Important notice

KidsMatter Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative and any other KidsMatter mental health initiatives are not to be confused with other businesses, programs or services which may also use the name ‘Kidsmatter’.

Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2013

This work is copyright. Provided acknowledgement is made to the sources, schools are permitted to copy material freely for communication with teachers, staff, students, parents, carers or community members. You may reproduce the whole or part of this work in unaltered form for your own personal use or, if you are part of an organisation, for internal use within your organisation, but only if you or your organisation do not use the reproduction for any commercial purpose and retain this copyright notice and all disclaimer notices as part of that reproduction. Apart from rights to use as permitted by the Copyright Act 1968 or allowed by this copyright notice, all other rights are reserved and you are not allowed to reproduce the whole or any part of this work in any way (electronic or otherwise) without first being given the specific written permission from the Commonwealth to do so. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights are to be sent to:

Communications Branch
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601

or via e-mail to:
copyright@health.gov.au

While the resources are available freely for these purposes, to realise the full potential of KidsMatter Primary, it is recommended that the resources be used with the appropriate training and support under the KidsMatter Initiative.

Last updated in July 2013
Contents

Welcome 02
Structure of the Action Team Handbook 03
For more information 03
KidsMatter Primary in your school 04
Self care 07
KidsMatter Primary implementation 08
  KidsMatter Primary Action Team 08
  Who will be on the Action Team? 09
Getting Started 10
The implementation journey 11
  Stage 1: Establishment: Getting organised after Getting Started (0-6 months) 11
  Action Team tasks in Stage 1 14
  Stage 2: Building on your foundations and facilitating whole-school change (6-12 months) 24
  Action Team tasks in Stage 2 25
  Stage 3: Action (12-24 months) 29
  Action Team tasks in Stage 3 30
  Stage 4: Review and planning for continuous improvement and sustainability (24-36 months and beyond) 32
  Action Team tasks in Stage 4 33
Re-establishment and review (after first and subsequent cycles) 36
Action Team Topics 38
  Topic 1: Building foundations and vision of KidsMatter in your school 38
  Topic 2: Whole-school approach 40
  Topic 3: How to create a successful Action Team 43
  Topic 4: The planning process 45
  Topic 5: Keeping the big picture in mind in Component 1 48
  Topic 6: Professional learning for the whole school 51
  Topic 7: External supporters 54
Implementation resources and tools 56
Appendix: Essential Reading
Welcome to the KidsMatter Primary Action Team Handbook. Congratulations on becoming a member of your school’s Action Team. This handbook is your roadmap to implementing KidsMatter Primary in your school. Inside you’ll find the information and tools necessary to guide your Action Team.

We hope you enjoy the journey!
Structure of the Action Team Handbook

The Action Team Handbook is divided into three sections:

The implementation journey
This section describes four main stages Action Teams typically move through during KidsMatter Primary implementation:

Stage 1: Establishment
Stage 2: Building on foundations and facilitating whole-school change
Stage 3: Action
Stage 4: Review and planning for continuous improvement and sustainability

Each stage highlights key tasks, issues to consider and links to useful information. A checkpoint at the end of each stage will help you to review your school community’s progress.

Action Team Topics
Each Action Team topic provides in-depth information for your team to aid discussion and planning at your Action Team meetings.

Implementation resources and tools
These are designed to assist your Action Team with planning and review processes. This section includes a comprehensive Action Team Implementation Checklist to help you review important tasks to be undertaken by the Action Team.

KidsMatter at your school
Remember that KidsMatter is designed to be flexible and adapt to the differing needs of schools.

Work at your school community’s pace. Your journey may not always fit neatly into stages or timeframes.

We encourage you to take more time for certain tasks or stages if required. You may also choose to read ahead and undertake tasks and planning at earlier stages than outlined in this handbook.

KidsMatter Primary online
To access the online resources for Action Teams referred to in the Action Team Handbook, go to www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/information-action-teams

For more information
Talk to your state or territory project officer if you have any concerns or would like assistance in making decisions about KidsMatter Primary in your school.

Name:

Phone number:

Email:

For further information about KidsMatter Primary, including contact details for state and territory coordinators and project officers, go to www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary

For specific enquiries about KidsMatter Primary implementation, phone the KidsMatter front desk on 1800 543 767 (1800 KIDSMP) or email frontendesk@kidsmatter.edu.au
KidsMatter Primary is all about children’s mental health and wellbeing. We know that being mentally healthy is vital for learning and for leading a rewarding life. KidsMatter is a way for schools to nurture happy, balanced kids through mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention activity and planning.

KidsMatter is being rolled out across Australia with growing numbers of participating schools in each state and territory. This means that your school is taking part in a significant initiative that is building a healthier future for every primary school student.

A flexible framework

KidsMatter Primary is not a program. It is a flexible framework with a whole-school approach that helps schools to build protective factors and reduce risk factors that research has shown can make a difference to students’ mental health and wellbeing. KidsMatter works across the school, on its own or as a valuable organising framework for existing programs.

Schools are dynamic environments that experience changes in students and families, staff and leadership each year. As a result, the mental health and wellbeing needs of the school community are also dynamic and constantly changing. In keeping with this environment, KidsMatter implementation is cyclical and ongoing, intended to become part of the way schools operate rather than a separate initiative.

KidsMatter is designed to be driven from within the school community. Each KidsMatter school puts their own unique stamp on the initiative in response to the needs of their particular community.

How does it work?

KidsMatter focuses on creating positive school communities that support the mental health and wellbeing of every member of the school community.

Using a comprehensive framework, professional learning and support, KidsMatter Primary guides schools to undertake planning and action around four core components, each with specific evidence-based Target Areas and Goals. The components are interrelated and work together to support student mental health.

This diagram illustrates the relationship among the four components.

You can read about each component and the related Target Areas and Goals on pages 10-13 of the Essential Reading section of this handbook.
Using the KidsMatter framework

The KidsMatter framework supports planning and activity around the four components with seven Guiding Principles and a planned whole-school approach.

**Core Components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive school community</th>
<th>Social and emotional learning for students</th>
<th>Working with parents and carers</th>
<th>Helping children with mental health difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Guiding Principles**

- The best interests of children are paramount
- Respectful relationships are foundational
- Diversity is respected and valued
- Parents and carers are recognised as the most important people in children’s lives
- Parents and teachers support children best by working together
- Students need to be active participants
- Schools, health and community agencies work together with families

**Whole-School Approach**

- Planning for whole-school change
- Professional learning, shared understanding and focus for staff
- Partnerships with parents and carers, health and community agencies
- Action within and beyond the classroom

**Guiding Principles**

The Guiding Principles in the KidsMatter framework reflect school values and beliefs that foster belonging and connectedness, inclusion and participation within the school community. These principles guide all work across the four KidsMatter components. It is important to keep the principles in mind when your Action Team develops actions and strategies for KidsMatter in your school.
Whole-school approach

‘A whole-school approach is cohesive, collective and collaborative action in and by a school community that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these.’

(Department of Education, WA)

A whole-school approach involves creating opportunities for all members of the school community to play active roles in the planning, development and implementation of school change, within and beyond the classroom.

It includes professional learning to develop a shared understanding and focus on mental health and wellbeing within the school. We recommend that this learning is made available to teachers, support staff, leadership staff, parents and carers, students and members of the local community. This is important to ensure that the needs and opinions of everyone in a school community are taken into account. It is critical that the Action Team consults with, and reports to, the whole staff and school community on a regular basis.

A whole-school approach also involves ensuring that policies and practices reflect the school community’s values and beliefs, and address identified needs. It is important that the initiative is tailored to the individual needs of your school, and builds on what you are already doing.

You can read more about a Whole-school approach in Topic 2 on page 40 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.

How much time is involved?

You can expect that it will take between 18 months and three years to complete the first KidsMatter cycle of school change.

During this time your school will work on a range of mental health and wellbeing Target Areas in each KidsMatter component that help build, maintain and sustain a positive school community. This promotes mental health and wellbeing and assists people experiencing difficulties through careful planning and action. These Target Areas have been developed in line with evidence and expert opinion about the most significant influences on children’s mental health and wellbeing. There is a particular focus on those factors that schools can influence.

Schools can play a significant role in improving children’s mental health and wellbeing, and research has shown that doing so provides substantial educational benefits for students. KidsMatter is designed to support schools in this role.

You can read more about children’s mental health and how KidsMatter Primary seeks to improve it on page 6 of the Essential Reading section of this handbook.

Support for schools

KidsMatter Primary has teams of experienced professionals to support schools and a range of free products and resources to help your school through the implementation process. You can access these resources online.
Talking about topics that relate to mental health may trigger thoughts or concerns for your own mental health or someone you know. Your school’s employee assistance program is there to help, and you may also find these contacts useful for support for mental health difficulties.

This diagram outlines self care for staff.

- **Australian Psychological Society (APS)**
  www.psychology.org.au/
  FindaPsychologist
  Find a Psychologist service

- **Beyond Blue**
  Tel: 1300 224 636
  www.beyondblue.org.au
  Information line

- **Lifeline**
  Tel: 13 11 14
  www.lifeline.org.au
  24-hour telephone counselling

- **Sane Australia**
  Tel: 1800 187 263
  www.sane.org
  Information line: 9.00am-5.00pm weekdays
  Online helpline, factsheets, resources
KidsMatter Primary Implementation Map

The diagram above describes the KidsMatter Primary implementation process from the first briefing your school leadership attends, to official commencement with a Statement of Commitment, forming an Action Team, attending Getting Started and working through each of the components.

From this point each Action Team will coordinate and drive the initiative in their school community, guiding progress through the implementation journey with help and support from KidsMatter Primary staff and resources.

KidsMatter Primary Action Team

The Action Team is responsible for coordinating and ‘driving’ KidsMatter in your school. This handbook will take you through a step-by-step process, giving you the tools required.

Some of the key tasks of the Action Team may include:

- building a shared vision of mental health and wellbeing in the school community
- engaging, consulting and collaborating with all members of the school community
- gathering and interpreting data
- contributing to strategic planning in the school
- leading the development and refinement of mental health and wellbeing policies and strategies
- coordinating staff professional learning
- working through the step-by-step implementation process
- reviewing progress and celebrating achievements.

Even before implementation begins, your Action Team will work on building a shared vision of mental health and wellbeing for your school, with the active support of the principal, staff, students and parents.

You can read more about Building foundations and vision of KidsMatter in your school in Topic 1 on page 38 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.

Over the coming years, your school will work through the four components in a planned, strategic and cyclical process involving the whole school community.

Action Team meetings

Your Action Team will meet regularly to plan, coordinate and drive the implementation of KidsMatter Primary. It is recommended that your team meet at least twice per term. It is also recommended that KidsMatter Primary activity and planning become part of the existing strategic planning processes of your school so that it is part of your school business. This will help streamline
activity and planning, and avoid unnecessary duplication of processes and administration. KidsMatter Primary provides a step-by-step planning process and useful planning tools, such as Component Plans, that schools use to add value to their existing planning processes.

You will find template Component Plans in the Tools section of this handbook. Read about the step-by-step planning process in Topic 4 on page 45 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.

You will also find a comprehensive Action Team Implementation Checklist on page 57 in the Tools section of this handbook that you can use to check off key tasks and make notes to record your progress.

As with any improvement initiative, focused effort and dedicated time and resources are required. It is vital to have leadership support so that time and resources are allocated appropriately at each stage.

You can read more about How to create a successful Action Team in Topic 3 on page 43 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.

Who will be on the Action Team?

Action Teams vary in number and make-up. An effective team will have diverse membership, allowing the perspectives of the whole school community to be heard and a range of skills to be used. Being part of the Action Team is also a great opportunity to build team members’ skills in a range of areas.

Ideally, each person will represent one of the key groups within your school community. Your Action Team should consist of at least three members. Members may include:

- school principal or deputy
- school staff – teaching and non-teaching
- parents and carers
- a representative from the welfare/wellbeing team (i.e. the school psychologist/counsellor or student welfare coordinator if the school has one)
- students, possibly from student council or other representative student groups
- cultural or community representatives.

Different members of the school community may join the Action Team and contribute their skills, interest and motivation at varying times. This can assist with keeping your Action Team energised and sharing the workload.

If you include students on your Action Team, consider the support students may need before, during and after meetings. It may be intimidating for students to participate in Action Team meetings if the majority of members are adults. Think about a range of ways students can influence and contribute to the implementation of KidsMatter in your school.

School leadership, staff and parents and carers are essential members of the Action Team, and it is vital that their presence is maintained.

Forming an Action Team in very small and remote schools can be a challenge. We recommend that you talk with KidsMatter staff about ideas for building an Action Team in these circumstances.

It can be logistically difficult to manage a large Action Team. If large numbers of people are interested in being part of your Action Team, consider dividing up tasks and forming working groups or involving people in other ways.

Challenge your thinking

- Is your Action Team representative of the whole school community?
- What specific skills, experience and knowledge does each member bring to the team?
- What other skills do you still need?
- Does your membership need to change over time as the school’s KidsMatter journey progresses?

Remember, as you identify specific needs in your school, you can seek out different people to address those needs.
Getting started

One of the first tasks of an Action Team is to attend Getting Started, the professional learning for Action Teams. This professional learning is highly recommended for all members of your Action Team.

---

**Note:** As new members join the Action Team, ask them to attend one of these sessions. This training can also be a great way for more established KidsMatter schools to reflect, review and renew.

Getting Started will give your team a good grounding and deeper understanding of KidsMatter Primary. As part of this training, you will:

- become familiar with the resources and tools KidsMatter provides
- understand the step-by-step implementation process and planning process
- consider what you will need to drive and coordinate KidsMatter Primary implementation.

---

Attending Getting Started will give you an opportunity to meet your state or territory KidsMatter staff and connect with other KidsMatter schools.

If you have any questions after this professional learning, or at different stages throughout implementation, your state or territory project officer will be happy to assist you.

**KidsMatter professional learning for Components 1-4**

When you organise for your Action Team to attend Getting Started it is useful to discuss plans for the whole-school professional learning with your KidsMatter state or territory project officer. This will include identification of an appropriate person who will attend component training and run the component professional learning at your school.

KidsMatter recommends that professional learning for each component is undertaken sequentially. Your school will undertake professional learning for each component when staff are ready to begin work on that component. The professional learning develops a common language and deeper understanding of mental health and wellbeing concepts related to each component. It provides an opportunity to share and discuss ideas, explore thoughts and feelings and consider a range of perspectives. Exploration of the four components highlights how each supports children’s mental health and wellbeing. The ideas and strategies that emerge from each session directly contribute to strategic planning in your school.

The Action Team is responsible for organising whole-school professional learning. You can read more about this in Topic 6 on page 51 of the Action Teams Topics section of this handbook.
The implementation journey

KidsMatter Primary Implementation Map

Stage 1: Establishment: Getting organised after Getting Started (0-6 months)

First meetings

Your first meetings as an Action Team lay the foundations for whole-school implementation. This is a good time to reflect more deeply on the readiness of your school community. Are the majority of people in the community on board with your commitment to KidsMatter? Do you need to provide more introductory information? Are there people and services in your community who can support your journey? Consider strengths both in your Action Team and in the school community, and build on these. Identify any gaps and work on these before launching any further into whole-school implementation.

You can refer to your Statement of Commitment – Considerations in the KidsMatter Primary Briefing Pack that is based on implementation success factors to help ensure your KidsMatter journey commences on a strong foundation.

