowledge, while also providing guidance on how to implement a whole-learning community approach. It offers a range of online, evidence-based tools and resources aimed at improving the skills and knowledge of educators to foster and support mental health and wellbeing in children and young people.

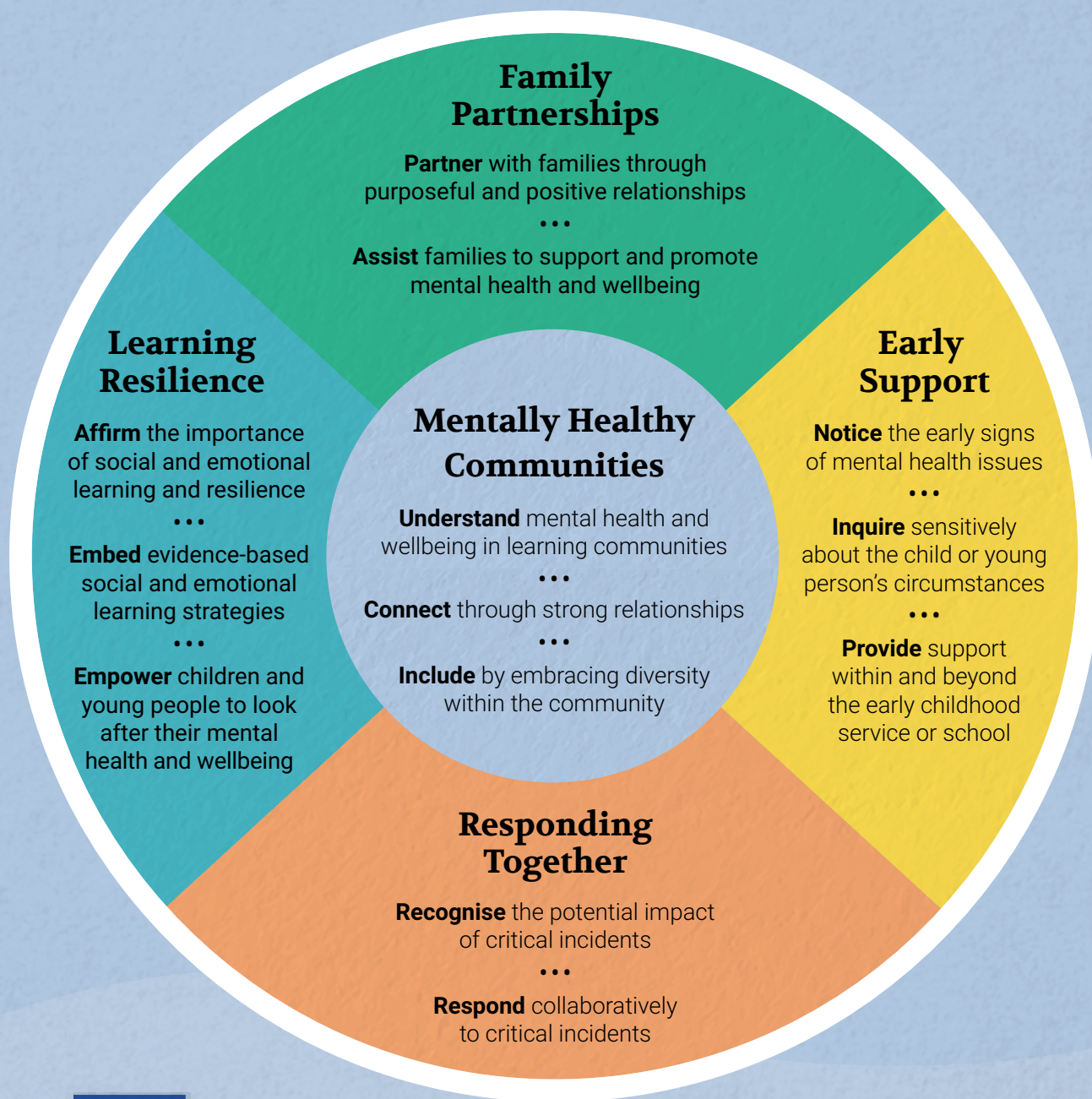
It's completely free, and available to every educator, early learning service, and school in Australia.

To learn more about the background to Be You, visit beyou.edu.au/about/about-be-you.

At the heart of Be You is a content framework that provides a structure for both [Professional Learning](#), and the actions schools and services can take to implement a whole learning community approach to mental health and wellbeing.

There are five domains in the framework, and each domain contains two or three modules. These modules delve deeper into the domain topics, helping educators and whole learning communities to increase their understanding of mental health and wellbeing and enact meaningful change in the ways they support and nurture children and young people.

The Be You framework is non-linear and allows educators and services to start at the point that suits them best. Usually this depends on the educator's level of experience and their learning community's unique circumstances.



Why should I get involved?

Improve on the great work you already do

No matter how much experience you have, there are always opportunities to improve.

