Mental health and accessibility: Bridging the digital divide

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Make sure you look after yourself!

If you need to take a breather, please do so

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
(or 1-800-799-4889 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

Or come have a chat with me at any point

Why mental health?

Because everybody has it!

No person should be prevented from accessing support (or experience road blocks) when they need it the most

State of the 'world': Mental health and suicide

1 in 4 people will experience a mental or neurological disorder in their lives (1.75 billion people)

In 2015: More than 2,000 people took their own lives every day (close to 800,000 annually). This is expected to increase to one person every 20 seconds by 2020

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 29 year olds worldwide

State of the 'nation' (USA): Mental health and suicide

1 in 5 Americans experience mental illness in any given year

1 in 25 Americans experience mental illness that substantially interferes or limits their way of life

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds. 123 people take their life each day, 3,000 will attempt to

Research has found that mental health and suicide rates are significantly higher for people with Asperger's Syndrome and Autism

Current demand for mental health services - worldwide

Services are currently experiencing record highs in demand for support – 30 to 100 percent increases year on year for online support worldwide

Despite this, 56% of Americans and 65% of Australians do not receive treatment for their mental illness

Current demand for mental health services – Australia

Service demand is currently at record high levels. The leading 5 mental health/crisis support services in 2016-17 had:

More than 1 million phone calls

10.5 million website visits

450,000 other requests for support (by e-mail, web chat or similar)

700,000 visits to peer support forums

(And that's just the leading 5 - not to mention smaller and community services)

Increasing demand for digital services

It's not just for young people, it's also anonymous

Growing investment to cater for demand – record investment in mental health services by government

Increased online offering for mental health services to cater for 'on demand'

Service offerings expanding with increased initiatives for people with a disability (National Disability Insurance Scheme)

Where services aren't quite hitting the mark…

New resources for people with disabilities being hosted on inaccessible websites, or published in inaccessible formats

Inclusive design scope is too narrow – doesn't factor in everyone

Acknowledging intersectionality, but not addressing all elements of it

Benefits of digital inclusion for mental health services

Ease of access means that users can access services when they need it the most

Readable – Having services in a language and format that users will be able to understan

Input Assistance – Allows users to access the most relevant information to them

One of the (rare) instances when policy matters!

All mental health services receive a significant amount of government funding

This means they have to follow any government policy – that includes web accessibility

Ireland is the country taking charge with the Health Service Executive – only government health agency with its own ICT policy that includes accessibility

Example: Beyondblue

Leading example: Beyondblue

Has been contributing to policy work on the NDIS and mental health since 2011, and has funded disability-related mental health projects for more than 10 years

Most recent website development has incorporated accessibility into technical brief

Digital outputs with partnership organisations (which are partly funded by Beyondblue) will often have accessibility incorporated into technical brief

Example: eHeadspace
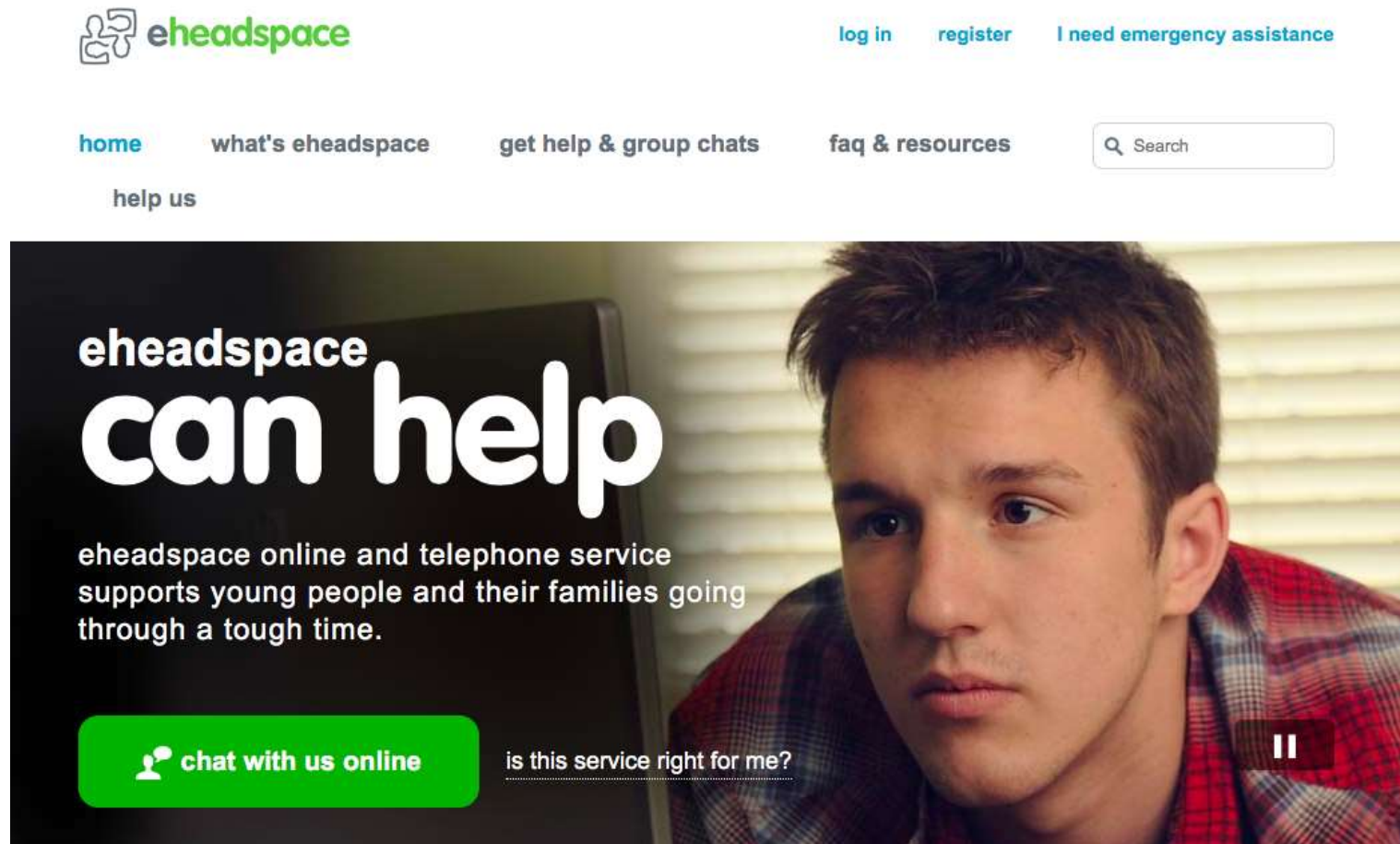
Leading example: eHeadspace