Further information and resources for Action Teams are available online.

Think about the following to get your Action Team organised for your first meetings:

1. **Venue, time and meeting schedule**
   Choose a time and a place for your meetings that is free from distractions. Consider the availability of Action Team members and set a schedule of meetings for the year so that everyone involved can plan ahead. Keep meetings brief and to the point.

2. **Agenda and minutes**
   It’s a good idea to have an agenda and to take minutes of each meeting so that you have a record of your progress. This will allow you to easily track your progress and continue to implement KidsMatter Primary when Action Team membership changes. You might also select a chairperson. This sounds formal but it helps to keep your meetings efficient and effective.

   Following is a sample agenda that you might like to use for your first meeting. An electronic version is also available online.

   Immediate and ongoing Action Team tasks, along with information about each of these tasks, are identified in each stage of your implementation. These will be important items to include in each meeting agenda.
### Sample agenda: Action Team meeting 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Time allocated</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Person responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Purpose of the Action Team – our wellbeing vision for our school</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Membership – who else should be part of our Action Team?</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Planning tools for the Action Team – how will we capture our plans as an Action Team? How will we make decisions quickly as an Action Team?</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Gathering evidence-based data: What existing data could inform actions and strategies? Have all staff completed the ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ activity from Getting Started?</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Immediate tasks: • Set up two-way communication with school community • Organise facilitator training and professional learning schedule • Gathering data</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ongoing tasks to start thinking about: • Establish supporters – who will these be?</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next meeting**

Date:  
Time:  
Venue:  

The Action Team Topics section of this handbook provides more detailed information about some of these tasks. Take the time to read this information before your meetings to assist your discussions and planning.

At each meeting you can use the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook to check off tasks and make notes on your progress.
3 Purpose of your team

The Action Team has a very important role in drawing together a broad range of information from across the school community to deliver the ‘big picture’ of mental health and wellbeing in your school community. This will include staff, student, family and community perspectives on how well mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention policies and practices are working in your school community.

Remember that while the Action Team is the main driver of KidsMatter Primary in your school community, the whole-school community is responsible for the success of the initiative.

In your planning, consider all the ways you can include school community members in building this picture of current practice. This will become the foundation for reviewing existing practices and contributing to new ideas and ways of working.

For any group to succeed, it is vital that all members have a clear sense of purpose or vision and that each person is clear about how they might contribute to this purpose. **Take some time to discuss this in your meetings and develop an understanding about the skills your team members bring to the group.**

Read Topics 1-3 on pages 38-44 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook to assist your discussions and planning. Topics 1 and 2 discuss the Action Team’s role in building foundations and vision for KidsMatter and using a whole-school approach. Topic 3 looks at key elements of successful Action Teams.

4 Membership

We recommend that you regularly review the balance of team members in your Action Team and consider other people you might involve at various stages. Refer to **Who will be on the Action Team?** on page 9 of this handbook.

**Reminder**

Action Team members may leave or step back for a period. As new members begin, check the KidsMatter website for details of the next KidsMatter Primary Overview sessions and book places for your new members. Where there is a significant change in Action Team membership we recommend that new members attend **Getting Started.**

5 Planning tools

Consider how you will capture your planning as an Action Team. It is useful to separate planning that relates specifically to the Action Team from the plans for how your school will address each component of KidsMatter. We recommend that KidsMatter is part of your whole-school strategic planning. You can use your school’s existing planning tools and processes, adapt the KidsMatter Component Plans to suit your needs or use one of the many project planning tools available online.

Many schools have found that the KidsMatter planning process is an excellent opportunity to review their planning processes and documentation, and add useful elements.
### Immediate tasks
- Set up two-way communication with the school community
- Organise facilitator training and whole-school professional learning
- Gather evidence-based data
- Commence the planning process
- Report findings and proposed plans to the school community
- Plan for immediate action

### Ongoing tasks
- Establish and maintain internal and external supporters
- Maintain your team: dynamics and motivation
- Develop whole-school understandings of each component
- Think about the process of change
- Find out about implementation support meetings in your area

### Communication tips
**Formal communication** may occur through: newsletter articles; updates at staff meetings; parent gatherings at the school or at school assemblies; displays outside classrooms, in the staff room and front reception area or at school events such as open nights and sports carnivals. To start, you could screen the *Introduction to KidsMatter* DVD provided to your Action Team.

Create lots of opportunities to update your school community and seek feedback.

Consider how much of your communication is one-way from the school to families. Are there mechanisms for communication from families to the school?

**Less formal communication** can occur by being available to talk with parents at pick-up and drop-off times and at school events. This allows for two-way communication between parents and carers and school staff.

Remember to ask families how they wish to be contacted by the school.

Be sure to provide lots of opportunities for the school community to give and receive feedback.

---

### Stage 1 Immediate tasks

1. **Set up two-way communication with the school community**

Consider how you will communicate with your staff, students, families and the broader community throughout the KidsMatter Primary implementation processes.

Your school community will need opportunities to discuss the following questions:

**What**
- What is KidsMatter Primary all about?
- What does it mean for different school community members?
- What can school community members do to be part of the implementation process?

**Why**
- Why is a focus on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention so important at school?
- Why should school community members get involved?

**How**
- How will the school go about implementing KidsMatter Primary?
- How can school community members be involved?

You can use the *Introduction to KidsMatter Primary* DVD to inform this discussion.
Remember this is two-way communication. Think about how you will deliver information, as well as how you will offer opportunities for people to give feedback, ask questions and raise issues.

**Initial and ongoing communication is very important to successful implementation.** Including staff, students, families and the broader community from the start of the implementation process allows them to more fully understand, participate in and contribute to the development of KidsMatter Primary at your school. It will also ensure that any concerns are identified and addressed at an early stage.

**Mental health can sometimes be a sensitive topic and as such there are many different ways of talking about and understanding mental health in the community.** Take care to respect differences when communicating and planning for KidsMatter, even if a minority has different views. In school communities there may not be consensus among community members in the language they use to talk about mental health and wellbeing, the way mental health is conceptualised, or the ways in which families and community are most effectively engaged in school life. For example, families in your community may have different cultural or religious beliefs and practices relating to mental health and wellbeing, raising children and the role of schools and community agencies.

**Component 1 professional learning will help you to think about how to build a shared understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and build belonging and inclusion.**

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Discuss with your Action Team members the current attitudes and values commonly held in your school community and how these could be influenced in a positive way.**
- **Get to know your community.** What are the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of your community members? What services and agencies work in your community? Are there members of your community who can help share information?

- **Find out what helps people from a range of backgrounds to feel that they have a voice and a sense of belonging and connection to their school community.** Use this information to plan school events or even simple communications throughout the KidsMatter journey.

Remember to regularly brief your principal about your plans and ask school leaders to sign off on official communication.

**KidsMatter continually develops new resources to assist Action Teams. These are available online.**

**More ideas**

- **Use existing school events to promote KidsMatter in your school community, and call for comments and feedback on proposed goals and actions.**
- **Hold a series of special purpose meetings to explain the goals and activities of KidsMatter and ask parents to provide feedback.** Consider holding a series of parent events at a variety of strategic times to capture as many people in your school community as possible. Invite agency and service representatives, and external supporters so they are also in the loop.

**Useful tips:**

- **Provide childcare to allow parents to attend events.**
- **Hold some events away from school in a relaxing environment.**
- **Organise students to design and send an invitation to their parents for special events.**


2 Organise facilitator training and whole-school professional learning

During this stage you should identify potential facilitators to deliver training in each component. You will also plan for facilitator training and schedule a time to run component professional learning in your school for all school staff.

By the end of this stage ideally you will complete professional learning for Component 1, and have a plan in place for delivery of Components 2, 3 and 4.

Importance of professional learning

KidsMatter professional learning is an opportunity for the whole school community to gain a deeper understanding of each component and how each one impacts on children’s mental health and wellbeing. This provides a strong base from which schools can review current practices and develop effective strategies as part of planning for KidsMatter implementation.

At each professional learning session the Action Team can provide an update on their progress, revisit data gathered from surveys and review current practices. There are also opportunities to collect qualitative data through activities in the sessions. This data, captured from staff responses, is a rich source of ideas and information for the Action Team to use in component planning. It is very helpful to schedule a meeting shortly after each professional learning session to discuss the data collected and how to use it in component planning. The Action Team can review how the session was received and act on any issues requiring immediate attention.

We recommend that schools undertake component professional learning in sequential order, commencing with Component 1: Building a Positive School Community. This component sets the scene for KidsMatter Primary implementation and, when implemented well, leads to more effective implementation of all other components.

Selecting facilitators

Facilitators can be sourced from staff at your school or an external education, health or community agency. Facilitator training prepares your facilitators to deliver professional learning to your whole school staff. It is important that facilitators are clear about their role and have necessary skills and confidence to deliver professional learning to your school staff. Facilitator training will highlight information, ideas and concepts to assist the Action Team in developing whole-school understandings of each component and initial planning, even before whole-school professional learning is undertaken. If you select facilitators from outside your Action Team, it is useful to invite them to some meetings to ensure they are clear about their role, can ask questions and can contribute to planning.

Action Teams are encouraged to work in partnership with people who are experienced in parenting support and children’s mental health and wellbeing for Components 3 and 4. Talk to your state or territory project officer about links with professionals in your area.

Scheduling professional learning

Visit the KidsMatter website to check on upcoming training opportunities in your state or territory for your facilitators.

When planning the delivery of professional learning to your school community, choose times when each component of professional learning can be given sufficient attention during the school year.

You can read more about Professional learning for the whole school in Topic 6 on page 51 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.
3 Gather evidence-based data

Why gather data?
Gathering data at the beginning of KidsMatter Primary implementation allows your school to establish a baseline to measure improvements, identify areas in which it can build on what is already going well and focus energy on areas that require more attention. If your school community is to put time and effort into any initiative, it is important that energy is directed effectively to areas of priority.

Some valuable ways to encourage involvement and build trust within your school community include:
- asking people for their thoughts and feelings
- being clear that information from the school community will help to shape goals, actions and strategies
- demonstrating the use of information and ideas from the school community in Action Team planning and early actions, and communicating how information and ideas have been used to benefit the community.

Existing data
Your school will already store a wealth of useful data to aid KidsMatter implementation. KidsMatter strongly recommends that your Action Team uses data that may already exist in the school.

Quantitative data
Quantitative data is numerical data (measuring something by its quantity) and can include previous staff, parent/carer and student surveys; community demographics; staff and student retention rates; incident reports; absence records; sick bay data and parent attendance at school events.

Qualitative data
Qualitative data is observational or perception data (measuring something by its qualities) and can be gathered from staff, students and families in the school community in the form of feedback. For example, written comments in surveys or verbal feedback in focus groups or school meetings.

Using data to build your school vision
The ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ diagram on page 61 can be used to develop and record a shared school vision for wellbeing at your school and document existing mental health and wellbeing policies and practices. Once the Action Team has completed the diagram, we recommend taking this to a staff meeting so all school staff can add to this diagram.

Using this existing data, ask the following questions:
- What is already working well and how can we build on this?
- What areas require greater focus? How will we unlock all of this data and incorporate it into our planning?
- Are there current practices that are redundant and no longer useful?

You may be surprised at how much your school is already doing. Action Teams are in the privileged position of being able to see the big picture in a school and tie together many separate activities into the one initiative. This means that you will be able to see how the school can work most effectively and where best to focus your energy.
Consider also how you will gather and review new data:
- How regularly will you collect additional data or review data to track your progress?
- Who will take responsibility for doing this?
- How will you share your data with the school community? What considerations will there be for how to do this?
- How will you let people know how their data will be used to shape action at the school? What will you do about data that will not be used or ideas not taken on board? How will you manage expectations?

4 Commence the planning process

The KidsMatter planning process uses evidence-based research and data and ideas generated from the whole-school community to develop a plan of action and strategies for each KidsMatter Primary component.

Topic 4 on page 45 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook provides a step-by-step guide to the planning process.

It is important to note that Action Teams can begin to consider plans for all four components before professional learning for a component commences. It is useful for Action Teams to consider what the school community is already doing in each component and to build on this as you work through each component. Often, actions or strategies implemented within one component have benefits in the other components. For example, strengthening relationships with the school community within Component 1 means that work with families is already improving and can be further enhanced when it is time to focus on Component 3.

Remember that you should work at a manageable pace and not take on too much at once. As an Action Team, one of your important tasks is to prioritise your goals, actions and strategies, choosing those that are most achievable given time and resources. It is not recommended that schools undertake implementation of all four components at once.

KidsMatter Primary strongly recommends that your Action Team uses data that may already exist in the school.

Informing strategic planning

When qualitative and quantitative data is gathered from a variety of different sources representing the views of staff, students, families and the broader community, Action Teams have a rich source of evidence that can inform the strategic planning of KidsMatter components. Your Action Team may need support to interpret and report on data. Talk to your state or territory project officer for ideas and support.

KidsMatter Primary survey process

The KidsMatter Primary survey process is designed to capture information specific to the four components from school community members such as staff and parents. This information provides a snapshot of your school across these components and is used to guide your planning.

The purpose of using KidsMatter survey tools is to build an accurate picture of mental health and wellbeing across your school community. This data can then be used to analyse the effectiveness of current policies and practices, and guide change and improvement using the component planning tools.

Guidelines and instructions for accessing, administering and analysing data from the surveys, including issues to consider, can be found online.
Action Teams keep the big picture in mind

As your school community undertakes KidsMatter professional learning and implementation of components sequentially over an 18-36 month period, it is important that as an Action Team you keep the big picture of the KidsMatter framework in mind as you progress.

It is useful to regularly revisit the Guiding Principles and check that you are using a whole-school approach. It is particularly important to review your school policies and practices related to each component to ensure Target Areas and Goals are well supported.

It is also helpful to think ahead to upcoming components and consider how you will maintain work on previous components. Try to avoid compartmentalising components and working exclusively on one at a time. The components are designed to build on each other. Working on each component in isolation can limit the benefits of KidsMatter in your school community.

To make this task easier many schools assign key Action Team members to lead a particular component. Groups can be formed within the Action Team as well as from outside the group to work on particular components. This means that work can continue on one component as your school begins to work on the next.

It also can help to prepare for upcoming components by encouraging Action Team members to read about components ahead of time and think about how each links with and builds on other components.

Take the time to read through resources for each component and look at KidsMatter School Stories online for ideas for starting activities in each component. Attending school support meetings and talking with your state or territory project officer are great ways to gain ideas for beginning each component and thinking about the links between all four components.

For more ideas, read Topic 5 on page 48 of the Action Team Topics of this handbook.

5 Report findings and proposed plans to the school community

It is important to be aware that your survey data may contain sensitive information. You will need to discuss the storage and management of data with your principal. Ensure that you have alerted the principal to any sensitive material, and always seek approval prior to releasing data to the school community.

Staff: Report the results of the survey for each component and the suggested goals and strategies proposed by your Action Team. These can then be added to and refined as feedback from staff professional learning sessions occur.

Parents and students: Consider how you might exchange feedback with parents and students in relation to Component Plan goals and strategies. If you use the KidsMatter parent survey or other ways of gathering feedback and ideas from parents, consider how you will share the impact of their feedback with them, how goals, actions and strategies are drawn from survey data, and how you will manage expectations where some ideas may not be implemented.