As an educator, we know you're already working hard to support the mental health and wellbeing of the children in your care. Be You helps you develop and expand your existing strategies, and shows you other practical ways to support children and their families to create mentally healthy learning communities.

Flexible, relevant Professional Learning

With Be You Professional Learning there's no such thing as one size fits all.

Be You offers a suite of [Professional Learning](#) aimed at building your skills and knowledge around mental health and wellbeing for children, young people and families. It's been developed to meet the needs of educators from a diverse background of experience and knowledge.

Your Professional Learning can be fully customised. You chart your own learning journey and navigate through the framework in whatever way suits you best. The flexible structure allows you to dip in and out, and to tailor your learning to your individual needs and situation. You set the pace. You decide where to start and which domains and modules are most relevant to you.

Shared understanding

It helps when we're all on the same page.

By providing a single, integrated initiative across early learning services and primary and secondary schools, we're helping to create a shared understanding among educators about mental health and about how to build mentally healthy learning communities. You'll have a common language to use when speaking with colleagues, families, children and young people about mental health and the best strategies to improve wellbeing.

Transferable across settings and locations

Be You goes with you, wherever your career may take you.

Be You is a national initiative spanning early learning services and schools. So what you learn in each module is transferable across settings and locations. This consistent approach better supports children and young people as they move from early learning to primary school, and on to secondary school. And if you decide to move into other areas of education, your knowledge and skills in mental health promotion go with you.

Helping you respond to a critical incident

We can't predict every crisis, but we can prepare to respond well.

In the event of a 'critical incident' — a one-off, short-term crisis — communities can struggle to make sense of what's happened. And it's not just children and young people who might feel overwhelmed: their families, teachers, and other staff can all be affected.

Be You helps build your confidence when responding to critical incidents and to consider and reflect on policies and processes within your service that relate to these situations. Be You also helps you recognise the impacts on mental health in your learning community, and determine how best to support children and young people, families, colleagues and importantly, yourself.



What are the ways I can get involved?

You can start your Be You journey any time as an **individual** with the [Professional Learning](#) modules, enhancing your knowledge and understanding of how to promote mental health and support children and young people. If you're looking for ideas on where to start with Professional Learning, see the suggested pathways below in "Getting started with Professional Learning".

Change starts with individuals, but it doesn't end there.

Be You is for individual educators, but it's also for whole learning communities. Lots of things influence mental health and wellbeing, and often they're interrelated. So the most effective approaches to mental health promotion are those that involve everyone in the community — educators, children and families. When an entire service decides to work on mental health and wellbeing collectively we call this a **whole learning community approach**, and we provide support, tools and resources every step of the way. Our proven implementation model allows schools and services to build on the work they're already doing and take practical action.

The implementation of a whole learning community approach is driven by an [Action Team](#), who are supported by Be You Consultants from [headspace](#) and [Early Childhood Australia](#).

Your service may already be a registered Be You learning community. If it is, speak to your Action Team or leader at your service about how you could get involved in their efforts.

If your service isn't registered yet, see the [Action Team Handbook](#) for more information on how to bring a whole learning community approach to your service.

Where do I begin?

Signing up online

Signing up with Be You is quick, easy – and free! We just need some basic information about who you are and your role as an educator. Go to beyou.edu.au/register to get started.



Once you've signed up, your Dashboard gives you full access to the Professional Learning modules and allows you to track your progress. If you're at a Be You Service, your Action Team Leader and your organisation's leader (typically the director or similar) will also be able to see which modules you've started and completed. This is so they can track how well the entire learning community is doing in reaching its goals.

Getting started with Professional Learning



Every service and educator is different. So is every Professional Learning experience.

There's no right or wrong place to start with Be You Professional Learning. Read through the module overviews at beyou.edu.au/learn and see which resonate.

You might want to consider what's happening within your service right now. Think about wellbeing areas that are currently a priority, or the specific needs of the children in your care. If your service is registered as a Be You learning community, your Action Team can provide guidance on what Professional Learning is most relevant for you and your colleagues.

Remember, this is your learning journey; you can start with whatever modules are most meaningful and relevant for you. **If you're still not sure where to start, or you need more inspiration, take a look over the page at some possible pathways through the Professional Learning you could consider.**