Online chat service developed to complement headspace centres, offer immediate support

Has supported 68,000 young people, and hosted 188,000 chat sessions (almost 4 million messages have been exchanged in those sessions)

Conforming to WCAG 2.0 Level AA was specifically included in the technical brief of the development of the service

Example: ReachOut.com
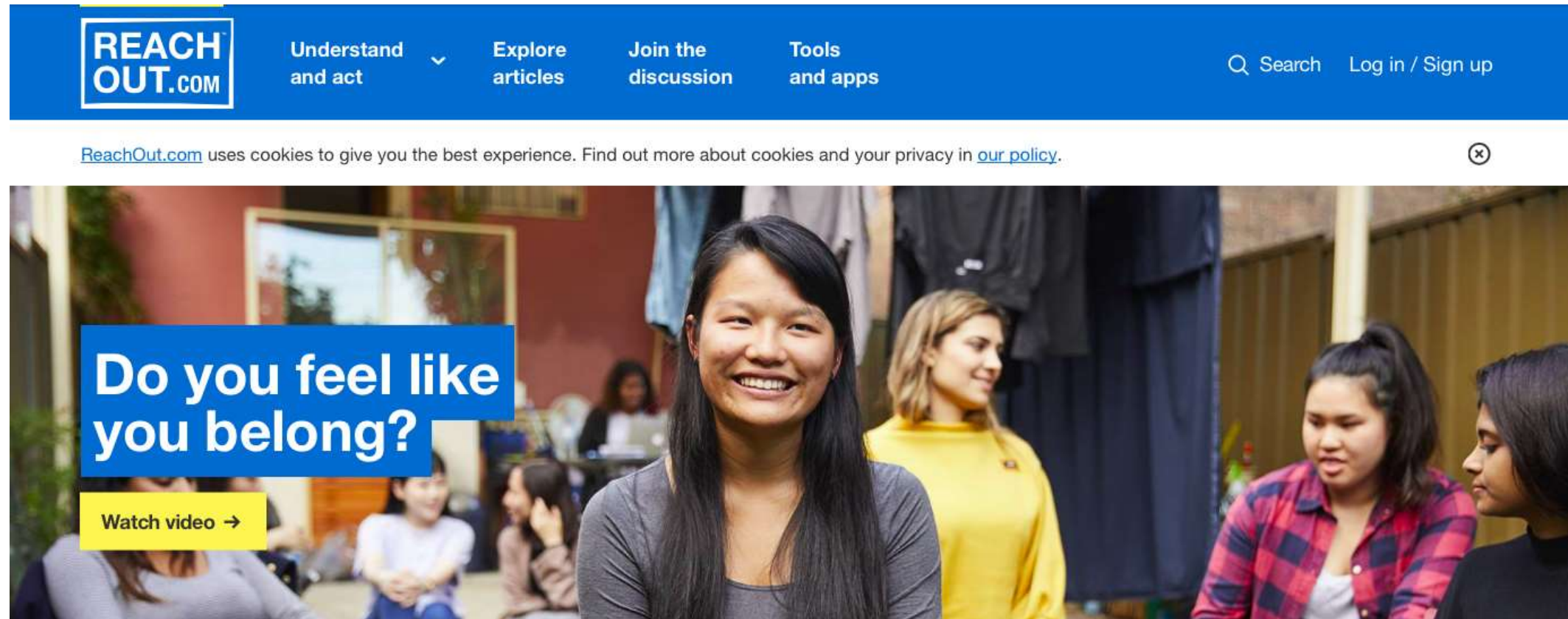
Leading example: ReachOut.com

First began providing resources, stories and factsheets for people with a disability in 2013 – however the website had no accessibility requirement

Most recent platform refresh specified WCAG 2.0 Level AA in its technical brief as a result of user feedback

First mental health service in Australia to include an accessibility statement on its website

Government funded mental health projects

An increasing number of mental health services and projects that are federally funded are required to be accessible

Organisations that are closer to hitting the mark aren't talking about it!

But to be fair, the ones that aren't quite there yet aren't either

What's next? What's needed?

A holistic approach – Support those making progress, but highlight the need for truly inclusive design

Informing organisations of the need for digital inclusion, particularly those focusing on support for people with a disability (often subject to funding arrangements)

Organisations who are factoring in digital inclusion need accessibility statements

Government funding and policy – digital inclusion should be a core requirement

Let's continue the conversation

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