Consider holding a question and answer style event for each year group over a series of weeks early in the year. Choose a range of times that suit your school community profile; for example, early in the morning (breakfast) or after school/early evening (BBQ).
6 Plan for immediate action

In the data you collect you may find issues or suggested actions that require urgent attention, are particularly important or relatively easy to implement.

Schools often find it useful to colour code their Component Plans. Urgent and/or important issues requiring immediate attention are marked in red. All other pending strategies are marked in black and on completion, in green. If the issue is something that needs addressing annually, it is marked in blue.

We recommend that you focus your attention on the most important issues first, and refer these items to school leadership for immediate action. An example might include a situation that is brought to your attention through survey feedback that could present a serious risk or cause harm to members of your school community. Another example might include clarifying referral policies and procedures if staff members are unsure of the details.

Early achievable actions

It is also very useful to include some early, easily achieved actions. Keep a list of simple, positive and readily achieved ideas sourced from within your Action Team, community consultations and data collection, informal feedback and school stories. Put some of these in place early. This is a great way to create a positive feeling in the school community about KidsMatter. It sends a positive message that you are listening and responding to feedback and ideas from your school community.

It is important to remember that activity in one component often has positive outcomes across all of the components. For example, schools will see the impact of KidsMatter on children currently experiencing mental health problems from action taken in Components 1, 2, and 3 well before concerted effort in Component 4.

Read about activities in Component 1, Target Areas and Goals that can lay strong foundations for later components in Topic 5 on page 48 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook.

Stage 1 Ongoing tasks

1 Establish and maintain internal and external supporters

KidsMatter Primary requires good quality internal and external supporters to thrive. Consider the supporters in your school community and the wider community, and work on building these relationships where needed.

Internal supporters

Internal supports are important because they help to drive the initiative from within the community. These include your leadership, staff, parents and students. You may be very surprised about the level of support and skills you will be able to draw from people in the school community. For example, some schools have asked parents if they have particular skills that they would be willing to use to assist the school and these are written into a volunteer register. This can be a great way for parents to offer assistance. Parents may be able to offer connections to health, education and community sector contacts where they work or more specific skills such as strategic planning; grant writing; organising events and fundraising; advocacy; and lobbying on behalf of the school.

External supporters

Access to external school supporters brings alternate perspectives and additional resources to the KidsMatter journey. External supporters can include staff from other schools participating in KidsMatter Primary as well as health, education and community professionals (including mental health professionals) who may work with your school or in your local area.

An external supporter may provide one off or occasional support when asked by the school. They may also participate in the whole-school implementation journey. Schools may also ask an external supporter to take on a ‘critical friend’ role. The term critical friend often means a trusted person who is invited to work with a school, who understands the school context, but who is detached from the day-to-day operations of the school.
At a local level, these partnerships:

- help improve communication and mutual expectations between schools and services
- promote and increase access to available health and community services
- enable services to reach out to schools to offer services schools may have trouble accessing (such as information sessions for parents, group programs for children, additional training and support for staff)
- assist schools to further develop appropriate and timely referral pathways for students experiencing mental health difficulties and their families
- provide direct service to children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families
- increase access for schools to health and community ‘external supporter’ expertise for implementing KidsMatter Primary.

These partnerships have the potential to benefit schools, families and health and community services. Services may, for instance, make themselves available to act as external supporters for schools; assist with professional development; provide information for school communities about services available; and/or provide services directly to the school community. In turn, schools can help destigmatise and demystify services available for families in the local area and help families access the most appropriate service for their needs.

Other sources of support for your KidsMatter Primary journey

We recommend that you expand your external supports beyond the education and health sectors. There may be businesses, for example, in your local community that are also keen to support local schools. They may be happy to donate time (eg assist strategic planning, use local business networks), funding or resources. This is great advertising for businesses and a rewarding way to give back to the community, and can have immense benefits for local schools. When considering business or private sector partnerships it is important to think about the fit between the business and the school values and goals of KidsMatter.
2 Maintain your team: dynamics and motivation
Consider how you will manage group dynamics and maintain motivation in your team. Information about team dynamics and group development can be found online.

It is useful to revisit Topic 3 on page 43 of the Action Team Topics section of this handbook to remind your Action Team about important features of successful Action Teams.

3 Develop whole-school understandings of each component
It is helpful for Action Teams to begin to develop a shared understanding of each component prior to whole-school professional learning and planning. Look at the resources available for each component on the KidsMatter website and decide how you will make this information available to your school community in an appropriate way when your school is ready to commence work in this area. Resources available include: video footage, professional learning, literature reviews, school stories, and staff and parent information leaflets. Professional learning templates, which provide some key questions to consider prior to and during each professional learning session, are available online.

KidsMatter School Stories, which can be found online, are a rich source of ideas for your Action Team and the rest of the school community. Hearing about what other schools are doing can build your understanding of each component and inspire new ideas.

Make sure that as part of developing an understanding of the four components, there is opportunity for your school community to ask questions, provide information and ideas and be involved in activities. To capture a broad range of people within your community, consider holding a range of small events at different times throughout school terms rather than one big event that may reach only some of your community.

4 Think about the process of change
“We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves: otherwise we harden.” Goethe

KidsMatter Primary provides a step-by-step implementation process to bring about positive change in your school community. Bringing about change in any setting requires a sound understanding of that setting and its culture. It is important to understand where the greatest leverage lies to bring about the change. Ask what will motivate people to get involved and facilitate beneficial changes. What’s in it for them?

When change is forced or ‘sold’ to people, it is unlikely to be successful or sustainable. Think about why your school community would want to make changes to achieve benefits for mental health and wellbeing. What are their concerns? Encourage people to voice their hopes and concerns, and take account of these in your planning.

You can also seek out external supporters with experience in managing change in systems and organisations to help at your school.

When people feel they are genuinely heard by those leading change, and that their concerns are taken into account, they are more likely to participate in and contribute to the changes, even if things are not done exactly as they would like.

You can read more about bringing about change in systems and organisations, including suggested processes for facilitating change online.
Find out about implementation support meetings in your area

Implementation support meetings are extremely useful for accessing continued professional learning and support for your Action Team, and sharing ideas and support with other schools. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on your progress and develop your Component Plans. For remote and regional areas where travel to a central event may be difficult, there are opportunities to join in discussions online. Talk to your state or territory project officer for further details.

Your state or territory project officer will facilitate these meetings and discussions around common issues so that Action Teams do not have to work in isolation. This can significantly reduce the time and energy spent on planning and gathering information for KidsMatter activities.

Check online for details of implementation support meetings. Go to your state or territory page for events in your area or contact your state or territory project officer. Information about upcoming events can also be found in the KidsMatter enewsletter.

Checkpoint: Are you ready for the next stage?

In this first six months of implementation your aim as an Action Team is to work on building and securing strong foundations for KidsMatter and beginning your implementation journey.

What might you see after six months?

- Component 1 professional learning undertaken by the whole school staff and planning commenced for this component
- increased efforts to build on relationships among staff, students and families
- good communication with the school community and increased knowledge about KidsMatter
- sound internal and external supports and new community members involved with KidsMatter in your school
- initial plans for KidsMatter activities underway based on information about school community needs
- clear goals and role clarity in the Action Team, which is also communicated to the school community
- plans for professional learning for staff in all components over the next six to 12 months
- plans for attendance at implementation support meetings in your area.

Remember to use the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook to check off tasks and make notes. This will help you keep a record of your progress.
Tip
Remember to ask your staff what might help. Sometimes in our eagerness to help, we can forget to ask this question. You can also source ideas from other schools attending implementation support meetings in your area and your internal and external supporters. Check online for details of upcoming meetings. You may also want to contact your state or territory project officer for assistance with accessing additional support and information about change in school settings.

Stage 2: Building on your foundations and facilitating whole-school change (6-12 months)

In the early stages of implementing KidsMatter, you are undertaking changes in the way your school approaches students’ mental health and wellbeing. This may be a relatively small change or it may be a significant change in the way your school community looks at students’ learning, behaviour and wellbeing.

Whole-school change, even for positive goals, can be disconcerting and may make people feel anxious and a little uncomfortable. This is normal but requires reassurance and good listening to ensure concerns are heard and taken into account. As an Action Team, it is important for you to think about how you might support your school community in making these changes and managing any anxieties.

The foundations you build in Stage 1 will assist your school community to understand and participate in this change. This is critical in order to maintain support from within your school community.

Build on the foundations you laid in Stage 1 by continuing to:

- seek out, develop and maintain sound relationships in your immediate school community and the wider community
- lead good quality planning that is responsive to feedback and data collected from your school community
- develop whole-school understandings of mental health and wellbeing and each of the four components through regular communication and good quality professional learning.
Stage 2 Immediate tasks

1  **Facilitator training and whole-school professional learning in Component 2**

During this stage, you will ideally have facilitators trained in Component 2 deliver Component 2 whole-school professional learning to the whole-school staff and commence planning for this component, building on your previous work in Component 1. You will also have a plan in place for delivery of Components 3 and 4 professional learning over the next 12 months, even if this may be subject to change.

Ensure that training has been organised for your facilitators in Component 2 (and in Component 3 and 4 close to the time when they will facilitate it for whole-school staff) and that they are clear about their role. If you have any questions or are having any difficulties in this area, your state or territory project officer will be happy to assist.

Remember, if you have facilitators who are not regular members of your Action Team, invite them to planning sessions for the component for which they will take responsibility.

As you plan the professional learning, consider how you would like to deliver these next components.

Ask your Action Team for feedback on the delivery of Component 1. Also remember to invite your staff to complete the Professional Learning Feedback form online. A collated report is available to your Action Team on request.

You might include the following questions:

- How well did the delivery of the session work? Should alternatives be considered? For example, did you break it up into sections or deliver the four hours together? Are regular staff meeting times convenient for the professional learning?
- Was there enough time for discussion? Do you need to schedule in more time to allow for further exploration of issues?
- Did you follow up on issues and ideas raised during the professional learning?
- Do you have ideas for improving this process for Component 2?

**Tip**

Schools often find it useful to schedule time at each staff meeting to discuss issues and ideas raised during the professional learning session. This allows further time for discussion of particular issues and reflection over time, rather than trying to discuss everything in depth during the professional learning.
After delivering component training, consider placing the presentation and video footage on your school staff communication system so that all staff can access it and revisit the information in their own time.

We recommend that KidsMatter Component Plans form the mental health and wellbeing arm of the school’s strategic plan.

Working collaboratively with your school community to build on component planning

Regular communication greatly increases the likelihood of successful implementation and support of your school community. It will also enable people to contribute ideas and information and to express concerns during the planning process.

Consider how you will communicate with people about proposed plans and how they can provide feedback.

Feeding qualitative data into Component Plans

You will have a wealth of qualitative data from existing information, surveys and KidsMatter professional learning activities.

Consider as a group how you will manage and store this information so it can be used effectively as needed. You don’t have to act on every suggestion and idea immediately but keeping a log of all contributions, data and feedback allows you to revisit this information as required.

As part of the planning process, you will assess ideas for feasibility before putting in place plans for the next steps. This way you will go ahead with actions that are likely to succeed and bring about benefit to the school community.
Keeping the big picture in mind
Continue to regularly revisit the KidsMatter framework to ensure you are covering all elements.
Remember to update your current policies and practices in each of the four components on the ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ diagram on page 61 in the Tools section of this handbook. Consider how your current work will support work on later components and how you will maintain your current strategies and activity when you commence work on a new component.

Attending school support meetings and talking to your state or territory project officer can help you manage this.

Actions and strategies for change
Your actions and strategies don’t have to be big to be successful. Small, consistent, sustainable changes that are responsive to your school community’s needs are just as desirable as big actions and can lead to significant achievements over time.

Planning a big event that requires a great deal of organisation is something that you might do only once every year or two as substantial time to plan and organise is required. These types of events can be fun ways to promote causes, raise awareness and sometimes funds, but do not always lead to lasting change.

Smaller actions like setting up a parents’ room or area filled with information about child development is something that most schools can achieve relatively easily and can be built upon over time. This type of action can have more lasting effects. It sends a message to families that they are valued and an important part of school life. Providing information for families helps to build their confidence in seeking help, which has important benefits for students and their mental health.

Use the component planning process in Action Team meetings to help prioritise suggested ideas and actions gathered in data. Keep a running list and choose to work on a couple of actions at a time.

How will we continue to gather feedback from the school community to include in plans?
Promote the KidsMatter components to your school community and ask for suggestions and ideas on a regular basis.
Take opportunities at existing school events, at special KidsMatter events or through regular communication channels such as school newsletters, communication books and your school website to gather ideas, feedback and information from your school community.

You could try:
• a drop box for KidsMatter ideas and suggestions
• a more formal focus group with staff, students, parents and carers or local service providers
• a fortnightly prize for the most innovative idea
• a dedicated email account to encourage feedback
• a regular update at staff meetings with time for questions, comments and ideas.

Your actions and strategies don’t have to be big to be successful.
Stage 2 Ongoing tasks

1 Communicate with the school community
Continue to review school functions, policies and practices to ensure that they support good relationships, communication and collaboration. This work helps to create a safe, supportive environment that builds protective factors for students’ mental health and wellbeing and provides a strong base for implementing Components 2, 3 and 4. Each of these components works best when strong relationships thrive among school staff, parents and carers, students and local agencies and services.

2 Review internal and external supporters
We recommend that you continue to build a network of supporters in the school community and regularly review it. You may benefit from different supporters at different stages so discuss this at your meetings.

Checkpoint: Signs of success
In the first six to 12 months you might see:
• positive feedback from staff about KidsMatter Primary
• increases in parent interest and uptake of resources
• delivery of Component 1 and 2 professional learning for staff and plans to deliver Components 3 and 4
• some KidsMatter events
• Component 1 plan developed, implemented and possibly reviewed and new goals set
• Component 2 plan developed and implementation begun
• selection and commencement of social and emotional learning programs in classrooms
• greater engagement with local agency and service representatives
• increase in positive discussion and attitudes about mental health
• increase in families seeking advice and help from school staff and accessing outside agencies
• increase in attendance at school events
• consultation with families, students and the whole school community
• delegation of tasks across the school community
• links made with other KidsMatter schools — eg through attendance at implementation support meetings.

Remember to use the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook to check off tasks and make notes. This will help you keep a record of your progress.

Remember that KidsMatter Primary does not operate on a fixed timeline. These are suggestions only for results you may see. Don’t worry if you are not seeing these results yet — they can be incorporated into your future planning.
Stage 3: Action (12-24 months)

During this stage you will have the chance to see your professional learning, data collection and planning pay off. Some actions and outcomes will occur relatively quickly and may already be occurring; others will take more time to implement and produce benefits.

Keeping the big picture in mind

Continue to regularly revisit the KidsMatter framework to ensure you are covering all elements. Remember to update your current policies and practices in each of the four components. You might find the ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ diagram on page 61 in the Tools section of this handbook useful for this purpose. Consider how your current work will support work on later components and how you will maintain your current strategies and activity when you commence work on a new component.

Attending school support meetings and talking to your state or territory project officer can help you manage this.
# Action Team tasks in Stage 3

## Immediate tasks
- Complete facilitator training and plan whole-school professional learning for remaining components
- Build on what’s working in each component
- Feed qualitative data from professional learning activities into plans
- Plan opportunities to gather ideas and feedback from your school community

## 1 Complete facilitator training and plan whole-school professional learning for remaining components

Plan for completion of Components 3 and 4 professional learning during this stage. This way, staff have the opportunity to build on their knowledge and understanding of students’ mental health, and do not lose the important connections between the components.