Pathways through the Professional Learning

Situation	Suggested modules
<p>I want to know how to identify children who may be experiencing mental health issues, as early as possible.</p> <p><i>Maybe you have concerns about a child who seems to be withdrawn and reluctant to join activities or play time, or there's a child who's displaying aggressive behaviour and you'd like to know more about how to address this.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Notice will help you to identify early signs of mental health issues in children. ✓ Inquire will assist you to inquire about children and family circumstances in a sensitive way. ✓ Provide will help you to support children and families within your early learning service, and provide referrals outside of your service in response to risk, harm, or critical incidents. ✓ Understand will support you to better understand mental health and wellbeing in children across a range of developmental stages.
<p>There has been a critical incident at my early learning service and I want to know how I can support my community.</p> <p><i>Perhaps there has been a recent critical incident – for example, the death of a child, family member, or current or former staff member, an accident or serious injury, or a natural disaster.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recognise will help you to recognise what critical incidents are and their impact on the whole learning community including children, families, and educators. ✓ Respond will support you in responding to critical incidents, and help you to work together to create mentally healthy communities.
<p>I would like to work together with families to support positive mental health.</p> <p><i>Working with families is a central part of your role. But perhaps you'd like to know more about how to encourage conversations and activity around mental health, and create stronger collaborative partnerships.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partner will help you to work and communicate with families more purposefully, respectfully, and collaboratively. ✓ Assist will show you how you can assist families to foster positive mental health and wellbeing, and to access timely help when required. ✓ Connect will help you to build strong relationships with children and young people, their families, the community and your peers.
<p>I would like to build a strong understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and feel confident to share this with my community.</p> <p><i>How can you raise concerns about a child with their family, and work collaboratively with them to get the best possible outcome for everyone?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand will support you in better understanding mental health within your service and how that relates to different developmental stages. ✓ Connect will help you to build strong relationships with children and young people, their families, the community and your peers. ✓ Include will help you to embrace the diversity of the children and their families within your service.
<p>I'd like to explore what I can do to build the resilience of children and help them to deal with situations that arise within the early learning environment that affect their learning.</p> <p><i>Maybe you'd like a deeper understanding of resilience, or are curious about the evidence base for strategies that empower children to better manage situations that affect their wellbeing and learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Affirm will help you to understand key concepts related to resilience including respectful relationships and social and emotional learning. ✓ Embed will show you how to use evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies within your service. ✓ Empower will help you to create learning environments that enable children to exercise resilience and awareness in their everyday learning and activities.

Using Be You tools and resources

[Professional Learning](#) is central to Be You, but there's a lot more to explore – tools, resources and events that you can use to put what you've learnt into practice.

Always Be You

Bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and ways of doing to Be You.

Important mental health and wellbeing messages should be accessible to everyone. [Always Be You](#) includes resources that can assist your service to begin an ongoing process of embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing.

These resources are for everyone in every context in Australia, and can assist all services to reflect on how culture is acknowledged, considered and celebrated in their learning community, and how and when we all learn.

Fact Sheets

Learn more about topics that are especially important to learning communities.

[Be You Fact Sheets](#) provide information about a range of topics and issues connected to the Professional Learning. Think of them as quick reference resources, with factual information about a particular issue. Many people come to Be You with a particular question or issue in mind, and the Fact Sheets are a great starting point to get answers. They're also a valuable resource to share with families and others in your learning community.

Programs Directory

Enhance what you're doing with Be You: choose a mental health program from our directory.

The [directory](#) provides a searchable database of external mental health programs, available across Australia, and you can feel confident that every one of them has been thoroughly reviewed and evaluated. This allows you to make informed decisions about the inclusion of any program within your curriculum.

Most programs are for children and young people, but there are others designed for families and educators.

Organising Speakers Guide

Inviting speakers to share their personal stories can be a great way to give an audience 'real-life' insights into mental health.

Hearing about the challenges a speaker experienced and their pathway to recovery can increase awareness and reduce stigma. It also encourages people to talk about how they're feeling and to seek help.

The [Organising Speakers Guide](#) provides a detailed run-down on what you need to consider when engaging an external speaker, including how to create a safe and meaningful environment for everyone involved.

Wellbeing Tools for You

Taking care of yourself helps you take care of others.

Paying attention to your own mental health ensures you are better able to support the children in your care. [Wellbeing Tools for You](#) outlines a range of online tools, resources and general strategies designed to support educators' mental health.

You'll also find a range of helpful information on self-care in the [Your Wellbeing Fact Sheets](#).

Wellbeing Tools for Students

As 'digital natives', children and young people will often look online for help with the problems they are facing, and educators play a vital role in directing them to the best resources.

There are lots of great mental health and wellbeing tools available. The trick is to find the best tool for the job. [Wellbeing Tools for Students](#) is your essential guide to the online tools and other resources that will best support children and young people in taking care of their own mental health.

Planning and implementation tools

If your service decides to take a whole learning community approach to Be You, our suite of implementation and planning tools will help throughout the process. Registered Be You services and schools also have access to Be You Consultants to support them every step of the way. Consultants act as mentors and advocates, supporting Action Teams to lead change confidently and effectively.

Be You events

There are a range of [online events](#) available to educators at registered Be You learning communities to enhance their experience. These events have a national reach, and provide opportunities to connect and share with Be You early learning services and schools.



Time to get started

Be You is for educators, but its impact goes far beyond the individual.

By getting involved you're making a powerful commitment to supporting and enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and creating a mentally healthy learning community.



Ready to get started? [Sign up](#) online now.



Still have questions? No problem. Get in touch with us at beyou.edu.au/contact

