

The logo features a blue arrow pointing to the right. Inside the arrow's shaft, the text 'Western Australian Family Support Networks' is written in white. The arrow's tail is a rounded rectangle containing the descriptive text.

**Western Australian
Family Support Networks**

Local networks of high quality, integrated services
that support families and young people at risk.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORKS

Roles and Responsibilities

Revised January 2016

FOREWORD

Approaches to the protection of children can be conceptualised in a similar way to the public health services model of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. This serves to illustrate the relational aspects in child protection service delivery (see Table 1.1 below).

Most families require access to a broad range of services to support the wellbeing of themselves and their children. Some require additional services to address particular vulnerabilities and need. Families generally are able to identify their own service needs and negotiate the system, particularly in the primary or universal services domain.

Some individuals and families will at times require specialist and targeted secondary services to respond to their needs and a small number require tertiary statutory child protection services to keep children safe.

Table 1.1 Levels of Intervention to Protect Children.

Intervention	Target Group	Definition
Primary or Universal	Whole communities and families generally	Services/interventions that build capacity in communities and families to address common needs and prevent problems from arising
Secondary	Families who are vulnerable or in crisis Families at risk of child abuse or neglect	Targeted services that support families and children to address identified risks and prevent them from escalating.
Tertiary	Families in which child abuse or neglect has occurred	Services to prevent abuse or neglect from re-occurring and to alleviate the impacts of abuse or neglect.

Western Australian Family Support Networks

Family Support Networks (FSNs) are a partnership of community sector services and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department), providing a common entry point to services, delivering earlier, targeted support to families.

FSNs operate at the secondary services level providing access to integrated services and support for families, children and young people who are at risk or facing an immediate crisis. FSNs play an important role in the early intervention and provision of support and services to prevent a family's situation from worsening to the point where it requires a statutory response. Families may also need support to re-establish themselves following a tertiary or crisis intervention.

Families will typically present with complex and multiple needs, and may be affected by one or more of the following:

- violence or threats of violence in the home;
- misuse of alcohol, drugs and/or other substances;
- mental health issues;
- recurring financial crises due to low income and/or limited budgeting skills;
- homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless;
- serious family conflict or problematic family relationships; and
- inadequate parenting skills.

INTRODUCTION

This document has been developed to assist Family Support Network stakeholders in relation to the roles and responsibilities of staff and agencies operating within or working with a FSN. It builds on the guidance outlined in *the WA Family Support Network Operating Framework*.

It is intended to be used as a guide, recognising that different FSNs may need to adapt certain roles and responsibilities to suit local needs. For example, the lead agency may wish to adapt certain lead agency roles, or utilise existing staff to carry out some of the duties that are described below.

This document builds upon existing FSN resources and should be read in conjunction with:

- Family Support Networks - An integrated, collaborative service delivery model;
- Family Support Networks - Operating Framework;
- Family Support Networks - Assessment and Planning Framework
- The Interface between WA Family Support Networks and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support.
- Secondary Services Working Together - Information Sharing Protocol.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lead Agency / Common Entry Point

FSNs provide a common entry point into the local integrated family services system. The common entry point is coordinated by the lead agency. The common entry point operates during business hours 8.30am – 5.00pm; Monday to Friday – and is the central point of coordination for services involved in the FSN.

Common entry points deliver:

- staffing of a 1300 number;
- advice and support to clients;
- initial screening and assessment;
- facilitated referral pathways for services and clients.

The lead agency has a key role in:

- bringing secondary family support services together across the district in an integrated and coordinated way;
- educating the community about the role and purpose of the FSN;
- establishing working relationships that bring together services from the universal and tertiary sector in response to the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families within the district;
- establishing a local governance structure for the FSN by convening local steering and operations groups.

The lead agency is responsible for:

- managing the common entry point;
- undertaking client screening and assessments;
- managing the capacity of the FSN, including active holding;
- providing secretariat support to the local steering and operations group (unless a partner agency is identified in the MOU as having this responsibility);
- monthly reporting to the operations and steering group;
- six monthly progress reporting to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department);
- service planning – mapping the current services system and developing a local service plan to support the operation of the FSN;
- relationship management with services across the FSN (refer to MOU for dispute resolution procedures);
- ongoing FSN coordination and collaboration (this role may be shared across the FSN agencies as part of an agreed process outlined in the MOU for the FSN).

Lead Agency Staff

The lead agency is staffed with an alliance manager, two assessment and support officers, a leader child protection and a part time administration officer. Each of these staff have different roles in carrying out the functions of the lead agency.

Alliance Manager

Lead agency:

- manages lead agency funding contract requirements;
- provides reports to the Department as required.

Common entry point:

- ensures the effective functioning of the common entry point team – including providing supervision, support and leadership;
- holds decision making authority with regard to assessment and referral;
- develops, manages and monitors referral, intake and allocations systems and work practices;
- maintains up to date information on capacity of member agencies;
- facilitates joint allocation meetings;
- provides active holding of assessed cases awaiting allocation;
- supports functions of Assessment and Support Officers when required;

- provides regular reports to the local Steering and Operations Group on key indicators such as referrals, case allocations, priority targets, and agency capacity.

Local FSN:

- ensures the effective functioning of the FSN;
- relationship management with partner agencies and other services;
- service mapping – initial map prior to commencement of FSN and maintenance of mapping to allow for new services as well as changes to existing services;
- manage and monitor MOUs and FSN relationships;
- identifying emerging issues and trends;
- ensuring practices within the FSN comply with relevant legislation, funding and service agreements and other external requirements.