## 2 Build on what’s working in each component

During this stage, it is useful to reflect on what you have achieved so far, and particularly what is working well. Build on this success wherever possible in your component planning. Starting new activities from scratch, while worthwhile, can take a long time and will use an immense amount of energy. Identifying and building on ideas and activities that have already been successful is just as significant.

Try to work out what made an idea or activity work so well and develop approaches to use these success factors in other ways. Most importantly, if it works, keep doing it. If it doesn’t, stop and regroup.

## 3 Feed qualitative data from professional learning activities into plans

Continue to use the opportunities within the component professional learning to capture ideas and strategies for your component planning. Keep a log of these to draw on when you are ready to undertake further actions. You can discuss these at your Action Team meetings.

## 4 Plan opportunities to gather ideas and feedback from your school community

Continue to plan opportunities for your school community to contribute ideas and provide feedback so that your Component Plans continue to reflect the needs of your school community.

---

As you build on what is working, prioritise new actions and review progress of planned actions and strategies.
If it works, keep doing it. If it doesn’t, stop and regroup.

**Checkpoint: Signs of success**

Within 12-24 months of KidsMatter implementation you would hope to see:

- real change in approaches to mental health and wellbeing such as changes in policies and practices
- greater student, staff and family engagement
- changes in staff language and practices that promote wellbeing
- positive staff and parent feedback on the impact of KidsMatter
- strong involvement in the school from community agencies or cultural groups
- social and emotional learning happening in all classrooms and practised and reinforced outside the classroom
- regular contact with other KidsMatter schools to share ideas and strategies
- professional learning undertaken in all four components or a firm plan in place for completion
- planning across all four components commenced or a firm plan in place for commencement of planning and implementation
- reviewing and adding to Component 1 and 2 plans as your implementation continues – looking at what worked well, what needs more focus or a different approach and what goals to set next.

**Remember to use the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook to check off tasks and make notes. This will help you keep a record of your progress.**
Stage 4: Review and planning for continuous improvement and sustainability (24-36 months and beyond)

Here, it’s time to consolidate your work across all four components. It is a time to reflect, review and start to renew the school’s commitment to KidsMatter and the opportunity to go more deeply into challenging practices and school culture.
**Action Team tasks in Stage 4**

**Immediate tasks**
- Keeping the energy alive
- Revisit vision, needs and readiness
- Celebrate what you have achieved
- Review completed components and look ahead to goals and actions for final components

1. **Keeping the energy alive**
   We recommend that you plan small, regular KidsMatter events that everyone enjoys and that are not a huge burden to organise.
   
   You could try:
   - shared meals
   - movie nights
   - student or staff performances
   - a student expo
   - hosting a fun, informative speaker
   - games days
   - family picnics
   - community days.

   **Trying something different**
   Allow yourselves to have fun and try something different to your usual school events. Using art, drama, music and dance can be a very powerful way to promote issues. For example, some schools have used student artwork to promote the positive messages about mental health and wellbeing in their school community.

   Check out our School Stories online to learn about how other schools have kept KidsMatter thriving in their school.

   **Managing staff and community turnover**
   Changes in school staff are a reality and of course families join and leave the school community as their children progress through school, or families move away. The services in the local community also experience staff changes and services can open and close. It is important to plan for these changes so that your KidsMatter journey can continue and adapt. It is critical to implement ways to record, promote and share the work your school is doing and your achievements. This is one of the main reasons why KidsMatter recommends an Action Team leads KidsMatter in your school rather than just one or two people.

   Think about how you will engage new staff and families in KidsMatter. Revisit your strategies from earlier stages as you may find that they can be used regularly.

   **Refreshing professional learning**
   You might also think about refreshing your staff professional learning, particularly if a number of staff have left or you feel momentum is slowing. Action Team members who have received facilitator training can hold this training for new staff. Consider sharing this role with other KidsMatter schools in your local network or district that may also have new staff. The professional learning resources are also available online.

   Extending professional learning into areas of specific need is also an option. Consider the professional learning that is available in your local area. Some of the local health and community services may offer relevant events or may be able to deliver tailored professional learning for your school. Your state or territory project officer can also assist you with information about opportunities for further learning.
Energy ebbs and flows
At the start of any initiative, school communities are often motivated by the promise of great change and the excitement of putting innovative ideas in place. As in all areas of school life, your energy can ebb and flow and other priorities will naturally compete with your KidsMatter focus. The KidsMatter implementation processes are designed for schools to work through at their own pace and to support all positive actions related to optimising student wellbeing. This may mean periods of maintenance and rest during which time other things take your time and energy.

Students’ development and wellbeing is the essential focus of KidsMatter Primary. It should govern all actions that your school takes as it is part of your school’s core business.

Each and every action you take to strengthen protective factors for good mental health and wellbeing and lessen the impact of risk factors, however small, improves outcomes for your students’ mental health and wellbeing.

Help from external supporters
You may be able to access expert advice on renewing energy and enthusiasm in your school community. Think about supporters who may work in public relations, media, organisational change and psychology and what they may be able to offer your school community.

2 Revisit vision, needs and readiness
Circumstances in schools change over time and it is important that your Action Team revisits the vision for KidsMatter in your school. It is important to consider any new school data, identify any changes in school community needs, and review your school community’s readiness to develop the initiative each year. In this way, your planning will continue to reflect the needs of your school community.

Focusing your first Action Team meetings for the year on vision and readiness will set you up for a successful year.

3 Celebrate what you have achieved
Sometimes we forget to reflect on how far we have come and what we have achieved, especially when we are busy.

Remember to celebrate your successes as it keeps energy and enthusiasm alive in the school community. As part of celebrations, it is important to acknowledge, thank and reward key people for the work they have contributed.

Take time to enjoy what you have achieved, reward those involved and promote your work.

4 Review completed components and look ahead to goals and actions for final components
At the end of this stage you will have completed one cycle of KidsMatter. Well done! Take the time to look back over what you have done in this last part of your first cycle. Reflect on what has worked well, what you have learned and what you still hope to achieve.

Promoting what you have achieved is good for school business. Use your successes to showcase what your school offers to prospective students and their families.
Checkpoint: Signs of success

In the 24–36 month period (and beyond) you may notice:

- staff and students enjoy coming to school more often
- increased confidence of staff in working with children with mental health difficulties
- absenteeism has reduced
- social and emotional competency in students is increasing
- families have created their own space to meet in the school
- children with mental health difficulties receiving help and referral pathways to support
- greater involvement of students and families in a range of activities across the school.

Remember to use the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook to check off tasks and make notes. This will help you keep a record of your progress.
Re-establishment and review (after first and subsequent cycles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Continue strategies for motivating and sustaining change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ KidsMatter Primary and strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Review internal and external supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Look for ways to dig deeper: what can Action Teams do to further explore each component?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Support other schools: how can this support new as well as more experienced schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Recognition as a KidsMatter school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Continue strategies for motivating and sustaining change**
   
   At this point it is helpful to review the work undertaken in earlier stages on planning for change and put in place any useful strategies.
   
   It is important to acknowledge that powerful messages can be communicated in many ways. Think creatively and use innovative and fun ideas combined with the values and beliefs that guide your work in student mental health and wellbeing.
   
   Remember that your school community changes every year. It is vital that you continue to gather evidence within your school to reflect the changes. Continue to use school data and gather specific evidence on mental health and wellbeing using the KidsMatter survey tools as well as other successful methods for gathering feedback.
   
   Remember to reflect on your progress using the ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ diagram on page 61. Review your school vision statement for wellbeing and existing school practices. It is also useful to review the KidsMatter Primary Guiding Principles to ensure practices and processes reflect these principles.

2. **KidsMatter Primary and strategic planning**
   
   This is a good time to review how well the leadership team has built this KidsMatter cycle into your school’s strategic planning process. Talk to your leadership team about how this will occur in the future.

   Consider presenting the outcomes of your first cycle of KidsMatter to the school board, regional education director, Member of Parliament or community health service representative. They may become great supporters in the next cycle of KidsMatter.

3. **Review internal and external supporters**
   
   As part of the end of a cycle and to prepare for a new phase, it is important to review your Action Team membership and internal and external supporters, and reflect on whether they have fulfilled your school community needs.
   
   You might ask:
   
   • Do you need to supplement existing supporters with new supporters with different skill sets?
   • Have valued supporters become unavailable and are new supporters required?
   • Has leadership support continued or does the KidsMatter Statement of Commitment need revising?
4 Look for ways to dig deeper: what can Action Teams do to further explore each component?

One of the most successful ways in which a school can ‘dig deeper’ is to talk to other schools. Both new and established KidsMatter schools have a lot to offer each other about working on the components in greater depth.

Spend time on the KidsMatter website looking at information for Action Teams and resources for each component. This information will be regularly updated with links and resources.

KidsMatter provides a range of resources that are updated regularly. School Stories highlight particularly successful ways in which schools have implemented KidsMatter.

5 Support other schools: how can this assist new as well as more experienced schools?

It is very rewarding for some established KidsMatter schools to provide support to other KidsMatter schools. This adds depth to their KidsMatter experience and helps them to make a contribution back to the education community.

This kind of support provides a wealth of information, inspiration and encouragement for new KidsMatter schools.

You can read more about how this experience benefited Hannan’s Primary School in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia online.

6 Recognition as a KidsMatter school

Completing the first cycle of KidsMatter is a significant milestone. We strongly encourage schools to take time to review and celebrate their achievements with their wider school community. For ideas, speak to KidsMatter staff in your state or territory.

Checkpoint: Signs of success

At this stage you should notice:

- increased Action Team capacity
- new members have attended Getting Started and Overview sessions
- Introduction to KidsMatter DVD provided to new community members along with Action Team presentation on the school’s KidsMatter journey
- school data continues to be collected to identify needs and inform planning
- school principal has agreed to ongoing support for KidsMatter as the wellbeing arm of the school’s strategic plan
- new families, staff and students know what KidsMatter is, what has been achieved and how they can become involved
- time allocated to celebrate and promote significant achievements to the broader community
- regular contact with other KidsMatter schools with the possibility of providing support to new schools
- KidsMatter website has been accessed regularly for ideas and information
- contact made with state or territory project officer
- presentation made to the school board
- new plans for action in each of the component areas is underway.

Your final task

You will find the comprehensive Action Team Implementation Checklist to use as a final review of this cycle of KidsMatter in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook.

To identify any remaining tasks, work through this checklist in your meetings towards the end of your KidsMatter cycle.

Once you have checked off all items, you have completed the cycle.

Congratulations! Your school community is very lucky to have such committed school community members. Best wishes for continued success in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of your students.
**Action Team Topics**

This section consists of seven topics that will guide the work of the Action Team

- Topic 1: Building foundations and vision of KidsMatter in your school
- Topic 2: Whole-school approach
- Topic 3: How to create a successful Action Team
- Topic 4: The planning process
- Topic 5: Keeping the big picture in mind in Component 1
- Topic 6: Professional learning for the whole school
- Topic 7: External supporters

**Topic 1: Building foundations and vision of KidsMatter in your school**

Implementing KidsMatter Primary is a flexible journey that enables schools to promote students’ mental health and wellbeing through a process that they can engage with at their own pace. School communities are dynamic as new staff, students and families move through. KidsMatter works in a cyclical way that allows the school to continually improve. You can expect that it will take between 18 months and three years to complete the first KidsMatter cycle – that is, to implement actions under each of the four components of KidsMatter.

During this time, your school community should discuss the KidsMatter Guiding Principles, which can be found on the KidsMatter framework diagram. In addition, your school will work on a range of Target Areas highlighted in the professional learning sessions that help build, maintain and sustain a positive community that promotes mental health and wellbeing through careful planning and action. A positive community is one that is characterised by respectful relationships and a sense of belonging and inclusion. There are proven mental health, wellbeing and educational benefits of an inclusive community.

Before this journey begins, schools need to build a shared vision of mental health and wellbeing, with the active support of the principal, staff and parents. The school then works through the four KidsMatter components in a planned, strategic way, involving the whole school community.

The Action Team has an important role in this vision building, and as such, some of your work will begin before the rest of the school even gets started with more formal KidsMatter activities.
Building a vision involves:

- finding ways to build a shared school vision of mental health and wellbeing
- working with staff and the wider school community to understand what it means for you to be involved in KidsMatter Primary, using the Guiding Principles to support this process
- developing a shared understanding and common language around mental health and wellbeing. Many schools start by highlighting the impact schools can have on students’ mental health and wellbeing. Consider using the *Introduction to KidsMatter DVD, Briefing Pack and Essential Reading* as a start
- motivating other staff members by delivering the message that everyone in the school community can make a difference in promoting student mental health and addressing mental health concerns
- tapping into values and beliefs about what is important in relation to mental health and wellbeing in your school community
- helping staff feel valued by listening to and including them. You could start by building positive relationships and addressing their needs and concerns early in the process

- being prepared to challenge attitudes and practices through promoting KidsMatter information and resources on supporting children’s mental health. Consider the mental health information sheets for staff, parents and carers. For rich debate, start to use the literature reviews for each component
- keeping up the momentum. Be innovative with how you keep all school staff and the wider school community up to date with the progression of KidsMatter Primary
- guiding and supporting the school staff to implement the initiative. Your key tip – you'll need this handbook! Think about how members of the Action Team can be champions of different aspects of implementation
- acknowledging that everyone’s voices are heard can be more difficult than it seems. Be mindful of those who aren’t being heard and be especially innovative in reaching out to them.

Access Action Team resources as well as KidsMatter School Stories online. Remember that the implementation support meetings and your state or territory project officers are also good resources for discussing innovative ideas.
Topic 2: Whole-school approach

KidsMatter highlights four main features of a whole-school approach:

- planning for whole-school change
- professional learning, shared understanding and focus for all school staff
- partnerships with parents and carers, health and community agencies
- action within and beyond the classroom.

These features are built into the KidsMatter framework, implementation process and component Target Areas. KidsMatter Guiding Principles provides a focus for developing school practice. These principles also align with the evidence-based success factors from the World Health Organization Health Promoting Schools framework.

The KidsMatter model

Essential Reading, found at the back of this handbook, provides you with the background to KidsMatter. You’ll find a number of models from Australia and overseas that contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of KidsMatter.

The KidsMatter framework brings together the:

- beliefs that underpin KidsMatter (the Guiding Principles)
- areas in which schools can most effectively concentrate their learning, planning and action (the four components)
- essential elements for working together as a school community (the whole-school approach).

Building upon existing good practice

One way to promote the benefits of implementing KidsMatter is to document, acknowledge and promote the good mental health and wellbeing work you are already doing in your school and identify opportunities to continually refine and improve. KidsMatter provides the tools to do this.

Use the diagram on page 61 to audit the types of activities, policies and procedures in your school that support each KidsMatter component. This tool can be used to identify what your school is currently doing to promote mental health and wellbeing, noting how it may relate to your school’s vision. This is a useful way to start involving all staff members in thinking about how KidsMatter Primary fits within your school context. Think also about how you could gain input from other school community members (students, families etc).

Planning for whole-school change

The Action Team Handbook will help you plan for and engage the whole school community in your KidsMatter journey.

