

Western Australian Enhanced Family Support Networks An integrated, collaborative service delivery model

Introduction

Enhanced Family Support Networks (FSNs) are a key component within the suite of services in the *Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy*¹ (the Strategy). The Strategy provides a framework for the alignment of the service system to meet the current needs of families most vulnerable to their children entering out-of-home care (OOHC).

The enhanced FSNS are trauma informed, culturally competent and prioritise the needs of Aboriginal families. The Lead Agency is funded by the Department of Communities (the Department) to provide two streams of service: *Intensive Case Management*, and *Assessment and Coordination*.

The enhanced FSNS include a Lead Agency and integrated Partner Agencies that provide targeted support to families most at risk of child protection intervention. The Partner Agency services include family support and counselling, targeted parenting support, homelessness services, family and domestic violence intervention, services for young people, and targeted community support.

Trauma Informed service

The FSN service environment recognises the impact of multiple traumas on the child or young person's development and behaviours, and the critical importance of safety and quality in relationships. Physical and psychological safety, self-regulation skills and strengths-based development of the child or young person are a focus across all activities. Organisational environments need to support a trauma informed way of working and be responsive to specialist supports when required. Healthy relationships and good communication between all stakeholders must be supported.

Culturally responsive

A critical component of the enhanced service model is the expectation that the Lead Agency will prioritise and increase direct service provision to Aboriginal children and families and actively work towards engaging with the local Aboriginal community. In order to engage with and develop meaningful relationships with the Aboriginal Community it is necessary for the Lead Agency to work alongside Aboriginal services and adapt a more culturally responsive approach.

To achieve this, the Lead Agency will engage Aboriginal services including the Aboriginal In-Home Support Service to become active Partner Agencies of the FSN. This may include attendance at FSN case conferences for joint families, and working collaboratively through joint visits to families in their home or community.

¹ *Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy* (2016). Government of Western Australia Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

Intensive Case Management

The *Intensive Case Management* service will accept referrals from the Department only. The target group for the intensive case management service is families who require intensive support keep their children safely at home. Priority for referrals should be given to Aboriginal families and children.

The Lead Agency provides active and persistent case management to achieve the case plan goals. Most case management and support is provided within the family's home, through a 'hands on' practical style of case management.

Active and persistent case management includes making repeated attempts to engage with families who are hard to reach or difficult to make contact with. This includes home visits, phone calls, and contact with other services or people families are known to. Contact is maintained frequently and consistently over time, and attempts are made to reach families when they disengage. This style of case management requires the service to be responsible for the engagement process with families and to have flexible and adaptable strategies to achieve meaningful engagement.

The *Intensive Case Management* case plan includes a step-down approach, enabling a clear focus with exit and transition planning. The focus of the service response is intensive initially, with a clear step down plan to medium/low intensity, this occurs within a 12 month time frame.

Assessment and Coordination

The *Assessment and Coordination* service can receive referrals from the Department, FSN Partner Agencies, non-partner agencies in the community and families themselves. The target group for the *Assessment and Coordination* service is vulnerable children and families, young people aged up to 25 years and families involved with or known to multiple agencies and who have had previous involvement with the Department.

The Lead Agency *Assessment and Coordination* service links the family with a Partner Agency who will coordinate the range of services required and/or provide case management. This process includes an allocations meeting and may also include a case conference with the family, the Department worker, and Partner Agencies to ensure an efficient and integrated multi-service response that addresses the case plan goals.

Partnerships

The Lead Agency works in partnership with the Department and other identified stakeholders. Secondary Family Support services operating in the metropolitan area actively participate as Partner Agencies of the FSN. The Partner Agencies that are operating for the current FSNs are included on www.wafsn.org.au. Strong collaborative relationships form the basis of these partnerships. Relevant Aboriginal services and the Aboriginal In-home Support Service are also active Partner Agencies of the FSN in the enhanced model.

Leader Child Protection

The Leader Child Protection position is co-located at the FSN site and prioritises referrals for the intensive case management service. The Leader Child Protection provides specialist advice, guidance, education, training and support regarding child protection matters to the service provider and partner agencies as required, undertakes signs of safety mapping and assessment when necessary, and maintains close working relationships with district offices with the metropolitan corridor where the FSN operates.

Outcomes

The FSN contributes to the achievement of the Department's desired outcome that families and individuals are assisted to overcome their risks and crises, are kept safe and are diverted from the child protection system. The FSN participates in developing and contributing to the evaluation process and outcomes reporting as required.

Training and Support

Regular training and reflective practice for practitioners and managers is essential to the provision of quality services for clients. It is in this context that practitioners can learn and develop, analyse and plan interventions, consider dilemmas and concerns, and develop strategies to guide their work. FSN staff and partner agencies have access to the suite of professional development opportunities provided through their in-house organisational training opportunities and the Learning and Development Portal within the Department.

Governance

Governance for FSNs is focused on overall interagency leadership and management, alongside operational needs. Governance arrangements support across government and community sector information sharing, local level planning, and ensure a whole of government response to vulnerable families.