

## How do young people with mental health issues access community-based support networks?

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Mental illness among young people is increasing; however, government funds for mental health services remain limited. It is thus imperative that the use of community-based sources of support, like Self-Help Support Groups (SHSGs), is examined so that they may be better utilised. This paper presents findings from a recent study that explored the involvement of young people with mental health issues in SHSGs. More explicitly, it examines the trajectories that led to group involvement. While existing policy espouses a holistic approach to mental healthcare, encompassing both conventional and community-based sources of support, there seems to be a considerable disjunction between these aspirations and the support networks made available to young people. This is because most of the young people consulted in the study did not come to their respective groups through contact with service providers, but rather, their own investigative efforts. Their contributions collectively suggest that those who work with young people need to engage more effectively with community-based sources of support, so that they might extend the networks available to young people. The research findings also offer valuable direction to improve current policy in youth mental healthcare.

Ann Dadich is a Research Associate and registered psychologist at the SPRC whose research passions lie in the areas of community mental health, youth, and the third sector. She also provides professional supervision to mental health professionals. Prior to this, she worked within the government and non-government sectors in a research capacity and worked with young people and their families in an array of settings including correctional centres, courts, schools, mental health services, and drug and alcohol services. These experiences continue to inform her research interests and her approach to conducting research that is empirical and respectful.



**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2007**  
**1-2pm**

Green Office, Room 2, Building G2, Western  
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