Sharing responsibilities on the Action Team

Driving a mental health initiative will bring extra responsibilities for Action Team members. Take time to discuss and share these responsibilities across the Action Team and think about how other members of the school community will be involved. If there is too much work, consider getting more people involved, or slow down or reduce the number of tasks. Remember this is a mental health and wellbeing initiative – it is not meant to increase stress as a result of additional work.

Role clarity and boundaries

The Action Team will be addressing issues of great sensitivity and confidentiality.
You will have access to data from across the school community and, accordingly, confidentiality will be required.

It is critical that the principal is kept informed of all sensitive data and is advised of any strategies you develop. Action Team members may also become known within the school community as contact people for issues relating to mental health and wellbeing. It’s important that you feel comfortable with your new role and confident that you know what to do if you’re asked a question about KidsMatter.

Remember this does not mean you need to know all of the answers or that you are available around the clock to help people all of the time. Put some boundaries around your role. This is just as important for parent and carer representatives. Remember that people are often pleased to know that you will get back to them at a certain time if you need to chat to your Action Team colleagues first.

**Challenge your thinking**

- What would you do as an Action Team member if you felt pressured to respond in a way that is outside of your usual role within the school?

**Professional learning, shared understanding and focus for all school staff**

KidsMatter recognises that the involvement of school staff is critical to a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. This is why KidsMatter provides professional learning for all school staff in each of the KidsMatter components. This professional learning not only provides information about children’s mental health, it offers protected time for school staff to safely share ideas, discuss concerns and develop a shared vision or understanding that can then flow through to all aspects of school life. The KidsMatter component planning process also includes specific steps for engaging all staff in the ongoing implementation of KidsMatter.
Engaging and collaborating

To implement a new initiative in schools in a sustainable way, school leaders need to:

- engage with and involve the whole school community
- ensure that action is taken at an individual as well as organisational level.

KidsMatter is no different from any other new initiative. Research shows that the most effective wellbeing interventions in schools occur when all school community members – teachers and other school staff, students, parents and carers, and health and community agencies – are consulted and collaborative partnerships are developed. This is particularly the case in children’s mental health because the family and community, as well as the school, have a significant influence on children’s wellbeing.

Engaging the whole school: action within and beyond the classroom

The KidsMatter component Target Areas ask schools to consider actions that can be implemented across multiple levels. These include:

- in the classroom
- via daily interactions between staff, students and parents and carers
- in school policies and procedures
- in the school grounds and physical environments
- through communication mechanisms
- through relationships with health and community services.

In this way, the whole school community is engaged in supporting student mental health and wellbeing and the impacts can be felt within and beyond the classroom.
Feedback has shown that commitment from leadership is a key success factor in implementing and sustaining KidsMatter Primary in schools.

**Topic 3: How to create a successful Action Team**

Research demonstrates that there are a number of specific elements that help Action Team members work together more effectively. These are:

- Well functioning groups tend to be **cohesive**. They come together in the pursuit of common goals and objectives.
- They have a common and **shared vision** that unites them as a team and provides a sense of belonging. When all members are involved in creating this vision, they are more committed and dedicated to the process.
- Members **actively contribute** to the team. This means everyone has their say. As the team is representative of the school community, it's important to listen to everyone.
- Member **concerns** are identified early and strategies are adjusted to address those concerns.
- **Strong leadership** is key to the success of a team in helping to manage the process and establish consensus. The leader helps to bring out and utilise the strengths of each team member. They also help to empower a team to work through issues and make decisions.

Remember, it takes time for a group to develop and work effectively. Your Action Team may move through various stages and face different challenges as you work towards forming a cohesive, well-functioning group.

KidsMatter will be a major new initiative within your school. Strong leadership from the Action Team is required to make KidsMatter work at your school. Action Teams will really benefit from having a member of the school leadership as part of the team if possible.

**What has helped other Action Teams?**

In order to create a well-functioning, effective Action Team it’s helpful to have some simple procedures in place. Your Action Team may consider:

**Membership stability**

A high level of staff turnover is often an issue within schools. This can cause Action Team membership instability, and concerns about the continuing ability of the Action Team to achieve its goals. Try to plan ahead for this eventuality. For example, you could invite ‘relief’ team members to attend Action Team training, attend an Action Team meeting or become involved in a small way. This is particularly important when staff changes are likely or imminent.

**Representative membership**

It is important to think about how the membership of your Action Team represents the different groups within your school. The membership is representative when it includes:

- the principal or deputy
- parents or carers from the very beginning
- a cross-section of people from the school community
- stand-in or proxy members.

**Meetings**

When your Action Team plans meetings it is important to consider:

- scheduling regular times to meet
- developing a detailed agenda for each meeting to keep track of timelines, plans, goals and achievements
- taking minutes and checking actions at the start of each meeting
- ensuring release time from teaching duties for meetings
- setting planned review meetings
- using a data projector so everyone can view the Component Plans
- sharing food while meeting or providing food (especially where staff give up their own time).
Planning considerations
It is useful to think about the following planning considerations for Action Team members:

- making time to complete tasks
- matching allocated tasks to individual skill sets
- working collaboratively with school staff, parents and carers and the wider community
- encouraging all members to contribute actively to the group
- taking time to get to know each other’s strengths and skills
- being committed and enthusiastic
- taking small steps – whole-school change takes time
- working hard to get all staff on board – whole-school collaboration is vital for success
- planning collaboratively – teachers modifying strategies for their own classes.

Planning for sustainability
Action Team members can plan for the future by:

- recognising that Action Team membership will not remain static
- actively monitoring and preparing for Action Team membership changes to ensure continuity of the implementation process
- enlisting external supporters to join the Action Team who can help with sustainability
- working on strategies to maintain focus on KidsMatter in the school. For example, providing regular feedback at staff meetings.

To support successful implementation of KidsMatter Primary by your Action Team, go to the Action Team Implementation Checklist in the Tools section on page 57 of this handbook.

Understanding team dynamics and group development
Your Action Team consists of a diverse group of people brought together to oversee the implementation of KidsMatter Primary. It is useful to understand how group dynamics operate on a complex task over a significant time period. There will be periods of high and low energy, of productive work and conflict. Understanding the nature of teams or groups can help with managing difficult patches and making the most of productive times.

Challenge your thinking
- Who is best placed to lead your Action Team?
- What barriers can you see that may affect your group working well together? How might you plan for this?
- What strengths does your team have that will help you to work well together?
- What would you do if your group, or a member of the group, lost interest in the initiative?
- Think of a team you have been part of that has worked well together. What helped? What made it effective? How can you use this information to support the Action Team?
- How will you deal with conflict if it arises?
Topic 4: The planning process

The planning process is comprehensive and designed to attend to implementation issues that may arise, including addressing any concerns or issues that teachers and school staff may have. The process includes using evidence from survey results, consultation with parents, carers, staff and students, informal feedback and, later, ideas generated during the component professional learning sessions.

Developing a plan

Once your summary statements are made in your School Mental Health Map you will have a base from which to set goals and plan actions. Think about the summary statements your school would like to make. What would you like to be able to say? These ideas form the basis of your goals and from here you will plan actions towards achieving them.

Action Teams develop a plan of action and strategies for each component using the KidsMatter Primary planning process. The proposed goals, including strategies, can be refined further after feedback from the school community.

You will find four blank Component Plans in the Tools section of this handbook and completed sample Component Plans online that can assist you to develop your school’s Component Plan. Electronic copies of all Tools are available online.

Step 1: Define the issues

A summary statement of your school’s current situation for each KidsMatter Primary goal has already been created in the Staff Survey collation tool.

Write the summary statement for each goal on the Component Plan.

List additional issues identified by the school community. Include any supporting data, ensuring the identified needs and views of the school community are included.

Step 2: Set goals

Set school-specific goals against each KidsMatter Target Area, based on the summary statements you have developed for your school to work on.

Make the goals clear and simple (for example, staff will increase parent contact by 25 per cent by the end of term).

Write the goal next to each summary statement on the Component Plan.

Consider whether your goals support your school’s vision for mental health.

Check that the goals are consistent with the KidsMatter Guiding Principles.

Remember to consult with the school community when formulating your goals.

Set SMART goals that are:

Specific: Goals should be well-defined and clear.

Measurable: How will you know when the goal is achieved? What will you see? What will be different?

Achievable: The goals should be realistic and take into account the current situation.

Relevant: The goals should meet the needs of the school.

Time specific: Be clear about when the goals will be achieved.

Useful tip

Action Teams should be sensitive to the issues identified and decide if it is in the best interests of the school to share some specific concerns with the broader community.

Always check with your school principal if in doubt. Privacy and confidentiality procedures need to be in place to respect all members of the school community.
Step 3: Identify any concerns

List any concerns or barriers members of the Action Team or broader community identify in achieving school-specific goals. It is important to consult with members of your school community and listen to their concerns.

You can identify concerns using the KidsMatter Primary Staff Survey collation tool, including:

- teacher and school staff attitude or belief survey questions for the component
- significant comments or concerns from individual staff.

List the concerns next to each school-specific goal on the Component Plan.

Step 4: Options and strategies

Develop a broad range of options or strategies to address concerns and achieve goals.

Use a brainstorming process with your school community to generate as many ideas as possible for each KidsMatter Primary goal. School Stories and ideas generated at the Facilitating Components 1, 2, 3 and 4 sessions will assist with this process.

Suspend judgement of each idea until the next step, as this may interfere with the creative process.

This step is best done using a range of strategies to gather ideas – a whiteboard or butcher’s paper near the school office, student focus groups, or tear-off sheets in the school newsletter. Do not decide which strategies to include on your Component Plan until the next step.

We recommend that the whole school community is involved in the brainstorming process. Consider delegating Action Team members responsibility for collecting feedback from different members of the school community such as staff, parents and carers, and students.

At the end of this process you should have a long list of possible options or strategies to address the concerns and achieve school-specific goals for each KidsMatter Primary goal.

Useful tip

The initial burst of ideas during brainstorming will usually generate options that would have been considered anyway. It is important to move beyond this point and be creative.

You may feel overwhelmed by the ideas and suggestions that are gathered and wonder how you will ever turn them into viable actions and strategies. This will be taken care of, to some extent, by making priorities.

Prioritise actions and strategies

Your task as an Action Team is to prioritise actions and strategies and to work on only as many ideas as is manageable. Keep a record of all ideas so that you can draw on these over time. The next step provides a process for deciding which strategies are most feasible and will help your decision making.

Step 5: Feasibility

Evaluate the feasibility of each option or strategy.

You are now ready to decide on the most feasible strategies for addressing each KidsMatter goal. When evaluating the feasibility of each option, consider the following questions:

- How well does your option meet your school-specific goal?
- What will be the cost of this option? eg time, money, staffing.
- Do we have the resources (time, money, staffing) to achieve this option?
- What would be the outcome of this option?
- Does this option reflect a whole-school approach?
- Does this option reflect our school’s values, vision and mission, and broader goals?

Work down your list of options or strategies and write down the feasibility issues for each option. Evaluate the feasibility of each option (according to the issues) by assigning a rating out of 3:

1 = not feasible
2 = somewhat feasible
3 = most feasible.
Step 7: Implement and review

Each Component Plan is developed, implemented and reviewed in turn.

Begin delivering the actions described in your plan, according to the agreed timeframe.

Set regular Action Team review meetings where you can revisit the KidsMatter Primary mental health and wellbeing Component Plans, and make adjustments if needed.

During the review, check that you are still working towards the agreed goals and making progress.

Adjust the Component Plans following the review and continue to implement.

Implementing strategies

Efforts in Component 1 can continue while the schools turn its focus to Component 2, and so on. Strategies implemented under each of the components can be undertaken simultaneously and address more than one component.

Once all four Component Plans are developed, the individual Component Plans can be joined together to form a KidsMatter Primary mental health and wellbeing plan. School leadership can incorporate this as the mental health and wellbeing arm of the school’s strategic plan as part of the school’s core business.

The information you collect for Component Plans will also form the basis of the processes used to recognise your school as a KidsMatter School when you complete the necessary steps.

Highlight the most feasible options for each KidsMatter goal.

Do not include this information in the Component Plan – the best options will be finalised and put in the plan in the next step.

Step 6: Formalise your Component Plan

The Component Plan only provides a general guide for implementation of each action. For more detailed planning, ask the staff members responsible for each particular action to prepare more comprehensive plans and timelines, consulting as required with the broader school community and principal.

Over time, the Component Plan should be considered in relation to actions from the other components to ensure that one staff member or group is not burdened with too many tasks. It is important to check that work for Action Team members is manageable and dispersed across the school year. In planning actions, ensure that resources are not overused and that dates for events do not clash.

To allow for any necessary adjustments, plan for a review of the Component Plan after the beginning of the implementation. This will allow the progress of the plan to be monitored and reviewed.

Based on your feasibility ratings, choose the most appropriate actions to address each KidsMatter Primary goal.

Agreed actions

Add your agreed actions to the Component Plan.

For each agreed action of the Component Plan, define:

- resources required – for example, professional learning programs, materials
- person responsible
- timeframes – start and completion dates
- review dates – when you will revisit and review your plan and make adjustments if needed
- consultation on the draft Component Plan prior to finalisation and formal adoption. It is essential to include the school principal in this consultation, and encourage the input of the school community.
Services mapping and partnering with health and community agencies

Relates to:

Component 1
Target Area 1: A school community that promotes mental health and wellbeing

Goal
a) School staff understand the importance of mental health and wellbeing, its impact on learning, and the significant contributions schools can make to improving student mental health.

Target Area 2: Respectful relationships, belonging and inclusion

Goals
b) Belonging and inclusion for all school community members is specifically addressed in school strategic planning, policies and practices.

d) School leadership and staff create opportunities for students, staff, families and the wider community to be involved in a range of school activities and contribute to school planning.

One of the significant contributions that your school can make to improving student mental health is to engage with the local community in an ongoing and purposeful way.

Action Teams can commence activity in this area from the start of implementation as part of their work in Component 1.

The purpose of engaging with the broader community is to promote your school’s focus on mental health and wellbeing, to build valuable partnerships and increase resources in the school. To be successful, this requires the establishment
and maintenance of respectful relationships and collaborative involvement beyond the immediate school community.

These outcomes not only address Target Areas and Goals in Component 1 but are of benefit to the work you will do later, particularly in Components 3 and 4. For example:

### Component 3
**Target Area 2: Support for parenting**

**Goal**
c) The school has policies and practices to support staff to identify issues and, where appropriate, facilitate access for parents to resources and services that support parenting.

**Target Area 3: Parent and carer support networks**

**Goal**
c) The school identifies and promotes community groups which may act as a source of support for parents and carers.

### Component 4
**Target Area 2: Responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties**

**Goal**
d) The school has effective working relationships and clear referral pathways with services and supports families to access these services.

- Being aware of the range of services available in your local area at an early stage of KidsMatter implementation will make it much easier to access valuable information that will be useful for Components 2, 3 and 4.
- Facilitating access to information and support for school community members can be an important part of building a sense of belonging and inclusion for parents and carers and students who are experiencing mental health difficulties. This can prevent a break in connection with the school community (Component 1 Target Area 2 Goal b) and also builds relationships relevant to addressing Target Areas in Components 3 and 4 in particular.

