# Navigator Pilot – evaluation snapshot

The Navigator Pilot Program commenced in July 2016 and is operating in eight Department of Education and Training (DET) areas. It aims to provide disengaged young people aged 12 to 17 with case management support to help them re-engage with education.

## The Model

The Navigator model is defined by its partnership between the community sector, DET and education providers to enable a service that actively seeks out disengaged young people and provides individualised support that is targeted to supporting their re-engagement back into education.

DET funds Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to work with the young person to identify their learning needs, capabilities and aspirations and develop an education re-engagement plan that involves family, carers, school and community supports. Through this work, Navigator providers:

* provide holistic support that assists young people to overcome learning, social and other barriers so that they can successfully engage and transition through education, including engaging support services where required
* support place-based responses to disengagement by drawing on a range of local services and working collectively to solve local issues
* monitor and support a young person as they re-engage in education for a period of up to six months and then following up six months later to see if they have remained engaged.

The Navigator pilot contributes to meeting the key Education State target of halving the proportion of students leaving school early from years 9 to 12 over the next 10 years. The Department has set clear outcomes and measureable targets for what it wants to achieve out of the pilot program:

* re-engagement of 70% of Navigator clients in education
* 50% of re-engaged clients remain in education for more than 6 months (measured by attendance of greater than 70%).

## the Evaluation

An initial Process and subsequent Impact Evaluation was conducted to build an in-depth understanding of Navigator’s implementation and impact in the first twelve months of the pilot.

Synergistiq was commissioned by DET to conduct an initial evaluation of the Navigator Pilot Program for its first 12 months of operation. Synergistiq used quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. They engaged with DET staff, providers, schools, young people and their families, conducting 83 interviews and collecting 160 survey responses.

The process evaluation report was delivered in November 2016 and demonstrated that the Navigator model had generally been implemented as planned across the pilot Areas. The learning curve of the Pilot meant that Providers were working with DET during the early stages to clarify the parameters of the program, causing some extensions to implementation timeframes. Data collected for the process evaluation suggested that Providers came to value the evaluation process as it gave them a chance to contribute genuinely to the establishment and design of the model.

The impact evaluation was conducted between March and July 2017, approximately a year after the pilot’s commencement. The impact evaluation examines the extent to which the Navigator model was implemented successfully in the eight pilot Areas as well as the overall impact of Navigator.

## Key findings from the impact evaluation

Navigator is achieving short-term outcomes around young people’s increased readiness for education, with the majority of young people reporting increased levels of wellbeing, such as a sense of control over their future and a greater sense of purpose in their lives. There were noticeable improvements in learner confidence, self-discipline and sense of identity – key indicators of education engagement.

“*I want to come to school more and it’s a bit easier. I think I’m more confident. I’m happier. It helps me and I come more often*” (Young Person, 2017)

Navigator is progressing toward medium-term outcomes around young people’s improved sustained engagement with education, with growing numbers of young people back in education. This degree of progress is to be expected at this stage of program implementation.

**57% returned to school
29% to Flexible Learning Option 
14% to Registered Training Organisation**As of end of March 2018:

* **1,841** Navigator referrals were received
* **1,219** case management support provided
* **860** returned to education
* **105** successfully exited the program (maintaining an average attendance of at least 70% for 26 weeks)
* **390** were on the waitlist

The evaluation found that Navigator provides an outreach model that is valued by many schools and perceived to complement their efforts. It has activated a concerted effort between the education and community service sectors, which provides fertile grounds for significant innovation and impact. Navigator has provided a central point of visibility and an improved understanding of the multiple and complex barriers to education that the cohort are experiencing.

Figure 1: Destination of re-engaging Navigator clients

The evaluation noted that further effort is required to increase the level of collaboration and communication between providers and schools to ensure sustained re-engagement of Navigator clients.

The evaluation report cited snapshot data collected by Providers highlights the complexity of the Navigator cohort.

Caseworkers reported that:

* **83%** of young people experienced some kind of mental health issue (either diagnosed or suspected), with **77%** experiencing anxiety
* **21%** have an addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs
* **31%** have been a victim of family violence
* **53%** of young people experience 4 or more issues, with 6% experiencing 9+ issues.

Data from the evaluation revealed that the majority of young people across all areas who participated in interviews reported satisfaction with the services being delivered by Navigator.

* **86%** of young people felt that they could always trust the Provider staff to support them.
* **89%** of young people stated that they were satisfied with the amount of support from the Provider and with their re-engagement plan.

**92% felt always welcomed, while 8% felt sometimes welcomed by the staff 
88% felt always comfortable during their visits, 9% sometimes 
74% were always able to share their feelings openly, 23% sometimes
86% could always trust the staff to support them, 12% sometimes 
82% said the staff always understood their cultural background, 16% sometimes 
89% were always able to get help from the staff, 8% sometimes
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Figure 2: Reported satisfaction by young people

## Success factors

The evaluation concluded that there are a number of factors supporting successful implementation of the Navigator model, including:

* Effective joint efforts that include a shared vision, effective and transparent communication and shared resources and knowledge.
* Skills in intensive, trauma informed case management including assertive outreach. Providers have specialist expertise to enable an approach that targets and engages young people who are experiencing multiple complex barriers to engaging in education.
* A client-centred approach, that supports a young person while understanding the broader context of their family, their school and other support services
* Skilled and committed staff that can work and manage across the eco-system of school disengagement - with young people, families, schools, community and government
* Consistent, regular, adaptable communication and engagement approaches with all stakeholders.