### Building partnerships

Invite local agency and service representatives and community and cultural leaders into your school to tell them about KidsMatter and your plans. Show them that they are very welcome and that you wish to build mutually beneficial relationships (Component 1 Target Area 2 Goal d). Discuss the KidsMatter framework and ask how each agency and service might support the work you will do in each component.

Community leaders in local government or business groups are often keen to support initiatives such as KidsMatter and may be able to promote your school’s goals and link to other sources of support and funding.

Agency and service workers benefit from being part of the work of KidsMatter, and welcome the efforts schools make to engage with them outside of crisis situations. Schools are often surprised to hear that agencies and services frequently worry that they do not receive enough contact from schools, especially at the early stages of concern about a child’s wellbeing. They often report that they would welcome early contact from schools before a situation has reached crisis point so that a good quality plan can be discussed and mutually agreed. Many health services can also struggle to get referrals because schools and families don’t know about the services they can offer. A partnership with a school offers a chance for information about the service to be provided to staff and families and appropriate referrals to happen, which makes the best use of service resources.

### Services mapping

Your Action Team can research the community groups, agencies and services operating in the local area and build a map for use in your whole-school strategic planning, policies and practices that support students’ mental health and wellbeing.

Mapping services is a very useful activity in Component 1 for a variety of reasons. These include:

- Among the agencies and services you explore you are likely to source external supporters and Facilitators for professional learning.

- Being aware of the range of services available in your local area at an early stage of KidsMatter implementation will make it much easier to access valuable information that will be useful for Components 2, 3 and 4.

- Facilitating access to information and support for school community members can be an important part of building a sense of belonging and inclusion for parents and carers and students who are experiencing mental health difficulties. This can prevent a break in connection with the school community (Component 1 Target Area 2 Goal b) and also builds relationships relevant to addressing Target Areas in Components 3 and 4 in particular.

### Building partnerships

Invite local agency and service representatives and community and cultural leaders into your school to tell them about KidsMatter and your plans. Show them that they are very welcome and that you wish to build mutually beneficial relationships (Component 1 Target Area 2 Goal d). Discuss the KidsMatter framework and ask how each agency and service might support the work you will do in each component.

Community leaders in local government or business groups are often keen to support initiatives such as KidsMatter and may be able to promote your school’s goals and link to other sources of support and funding.

Agency and service workers benefit from being part of the work of KidsMatter, and welcome the efforts schools make to engage with them outside of crisis situations. Schools are often surprised to hear that agencies and services frequently worry that they do not receive enough contact from schools, especially at the early stages of concern about a child’s wellbeing. They often report that they would welcome early contact from schools before a situation has reached crisis point so that a good quality plan can be discussed and mutually agreed. Many health services can also struggle to get referrals because schools and families don’t know about the services they can offer. A partnership with a school offers a chance for information about the service to be provided to staff and families and appropriate referrals to happen, which makes the best use of service resources.
Exchanging information with agencies and services about the best ways to contact key people at your school and in agencies and services, protocols for referral, setting up meetings, and other ongoing communication will help you greatly, especially when a concern arises. This information should also become part of your strategic planning, policies and practices around supporting parents and carers as well as students with mental health difficulties (Component 1 Target Area 2 b).

How can schools make the most of information, education and resources?

Practical ways to make the most of information, education and resources from agencies and services include:

- promoting community groups, agencies and services in your school newsletter, on your website and at well-attended school events such as open nights and sports carnivals (many agencies and services will be willing to set up displays and provide free resources)
- setting up an area where staff can easily access information and resources (eg in the staff room or library)
- setting up a parents and carers area or room (where space allows) in which parents and carers can connect with each other and access a range of information about child health, wellbeing and development, and the services available if help is required.

In schools where space is limited, a simple carousel or magazine rack for pamphlets in the reception area, outside classrooms, in the library or other suitable space is suitable. Including a range of child-related information, such as health and nutrition, behaviour, common issues in childhood, fun activities in the local area, services and mental health information is useful to encourage parents to access information without fear of stigma.

Remember, you can also display KidsMatter resources for parents and carers, which can be downloaded online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/resources-your-journey.

This sends a powerful message to parents that the school understands the importance of mental health and wellbeing and wishes to partner with parents and carers in building protective factors for their children (Component 1 Target Area 1 a, 2 d). It also means the information is accessible and timely, and parents don’t have to obtain the information from a health service.

Setting up good systems for effective communication

Think about how you will make contact with local agencies and services and how this contact can be mutually beneficial and ongoing.

Information and education for your whole school community

Ask agencies, cultural groups and other services to speak about their work at a staff meeting to promote important groups and services in the area. This can be very beneficial for improving staff knowledge about available services and their roles. The information can increase confidence that a range of relevant services are available and ready to provide support to the school community (Component 1 Target Area 1 a).

Agencies and services are a great source of resources, education and information for staff, parents and carers in your school community (Component 1 Target Area 1 Goal a). Access to education and information about building positive mental health and seeking help for mental health difficulties in your school community can be a very important tool in the promotion of mental health and prevention of mental health difficulties in children. By promoting information in this way, schools can also help to overcome the fear and anxiety families may be feeling about contacting a health service.
Topic 6: Professional learning for the whole school

The success of KidsMatter Primary at your school requires the active participation of the whole school community. One of the most visible elements of KidsMatter implementation is the professional learning for each component. The Action Team plays a pivotal role in planning and delivering the professional learning.

Schools are provided with a comprehensive package of materials to deliver professional learning for each of the KidsMatter components. Each package is designed to be delivered to all school staff, including non-teaching staff. For each component there are three to four hours of content built around the Target Areas (although if you are a school community that likes lots of discussion, you can allocate additional time for the professional learning session or follow-up discussions).

Can we skip a component or do them out of order?

KidsMatter Primary components work together and help your school progressively build knowledge. What this means is that the work you do on building your sense of community in Component 1 helps you to develop relationships with families in Component 3. If your school is already well versed in the content of a component, KidsMatter recommends you do the professional learning anyway to build a shared understanding and challenge deeper thinking and practices.

Getting the most out of professional learning

The Action Team is responsible for planning and organising the professional learning. Careful preparation can help ensure that each event is as relevant as possible to your school context. Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- The facilitator attends the Facilitating Professional Learning event for each component. The content familiarises participants with each component area and the whole-school staff processes of the professional learning. It also prepares participants to deliver the professional learning effectively in their schools. If possible, take along external supporters.

- All staff are brought up to speed before they participate in the professional learning. KidsMatter produces a range of introductory information to promote its aims and rationale to participating schools.

- All school staff will participate in professional learning. The Action Team will need to prepare for this. You may need to consider factors like timing of the event. When will work best for all staff to attend?

Purposes of whole-school professional learning

The whole-school professional learning has been designed to help the school community:

- develop a shared understanding of children’s mental health and wellbeing and recognise the important role that school staff play
- understand different school community perspectives, including those of parents, carers and students
- further understand what contributes to children’s mental health and wellbeing
- view tools, models and techniques that can help address each component and provide the opportunity to practise specific skills
- identify avenues or opportunities to enhance school’s practices relevant to each component
- contribute to the planning for implementation of KidsMatter Primary at the school.
It is very useful for Action Team members to read component literature reviews prior to each professional learning session. This will enable Action Team members to support rich conversations during these sessions, and better inform planning.

• Awareness of existing policies and procedures is important. During the professional learning sessions it’s possible that staff will discuss current policies and practices. For example, the school’s behaviour policy may have been written several years ago and may not have been reviewed in recent times or may not reflect what actually happens. The Action Team should take note and follow up on any comments or feedback brought up in the professional learning.

• In each session Action Team members will hear and act upon questions, suggestions and concerns raised. The professional learning session provides rich information for continuing the development of component planning. The Action Team will take away what they learn from the session and use it to create further opportunities for discussion and planning. This will include the development of plans to obtain input from parents and students. It is through this process that the Component Plan will be developed, which will ensure genuine input from the whole school community.

• Each component will have its own particular focus and the Professional Learning Guide for Facilitators will include these specific considerations.

• The professional learning templates (available online) will be helpful to use at your Action Team meetings prior to each professional learning to ensure that you are clear about where your school is up to in the implementation process and to capture as much relevant information during the professional learning for your planning as possible.

• You will need to decide whether parents will be involved in the sessions. Although parents are not the target audience, many schools have reported success when parents attend. This can certainly send an important message about the involvement of the broad school community.

• Many factors can impact on the readiness of the staff to engage in professional learning. As an Action Team, consider additional priorities when planning the timing of the session. For example, if the school has recently been involved in a critical incident, consideration will need to be given to the appropriateness of the session at that time. Consultation with the school wellbeing staff may help make decisions about the best timing for the session.
Beyond professional learning

It’s easy to believe that KidsMatter is ‘finished’ once the professional learning in each of the four components has been delivered. However, the professional learning is designed to build knowledge and skills to enhance whole-school planning and implementation. Planning, action and review will follow and continue as an ongoing process. KidsMatter is designed to become part of the way a school operates rather than a time-limited program. It is the job of the Action Team to keep up momentum and use the knowledge that has been collected from the professional learning to enrich the planning phase.

Beyond the professional learning you will undertake for KidsMatter, it is useful for Action Teams to look out for opportunities to attend or host additional whole-school professional learning available in your local area. You could invite an expert speaker to a staff meeting or parent evening to speak about a topic of interest or have staff attend an event and share any new learning at a staff meeting.

To keep a focus on the very important protective factors that your school can provide, encourage continuous learning about students’ mental health and wellbeing in your school community.

Your state or territory enewsletter will highlight professional learning opportunities and you can also ask your state or territory project officer for information about upcoming events.

Encourage continuous learning about students’ mental health and wellbeing in your school community.

Who will facilitate?

The Action Team will be involved in choosing one or more facilitators for the KidsMatter professional learning. A facilitator might be a member of your school staff or someone from an external education, health or community agency. The facilitator may also be a member of the Action Team. Your KidsMatter Primary state or territory project officer can help you identify appropriate external people to facilitate at your school.

We recommend that Action Teams work in partnership with appropriate mental health and parenting support professionals in the delivery of Component 3, and mental health professionals in the delivery of Component 4.

- Who might you ask to facilitate the professional learning at your school?
- How will the facilitator be supported to deliver components 3 and 4?
- How will you provide professional learning for staff that don’t attend the training or new staff entering the school?
**Topic 7: External supporters**

Everyone benefits from support. The research related to a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing and organisational change suggests that having access to appropriate support from someone external to the school can lead to greater and more sustained positive changes.

During implementation of KidsMatter Primary, we recommend that your Action Team seek external supporters to help you in the journey.

**Who could be an external supporter?**

External supporters can be one person or more and can be sourced in a variety of different ways. They are external in the sense that they are people who provide additional skills and support that complements skills and support provided by existing Action Team members. They are able to contribute to the implementation of KidsMatter with an outside perspective.

An external supporter could include:
- education system personnel such as student wellbeing officers, school counsellors or school psychologists
- health and community personnel such as the local health or community service, mental health professionals, including from child and adolescent mental health services, private practitioners such as psychologists, local government representative, Medicare Locals, non-government organisations or parent support services
- a member of an Action Team from another KidsMatter school
- a parent or carer with specialist skills or knowledge of mental health and wellbeing.

Some schools have greater access to a range of support systems, including community, cultural and student support services. If your school has fewer options, you may need to be creative about accessing different people and forms of support available within your community. It may be helpful to start out by liaising with any existing connections your school might have. Remember, your state or territory project officer can also help to locate an external supporter.

**How can external supporters help?**

An external supporter is someone who could assist you in your KidsMatter journey in a number of different ways. This will depend on your Action Team’s existing strengths and identified gaps or needs. Some examples of the assistance an external supporter could provide include:
- delivering professional learning in some or all of the four components
- providing specialist knowledge or advice about mental health, managing change, strategic planning, social and emotional learning or parenting support
- identifying useful resources
- helping schools develop and refine strategies that will promote mental health and wellbeing for implementation in each of the four KidsMatter components
- linking you with health and community agencies
- helping you to identify referral pathways
- enriching your planning by offering a broader community perspective
- sharing skills and knowledge in areas such as mental health and wellbeing, parenting and child development
- working with diverse cultures, or working with school culture change.

To get the most out of external support, it is important to consider:
- how you think an external supporter can enhance your KidsMatter experience and who might be appropriate
- ways in which your school can develop a trusting relationship with an external supporter
- how you can get an external supporter involved and up-to-speed on your KidsMatter journey so the support they offer is targeted
Challenge your thinking

- Is there someone already working with your school or in a local service who might be able to take on one or more of these external supporter roles?
- Who else in the local community might be able to help?

Working together effectively with external supporters

It is important to establish a good working relationship, communication and clear parameters with your external supporters. As an Action Team, be clear about what you need and want from the relationship, as this will help avoid misunderstandings. The school needs to feel that the person has the school’s best interests at heart. This includes a person with the ability to maintain confidentiality about your school and issues you may be facing.

What assistance is available for external supporters?

External supporters are welcome to attend a briefing and overview professional learning session and speak with state and territory KidsMatter staff who can tailor a specific professional learning event for them to gain a better understanding of how they can support the Action Team.

Remember, the critical friend doesn’t lead the implementation of KidsMatter in your school, but they can help schools clarify and achieve their goals.

What is a critical friend?

The term critical friend has gained currency in the education and health sectors and there is a body of literature and resources that now uses the term.

In KidsMatter a critical friend is a person who is invited to work with a school, who understands the school context, but who is detached from the day-to-day operations of the school. A critical friend is therefore able to ask questions that are reflective and challenging, provide constructive feedback, offer a different perspective and share ideas that come from working in a different field or with a range of other schools.

Any team that works closely together managing an organisational change process like KidsMatter can benefit from an alternative perspective.

- Where can you locate external supporters in your school community?
- What level and type of support do you want from an external supporter?
- What will you consider as an Action Team before accepting support from an external supporter?
- How will you work effectively with an external supporter?
Implementation resources

KidsMatter Primary provides your Action Team with the information, resources and support it needs to effectively implement KidsMatter Primary. This includes:

- **Programs Guide**: to assist schools in making informed decisions when selecting appropriate programs
- **Information sheets**: for teachers, parents and carers, and health professionals covering a range of mental health and wellbeing topics
- **Posters**: designed to promote the four components and key KidsMatter messages around the school
- **Online event calendar**: staff register to attend events in their local region
- **Online tools**: to assist schools in planning
- **School Stories**: share strategies and best practice
- **Ennewsletters**: both state-based and national
- **Documents**: teaching and learning resources to download, like *Essential Reading* and *Action Team Handbook*.

State and territory staff is available to provide professional learning and support to your school, and build partnerships with health and education sectors.

KidsMatter Primary supports schools throughout their journey by providing professional learning events for school and non-school based professionals. Check out the calendar of events and register online.

Implementation tools

The following tools will assist Action Teams to complete the work of implementing KidsMatter Primary in your school:

- **Action Team Implementation Checklist**
- **How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?**
- **Component Plan templates**
## Tool 1: Action Team Implementation Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the principal signed the <em>Statement of Commitment</em> and ensured school leadership is represented on the Action Team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Team information and training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all members of the Action Team attended <em>Getting Started</em> professional learning and read the <em>Action Team Handbook</em>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has everyone reviewed the online resources for Action Teams, watched the <em>Introduction to KidsMatter</em> DVD and read the <em>Essential Reading</em> and Briefing pack?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If any members have not yet attended <em>Getting Started</em>, have they been booked into another session or an Overview session?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your Action Team identified who will attend KidsMatter implementation support network meetings each term?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishing Action Team roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the Action team representative of the whole school community?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have tasks been matched to skills?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will establishing working groups involving the broader school community be useful if there are skill gaps or extra resources needed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leading the Action Team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is best placed to take on this coordination role?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is leadership distributed among all members of our Action Team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying external supporters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we sought supporters from outside the school from the education, health or community sector to be on the Action Team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we recruited parents and carers with specialist knowledge in mental health, wellbeing, cultural diversity, parenting or organisational change?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any KidsMatter schools nearby that our Action Team can connect with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Planning meetings

- Is meeting twice per term sufficient?
- What time and where will we meet?
- Who will develop the agenda, keep minutes, gather working group feedback and circulate these the week after each meeting?

### Engaging, consulting and collaborating with the school community

- Has the *Introduction to KidsMatter* DVD presentation been viewed by all staff?
- What steps have we taken to engage all staff, students and families using the *Introduction to KidsMatter* DVD, Briefing pack and Guiding Principles?
- What creative strategies are we using to collaboratively involve staff, students and families and to empower them to participate in the KidsMatter journey?
- How will we regularly seek opinions, provide feedback and information?

### Clear vision and goals

- Has the Action Team completed the ‘How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?’ diagram in this handbook?
- Has this diagram been filled out by all school teaching, administration and support staff?
- Have students and families been invited to contribute to the wellbeing vision of our school?
- Have we considered the KidsMatter framework and Guiding Principles to help inform our vision and goals?

### Gathering and interpreting evidence-based data

- Have we identified and collected any existing data that relates to mental health and wellbeing in our school community?
- Have we used the KidsMatter survey tools and Mental Health Map?
- Are we following the step-by-step instructions for interpreting KidsMatter data?
- What mechanisms have we developed to check back with our school community and KidsMatter Project Officers after collating and interpreting data?
- Are we using KidsMatter professional learning component Target Areas and Goals and literature reviews to support interpretation of school data?
### Coordinating whole-staff professional learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have we decided who will facilitate the training?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we organised external support for the delivery of Components 3 and 4?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all members of the Action Team read the literature review prior to each component being delivered to staff?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the professional learning developed a shared understanding of mental health and wellbeing among all staff?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the Action Team grow this shared understanding across the school community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the Action Team use the professional learning sessions to inform and build the strategic planning and school change process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategic planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are we using the KidsMatter step-by-step process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are issues arising from the data collection that require immediate attention being addressed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we included staff feedback from the professional learning component training sessions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inform planning did we use the KidsMatter vision, goals and current practice detailed in the ‘How does KidsMatter build upon what we are doing diagram?’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we use KidsMatter Guiding Principles, professional learning Target Areas and Goals, and literature reviews to support strategic planning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are we involving students and parents and carers in planning, developing and implementing strategies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Working through step-by-step implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the step-by-step process been used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we successfully use our school data and KidsMatter literature to inform our policies and practices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we successfully developed and implemented strategies across all four components at the same time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we revisited the ‘How does KidsMatter build upon what we are doing?’ diagram and updated this to reflect deleted, refined and new practices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the implementation process provided opportunities for all members of the school community to be empowered to work together?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reviewing progress and celebrating achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have we discussed revisiting the vision and change processes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a plan for ongoing data collection, analysis and strategic planning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we celebrated the achievements, learnt from challenges and promoted the improvements along the journey?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategies are in place to motivate and sustain change and continual improvement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have we reviewed internal and external supporters?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the literature reviews and online Action Team resources been utilised to challenge us to reflect and continue to improve practices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we share our experiences with other schools?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 2: How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing?

Component 1
Positive school community

Component 2
Social and emotional learning for students

Component 3
Working with parents and carers

Component 4
Helping children with mental health difficulties

School vision
How does KidsMatter Primary align with this vision?
Tool 2: How does KidsMatter build on what we are doing? (see inside)

Tool 3: Component Plan templates >
### KidsMatter Primary Component 1: A positive school community

**Step 1: Summary statements**
What issues or conclusions came out of the Staff Survey collation?

**Step 2: School-specific goals**
What are you aiming for or hoping to see in relation to this issue? Set SMART goals.

**Step 3: Concerns**
What barriers might get in the way of achieving this goal?

**Step 4: Options and strategies**
What are all possible strategies for addressing these barriers and achieving the goal?

**Step 5: Feasibility**
How feasible or realistic are each of these options?

**Step 6: Actions**
What are the most feasible and appropriate options or strategies to address this objective?

**Step 7: Implementation time frame**
What are the start and completion dates?

**Resources required**
Who will be responsible for actioning each option?

**Review**
When will this be revisited and reviewed?

#### Target Areas

**Target Area 1 – A school community that promotes mental health and wellbeing**

1. **School staff understand the importance of mental health and wellbeing, its impact on learning, and the significant contributions schools can make to improving student mental health**

   - **Q1-Q3**

2. **School staff have an understanding of their community**

   - **Q4-Q5**
# KidsMatter Primary Component 1: A positive school community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Area 2 – Respectful relationships, belonging and inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) School staff expect and model respectful and responsive relationships within the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Belonging and inclusion for all school community members is specifically addressed in school strategic planning, policies and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The school environment and communication reflects the diversity of the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) School leadership and staff create opportunities for students, staff, families and the wider community to be involved in a range of school activities and contribute to school planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### KidsMatter Primary Component 2: Social and emotional learning for students

#### STEP 1: Summary statements
What issues or conclusions came out of the Staff Survey collation?

### STEP 2: School-specific goals
What are you aiming for or hoping to see in relation to this issue? Set SMART goals

### STEP 3: Concerns
What barriers might get in the way of achieving this goal?

### STEP 4: Options and strategies
What are all possible strategies for addressing these barriers and achieving the goal?

### STEP 5: Feasibility
How feasible or realistic are each of these options?

### STEP 6: Actions
What will be needed to put this option or strategy into place? Who will be responsible for actioning each option?

### STEP 7: Implementation time frame
What are the start and completion dates?

### Review
When will this be revisited and reviewed?

### TARGET AREAS

#### Target Area 1 - Effective social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum for all students

- **a)** School staff understand the inter-relationship between social, emotional and academic learning
  - Q1-Q2

- **b)** Teachers understand the core social and emotional competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
  - Q3-Q5

- **c)** SEL curriculum is taught. It covers the core social and emotional competencies; has research evidence of effectiveness or underpinned by a sound theoretical framework; it is effectively, formally and regularly coordinated and supported throughout the school
  - Q6-Q8
## KidsMatter Primary Component 2: Social and emotional learning for students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STEP 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 4</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 5</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 6</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 7</strong></th>
<th><strong>TARGET AREAS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary statements</strong></td>
<td><strong>School-specific goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Concerns</strong></td>
<td><strong>Options and strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Feasibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implementation time frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTION TEAM</strong></td>
<td>What issues or conclusions came out of the Staff Survey collation?</td>
<td>What are you aiming for or hoping to see in relation to this issue? Set SMART goals</td>
<td>What barriers might get in the way of achieving this goal?</td>
<td>What are all possible strategies for addressing these barriers and achieving the goal?</td>
<td>How feasible or realistic are each of these options?</td>
<td>What are the most feasible and appropriate options or strategies to address this objective?</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for actioning each option?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Target Area 2 – Opportunities for students to practise and transfer their social and emotional skills

**Q9-Q10**

_a) School staff use their daily interactions with students to support the development of students' SEL skills in and out of the classroom_

**Q11**

_b) Students are provided with regular opportunities to practise and adapt their social and emotional skills to new situations in the classroom, school and wider community_

**Q12-Q13**

_c) School staff provide information to parents about the school's social and emotional curriculum and work collaboratively with parents to assist students' development of social and emotional development_
**GOALS**

**STEP 1** Summary statements
What issues or conclusions came out of the Staff Survey collation?

**STEP 2** School-specific goals
What are you aiming for or hoping to see in relation to this issue? Set SMART goals

**STEP 3** Concerns
What barriers might get in the way of achieving this goal?

**STEP 4** Options and strategies
What are all possible strategies for addressing these barriers and achieving the goal?

**STEP 5** Feasibility
How feasible or realistic are each of these options?

**STEP 6** Actions
What are the most feasible and appropriate options or strategies to address this objective?

**STEP 6** Resources required
What will be needed to put this option or strategy into place?

**STEP 7** Individual/group responsible for each action
Who will be responsible for actioning each option?

**Implementation time frame**
What are the start and completion dates?

**Review**
When will this be revisited and reviewed?

### TARGET AREAS

#### Target Area 1 – Collaborative working relationships with parents and carers

**Q1**
- School planning, policies and practices support collaborative working relationships with parents and carers

**Q2-Q3**
- School staff implement strategies to proactively develop collaborative working relationships with parents and carers to promote children’s mental health, wellbeing and learning

#### Target Area 2 – Support for parenting

**Q4**
- School staff have knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with parents about their children in areas related to child development, learning and mental health and wellbeing

---

**KidsMatter Primary Component 3: Working with parents and carers**
## Target Area 2 – Support for Parenting (continued)

### b) School staff communicate effectively with parents and carers about child development, learning and mental health and wellbeing

- **Q5-Q6**

### c) The school has policies and practices to support staff to identify and, where appropriate, facilitate access for parents to resources and services that support parenting

- **Q7-Q8**

## Target Area 3 – Parent and carer support networks

### a) The school provides opportunities for parents and carers to connect with each other and develop support networks, and actively seeks to minimise barriers to participation

- **Q9-Q10**

### b) The school identifies and promotes community groups that may act as a source of support for parents and carers

- **Q11**
## KidsMatter Primary Component 4: Helping children experiencing mental health difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
<th>STEP 4</th>
<th>STEP 5</th>
<th>STEP 6</th>
<th>Resources required</th>
<th>Individual/group responsible for each action</th>
<th>STEP 7</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary statements</td>
<td>School-specific goals</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Options and strategies</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>What will be needed to put this option or strategy into place?</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for actioning each option?</td>
<td>Implementation time frame</td>
<td>When will this be revisited and reviewed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What issues or conclusions came out of the Staff Survey collation?</td>
<td>What are you aiming for or hoping to see in relation to this issue? Set SMART goals</td>
<td>What barriers might get in the way of achieving this goal?</td>
<td>What are all possible strategies for addressing these barriers and achieving the goal?</td>
<td>How feasible or realistic are each of these options?</td>
<td>What are the most feasible and appropriate options or strategies to address this objective?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TARGET AREAS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Area 1 – Understanding mental health difficulties and improving help-seeking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) School staff have an understanding of childhood mental health difficulties, including common signs and symptoms, the impact on children and families, and factors that put children at risk</td>
<td>Q1-Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) School staff understand that getting help and support early is important for students and families experiencing difficulties</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The school provides an inclusive and accepting environment for community members who may be experiencing difficulties with their mental health</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) The school has policies and practices that support students and families to seek help for mental health difficulties</td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### KidsMatter Primary Component 4: Helping children experiencing mental health difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Area 2 – Responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a)</strong> School staff have a shared understanding of their role, and boundaries in addressing the needs of students experiencing mental health difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6-Q7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b)</strong> The school has protocols and processes for recognising and responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties, including helping students to remain engaged in their education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c)</strong> School staff have knowledge and skills for recognising and supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties, including how to access support and make appropriate referrals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9-Q11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d)</strong> The school has effective working relationships and clear referral pathways to services and supports families to access these services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e)</strong> The school works together with families and professionals who are involved in caring for their students’ mental health and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important notice

KidsMatter Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative and any other KidsMatter mental health initiatives are not to be confused with other businesses, programs or services which may also use the name ‘Kidsmatter’.

Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2013

This work is copyright. Provided acknowledgement is made to the sources, schools are permitted to copy material freely for communication with teachers, staff, students, parents, carers or community members. You may reproduce the whole or part of this work in unaltered form for your own personal use or, if you are part of an organisation, for internal use within your organisation, but only if you or your organisation do not use the reproduction for any commercial purpose and retain this copyright notice and all disclaimer notices as part of that reproduction. Apart from rights to use as permitted by the Copyright Act 1968 or allowed by this copyright notice, all other rights are reserved and you are not allowed to reproduce the whole or any part of this work in any way (electronic or otherwise) without first being given the specific written permission from the Commonwealth to do so. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights are to be sent to:

Communications Branch
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601

or via e-mail to:
copyright@health.gov.au

While the resources are available freely for these purposes, to realise the full potential of KidsMatter Primary, it is recommended that the resources be used with the appropriate training and support under the KidsMatter Initiative.

Last updated in July 2013
# Contents

KidsMatter Primary: Growing healthy minds ........................................ 02  
What is KidsMatter Primary? .......................................................... 04  
How KidsMatter Primary seeks to improve children’s mental health ..... 06  
Evaluation of KidsMatter Primary .................................................. 14  
KidsMatter Primary collaborators ................................................... 15
Mental health and wellbeing is vital for learning and life. Children who are mentally healthy are better learners, benefit from life experiences, and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers. They are better equipped to meet life’s challenges and to contribute productively to their families, friends and society in ways that are appropriate for their age.

Good mental health in childhood also provides a solid foundation for managing the transition to adolescence and adulthood, for engaging successfully in education, and for making a meaningful contribution to society. Many children who have adequate support, good coping skills, and a manageable level of environmental stress can progress through to adolescence and adulthood without showing significant behavioural or academic difficulties.

By contrast, children who are exposed to challenging circumstances without receiving adequate support may experience distress and have difficulty coping. Children who experience multiple stressors – such as family breakdown, lack of academic success, parental mental illness, bullying, parental substance abuse, living in poverty, or racism – are more likely to develop emotional or behavioural problems that can continue to affect their mental health into adulthood.

Currently in Australia nearly one in five people are affected by a mental illness in any one year. The effects of mental illness are felt across our nation.

It is not always possible to predict which children will develop mental health difficulties. Programs therefore need to target all children and a range of needs, from teaching skills for emotional wellbeing to specific mental health interventions. It is now recognised that at least one in seven children will have significant mental health difficulties with serious associated problems at some time during their childhood.

Children who are socially disadvantaged or exposed to multiple highly stressful life events are at considerably higher risk.
Mental health and learning

Good mental health and wellbeing is integral to academic learning. Mentally healthy students arrive at school ready to learn and are more likely to achieve academic success. They are more motivated learners, have fewer behavioural problems and show greater commitment to their schoolwork. They are also more likely to experience success after primary school, with a greater likelihood of graduating and better prospects for constructive employment.

Conversely, poor mental health reduces students’ ability to learn and can lead to school failure and drop out. Academic failure has lasting consequences, as the failure to learn in school limits a person’s chance to succeed in the future.

Schools are more likely to achieve goals related to learning and academic success when students’ mental health and wellbeing is prioritised and addressed with the same enthusiasm as numeracy or literacy. Schools that promote mental health are also more likely to engage productively with their community members, reduce student behavioural issues, and achieve higher levels of staff satisfaction.

Promoting the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australian primary schools

Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have much poorer health when compared to the non-Indigenous members of the population. KidsMatter Primary provides a literature review outlining the current research on issues affecting the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the associated implications for schools. The literature review is available online.

The role of schools in improving children’s mental health and wellbeing

Schools, with the full support of families and the community, are currently one of the best places to comprehensively support children’s mental health and wellbeing for the following reasons:

• School is the most significant developmental context (after family) for primary school-aged children, with almost all children attending school at some time in their lives.

• Through their role in supporting children’s learning, schools play a crucial role in building children’s self esteem and sense of competence. On the other hand, when children’s learning and wellbeing needs are not met at school, their overall development and mental health may be undermined.

• Schools can act as a safety net and assist in protecting children from circumstances that affect their learning, development and wellbeing.

• School mental health programs are shown to be effective in improving students’ learning and emotional wellbeing and in treating mental health difficulties.

• When teachers and school staff are actively involved in comprehensive mental health programs, the interventions can reach generations of children.

• School-based interventions can provide students with experiences to strengthen their ability to cope with environmental stresses and help them to feel supported.
What is KidsMatter Primary?

KidsMatter Primary is a national initiative that aims to contribute to:

- improving student mental health and wellbeing
- reducing mental health difficulties among students
- increasing support for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

KidsMatter Primary fosters partnerships between the education and health sectors.

KidsMatter Primary takes schools through a two-to-three year cyclical process in which they plan and take action using a comprehensive whole-school approach to mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. It allows for flexibility and can be tailored to schools’ local needs. In this way, KidsMatter Primary builds on the work schools are already doing to address the mental health of their students through national, state, territory and sector-based mental health initiatives and policies. KidsMatter Primary provides a range of resources and support throughout the implementation journey.

The KidsMatter Primary framework

1. **Guiding Principles**: These principles underpin the development of the initiative and its successful implementation in schools. The development of the principles has been informed by research as well as the experiences of schools undertaking KidsMatter Primary to date. The principles are not only foundational, but provide checking points for schools to review their progress throughout implementation. In this way, they serve as a navigation aid during the journey.

2. **Core components**: The four components known to have a positive impact on children’s mental health are:
   1. Positive school community
   2. Social and emotional learning for students
   3. Working with parents and carers

   The selection of these four components has been informed by current evidence and expert opinion on the factors that most influence children’s mental health and wellbeing. There is a particular focus on the factors schools can influence. Target areas and goals are provided under each component to help guide schools to take action in these areas.

3. **Whole-school approach**: It is now well understood that effective interventions in schools occur when all school community members (staff, parents and carers, health and community agencies) are consulted and collaborative partnerships are developed. This is particularly the case when addressing children’s mental health because of the significant influences of the family and community as well as the school. A whole-school approach involves the school community systematically reviewing school practice across each of the four KidsMatter components. The review identifies strengths and challenges, and incorporates strategies into a mental health and wellbeing strategic plan. This plan sits within the school’s broader strategic plan as part of the ongoing review and improvement processes.
The best interests of children are paramount
Respectful relationships are foundational
Diversity is respected and valued
Parents and carers are recognised as the most important people in children’s lives
Parents and teachers support children best by working together
Students need to be active participants
Schools, health and community agencies work together with families

Core Components
- Positive school community
- Social and emotional learning for students
- Working with parents and carers
- Helping children with mental health difficulties

Guiding Principles
- The best interests of children are paramount
- Respectful relationships are foundational
- Diversity is respected and valued
- Parents and carers are recognised as the most important people in children’s lives
- Parents and teachers support children best by working together
- Students need to be active participants
- Schools, health and community agencies work together with families

Whole-School Approach
- Planning for whole-school change
- Professional learning, shared understanding and focus for staff
- Partnerships with parents and carers, health and community agencies
- Action within and beyond the classroom

The KidsMatter journey

Vision and values to promote mental health and wellbeing for all students
Committed principal and team leadership with staff and parent support
KidsMatter resources and support

Implementation of the KidsMatter framework in a planned, strategic way with a whole school approach

- A school community that promotes mental health and wellbeing
- Respectful relationships, belonging and inclusion
- Effective social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum for all students
- Opportunities for students to practise and transfer their social and emotional skills
- Collaborative working relationships with parents and carers
- Support for parenting
- Parent and carer support networks
- Understanding mental health difficulties and improving help-seeking
- Responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties

KidsMatter Primary has identified key target areas which will impact positively on children’s mental health. They can be considered the destination of a school’s KidsMatter Primary journey.

The journey begins with school leaders and their communities reflecting on their vision and values. A commitment from the principal and leadership team (in consultation with staff and parents) is a crucial starting point.

The implementation process enables schools to work with the framework in a planned and strategic way.
How KidsMatter Primary seeks to improve children’s mental health

Risk and protective factors

Research has identified a range of risk and protective factors that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children. Risk factors present in a child’s life increase the likelihood of experiencing a mental health difficulty. Protective factors strengthen a child’s mental health and buffer against risk, making them less likely to develop a mental health difficulty.

KidsMatter Primary guides schools to develop key protective factors that research shows can make a difference to children’s mental health in the school environment.

Risk and protective factors can be identified in relation to individual skills, needs and temperament, familial circumstances and relationships, school context, specific life events, and social environment as indicated in the table below. The various interactions between risk and protective factors are complex and not yet well understood. It should be noted that the presence of risk factors does not mean a child will experience mental health difficulties, just as a lack of apparent risk factors does not necessarily mean that mental health difficulties will not develop. However, research at present does suggest that the likelihood of mental health difficulties occurring is significantly increased when multiple risk factors are present. As it can be difficult or impossible to change some risk factors, efforts to build protective factors can serve to mediate the impact of risk factors.

The following table provides some examples of risk and protective factors associated with children’s mental health. Schools, through their ongoing contact with children and families, are well-placed to strengthen protective factors and minimise risk factors.

(Adapted from Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000; Spence, 1996)
The socio-ecological model

The socio-ecological model of human development recognises the many influences on children’s mental health and wellbeing. The child is at the centre of the model, which explains that development occurs within the context of relationships with family, school and community. Children are further influenced by the wider social, economic, cultural, workplace and political forces in which their families, communities and schools exist.

The family is the main context for children’s development as it provides the most powerful and enduring influences on short and long-term health and social adjustment. Schools, including peers, are another important environment that children experience, which can have a major impact on learning, socialisation and employment outcomes.

Children can be exposed to both nurturing and stressful experiences of the world around them. Such experiences can have differential effects on individuals and the environments in which they live.

The KidsMatter Primary framework views children as active participants in their own development, both shaping and being shaped by their environment.

(Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1977)
KidsMatter Primary is a comprehensive model for improving mental health in schools that involves the entire school community. It targets the mental health and wellbeing of all students in primary schools through promoting a positive school environment and providing education on social and emotional skills for life. In addition, it provides information about getting help for those students who are exposed to psychological and social stressors. KidsMatter Primary also helps schools to address the needs of the estimated one in seven Australian children who are already experiencing mental health difficulties.

KidsMatter Primary considers all the aspects of school life – the school climate, policies, practices, events, teaching and learning – to enhance the mental health of children and reduce experiences that can have a negative impact. This whole-school approach also involves the people who have a significant influence on the lives of children, including parents and carers, families, community groups and organisations.

The KidsMatter Primary initiative is also underpinned by the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Health Promoting Schools framework. This framework focuses on three core areas of operation in schools: organisation, ethos and environment; curriculum teaching and learning; and partnerships and services. Furthermore, KidsMatter Primary draws from the original WHO model for school mental health promotion (1994) to explicitly include the influence and involvement of parents and carers at each of the levels of intervention. The model has also been adapted to highlight the important role schools play in continuing to support and engage those students experiencing mental health difficulties. In this model, schools also work with parents and carers to facilitate help-seeking and referral pathways.
The four components of KidsMatter Primary

Schools take action across four areas known as components. Research has identified that these are the areas where schools can make a real difference in supporting their students’ mental health and wellbeing. They make up the core content of KidsMatter Primary.

Dividing KidsMatter Primary into the four components is a way of making the task of improving students’ mental health in schools more manageable. It also allows schools to focus their efforts more effectively, and include all the significant people and contexts in children’s lives that may impact on their mental health.

The four components of KidsMatter Primary are interrelated. Each is important for supporting student mental health and wellbeing.
Component 1 encourages the school community to develop a shared understanding of mental health and wellbeing. Respectful relationships enable a sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community. A welcoming environment reflects the diversity of the school and local community, as well as the active involvement of students, staff and families.

**Target Areas**

1. A school community that promotes mental health and wellbeing

2. Respectful relationships, belonging and inclusion

**Goals**

1. School staff understand the importance of mental health and wellbeing, its impact on learning, and the significant contributions schools can make to improving student mental health.

2. School staff have an understanding of their school community.

3. School staff expect and model respectful and responsive relationships within the school community.

4. Belonging and inclusion for all school community members is specifically addressed in school strategic planning, policies and practices.

5. The school environment and communication reflects the diversity of the school community.

6. School leadership and staff create opportunities for students, staff, families and the wider community to be involved in a range of school activities and contribute to school planning.
Component 2 promotes the five core social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making as identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). School staff members are encouraged to embed these competencies in the curriculum, provide opportunities for students to practise and transfer skills daily, and collaborate with parents and carers to further assist students’ social and emotional skill development at home.

Target areas

1. Effective social and emotional learning curriculum for all students

2. Opportunities for students to practise and transfer their social and emotional skills

Goals

a. School staff understand the interrelationship between social, emotional and academic learning.

b. Teachers understand the core social and emotional competencies of:
   • self-awareness
   • self-management
   • social awareness
   • relationship skills
   • responsible decision-making.

c. Social and emotional learning curriculum is taught:
   • that covers the core social and emotional competencies
   • that has research evidence of effectiveness or is underpinned by a sound theoretical framework
   • effectively, formally and regularly in a co-ordinated and supported way throughout the school.

a. School staff use their daily interactions with students to support the development of students’ social and emotional learning skills, in and out of the classroom.

b. Students are provided with regular opportunities to practise and adapt their social and emotional skills to new situations in the classroom, school and wider community.

c. School staff provide information to parents about the school’s social and emotional curriculum and work collaboratively with parents to assist students’ development of social and emotional skills.
Component 3 promotes collaborative working relationships between school staff and parents and carers, and recognises the importance of these relationships in developing good mental health and wellbeing for children. It encourages schools to facilitate access to information and services that support parenting, and provides opportunities for families to extend their social and support networks.

Target areas

1. Collaborative working relationships with parents and carers

2. Support for parenting

3. Parent and carer support networks

Goals

1. School planning, policies and practices support collaborative working relationships with parents and carers.

2. School staff implement strategies to proactively develop collaborative working relationships with parents and carers to promote children’s mental health, wellbeing and learning.

3. School staff have knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with parents and carers about their children in areas related to child development, learning and mental health and wellbeing.

4. School staff communicate effectively with parents and carers about child development and learning, mental health and wellbeing.

5. The school has policies and practices to support staff to identify issues and, where appropriate, facilitate access for parents and carers to resources and services that support parenting.

6. The school provides opportunities for parents and carers to connect with each other and develop support networks, and actively seeks to minimise barriers to participation.

7. The school identifies and promotes community groups which may act as a source of support for parents and carers.
Component 4 assists schools to support students who may be experiencing mental health difficulties. Within the boundaries of their role, teachers and schools can help by recognising when a child may be experiencing difficulties. They can then respond by promoting an inclusive, accepting environment and using school policies and practices to access support and referral pathways in collaboration with parents and carers. Schools also work closely with students, parents and carers and support services to help them remain engaged in their education.

**Target areas**

1. Understanding mental health difficulties and improving help-seeking

2. Responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties

**Goals**

- **School staff** have an understanding of childhood mental health difficulties including common signs and symptoms, the impact on children and families, and factors that put children at risk.

- School staff understand that getting help and support early is important for students and families experiencing difficulties.

- The school provides an inclusive and accepting environment for community members who may be experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

- The school has policies and practices that support students and families to seek help for mental health difficulties.

- School staff have a shared understanding of their role, and its boundaries, in addressing the needs of students experiencing mental health difficulties.

- The school has protocols and processes for recognising and responding to students experiencing mental health difficulties, including helping students to remain engaged in their education.

- School staff have knowledge and skills for recognising and supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties, including how to access support and make appropriate referrals.

- The school has effective working relationships and clear referral pathways with services and supports families to access these services.

- The school works together with families and professionals who are involved in caring for their students’ mental health and learning.
Evaluation of KidsMatter Primary

KidsMatter Primary was first piloted in 100 schools across Australia between 2006 and 2008. A comprehensive evaluation of the KidsMatter Primary Pilot, involving almost 5000 children, was conducted by the Centre for Analysis of Educational Futures, Flinders University of South Australia. The findings show that KidsMatter Primary had a positive impact on schools, staff, children, parents and carers. While the Executive Summary provides an overview of the findings, the Full Report contains the comprehensive discussion of findings and recommendations. Both are available online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/research/publications

According to the evaluation, KidsMatter Primary was associated with:

- improved student mental health and wellbeing (for example, optimism and coping skills)
- reduced mental health difficulties such as emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, conduct and peer problems
- improved student school work
- improved teacher capacity to identify students experiencing mental health difficulties
- improved teacher knowledge of how to improve students’ social and emotional skills
- increased parent and carer capacity to help children with social and emotional issues
- the placement of mental health as an issue on schools’ agendas and the provision of a common language to address mental health and wellbeing issues.

The quality of implementation matters

Further analysis of the pilot data found evidence that linked high quality implementation of KidsMatter Primary with improved NAPLAN outcomes, as well as improvements in students’ mental health and wellbeing. The research found that schools who implemented KidsMatter Primary successfully reported improved student learning outcomes that placed their students’ average NAPLAN results up to six months ahead by Year 7. This is over and above any influence of socio-economic background. The results also support anecdotal reports by teachers during the pilot that implementation of KidsMatter Primary had led to improvements in students’ school work. The research (Dix et al, 2012) is available online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/research/publications

KidsMatter Primary and students with disabilities

The South Australian Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities worked with Flinders University to study the effect of KidsMatter Primary on the mental health of students with disabilities. It is known that students with a disability are at significantly greater risk of developing mental health problems than students without a disability. The Committee reinforced findings from the pilot data that suggest KidsMatter Primary had a positive effect on students with disabilities by strengthening their wellbeing and reducing the incidence of mental health difficulties. Both reports are available online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/research/publications
KidsMatter Primary collaborators

Department of Health and Ageing

The vision of the Department of Health and Ageing is better health and active ageing for all Australians. The department is responsible for achieving the Australian Government’s priorities for population health, aged care and population ageing as well as medical services, primary care, rural health, hearing services and Indigenous health. The department administers programs to meet the Government’s objectives in health system capacity and quality, mental health, health workforce, acute care, biosecurity and emergency response, as well as sport performance and participation. The department supports the Australian community’s access to affordable private health services and is responsible for policy on Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

beyondblue

beyondblue is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance-use disorders in Australia. beyondblue is a bipartisan initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments with the key goals of raising community awareness about depression and reducing stigma associated with the illness. beyondblue works in partnership with health services, schools, workplaces, universities, media and community organisations, as well as people living with depression, to bring together their expertise. One of the main priorities of beyondblue is to fund research initiatives such as KidsMatter which focus on the prevention and early intervention of mental health problems in Australian communities.

For more information

For further information about KidsMatter Primary, visit www.kidsmatter.edu.au
For enquiries about KidsMatter Primary, contact the KidsMatter front desk on 1800 543 767 (1800 KIDSMP) or frontdesk@kidsmatter.edu.au