Assessment and Support Officers

- receives initial FSN referrals;
- client screening – collection of client information, including demographic data, cultural background, family structure, previous service history and presenting issue;
- undertake stage one assessment;
- undertake stage two assessment;
- undertake assessment of underlying risk in consultation with the Leader Child Protection and other relevant services/professionals;
- identify the service responses required for families related to the assessment of needs and underlying risks;
- develop initial case plan in consultation with client;
- brief intervention – this may include:
 - information;
 - advice;
 - advocacy;
 - brief therapeutic intervention (for example, single counselling session over the phone);
- referral to a universal service or other service outside the FSN;
- case allocation - actively engage with families to determine the priority of a response and allocation of families to secondary services, in consultation with secondary services and leader child protection (where required):
 - referral for specific service (into or out of FSN).
 - complex needs, multi-service referral (into or out of FSN).
- active holding (subject to local procedures, lead agency Assessment and Support Workers may undertake active holding) – this may include:
 - initial home visit;
 - the development of a plan of action that can be implemented by the family;
 - referral to supported playgroups, mother's groups or parenting support groups;
 - referral to universal services;
 - case conferencing; and
 - telephone contact to and from the family to touch base and assess if the family's situation has changed.

Leader Child Protection

The Department provides a leader child protection worker to work within each FSN. The leader child protection has the full range of statutory responsibilities and reports directly to the

Department's district director. The leader child protection contributes to the effective operation of the common entry point and the local FSN.

The leader child protection provides:

- specialist consultation, support and advice relating to initial assessment, particularly in relation to child protection issues;
- advice and liaison to FSN agencies concerned about a child or family in their service;
- advice and liaison with the Department district office in relation to clients of the Department who are involved in the FSN;
- referral to the district office when child protection issues are identified;
- provision of consultation and advice on specific cases to the common entry point and FSN partner agencies, including safety planning to enable ongoing case coordination;
- collaborative case work, including supporting engagement, home visits and case conferences with the common entry point and partner agencies; and
- participate in the local governance structures of the FSN.

Administration Officer (Part time)

- provides administrative support to lead agency staff;
- administrative duties may include:
 - reception duties;
 - data entry; and
 - compilation of reports.

FSN Partner Agencies

It is the responsibility of each partner agency to participate actively in the alliance. This includes ensuring agencies attend all relevant meetings and representatives who attend meetings have the appropriate authority to make necessary commitments on behalf of their organisation.

FSN partner agencies undertake:

- client screening – collection of client information (if a client self refers to a member agency) using the Assessment and Planning Framework.
- liaison with the common entry point immediately after client screening;
- accept referrals from the common entry point;
- inform the common entry point of agency capacity to provide secondary services;
- participate in joint allocation processes as required;
- entering client data in FuSioN, the FSN IT system as required;
- active holding (subject to local procedures, partner agencies may undertake active holding) – this may include:
 - initial home visit;
 - the development of a plan of action that can be implemented by the family;
 - referral to supported playgroups, mother's groups or parenting support groups;
 - referral to universal services;
 - case conferencing; and
 - telephone contact to and from the family to touch base and assess if the family's situation has changed.
- deliver secondary family support services; and

- provide “monitoring” services (Service Intensity Model – 3a, refer to *The WA Family Support Network Operating Framework*).

Case Allocation Groups

FSN local case allocation groups are responsible for joint decision making processes for case allocation to ensure referrals are allocated with due consideration to their priority of access (based on greatest risk and need) and agency capacity to respond (ensuring a timely response).

The case allocations group is also be responsible for managing active holding, with cases on active hold being reviewed at every case allocation meeting.

Government Agencies & Other Human Services

Each FSN will develop relationships with relevant State and Commonwealth Government agencies at the local level.

There are a range of other services within the community that will not become partner agencies of the FSNs, including:

- universal/primary services (for example, childcare, hospitals, schools, general practitioners);
- other secondary services that are not part of the FSN (for example, drug and alcohol, mental health, disability); and
- specialist services (for example, crisis response services, specialist medical).

These services provide key avenues for referral into and out of the FSN. Partner agencies of the FSN may undertake consultation with universal, specialist and/or other secondary services regarding FSN clients.

Department for Child Protection and Family Support District Offices

The local Department office will become a partner agency of the FSN through the district director. The district director may be supported by the assistant district director.

Department offices employ a leader child protection, who is based in the local FSN common entry point.

The Department district offices will:

- refer cases to the FSN;
- receive notifications from the FSN;
- work collaboratively with the FSNs where cases are transitioning between the Department and FSN;
- provide professional supervision and support to the leader child protection;
- participate in local FSN steering groups (district director or assistant district director);
- provide Responsible Parenting Services - Best Beginnings and Parent Support.

The Department uses the *Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework (Signs of Safety)* to identify risk and protective factors in a child’s (and their family’s) life and to undertake assessment and planning. *Signs of Safety* is embedded in the FSN overall operating framework and common assessment processes and helps to maximise family

involvement and support, sharing of information and collaborative decision-making in planning for the safety of children.

Department for Child Protection and Family Support (Head Office)

- manage partnering relationships through the Community Sector Roundtable and with other Government agencies – Policy and Learning;
- evaluation of FSN model – Policy and Learning.
- contract Management – Non-Government Policy and Funding;
- ongoing liaison with FSN – Non-Government Policy and Funding/Policy and Learning; and
- FuSioN data system – Client Applications.

Governance at the FSN Level

Governance at the FSN level involves two tiers – the local steering and operations group. These two tiers are known collectively as the alliance structure for the FSN and have accountability for the overall operation of the FSN. These groups do not have a contractual role over partner agencies.

Local Steering Group

Membership of the local steering group will be drawn from the agencies involved in the FSN. The local steering group comprises of:

- the most senior local area managers (with the highest level of decision making authority) from all of the FSN partner agencies;
- the lead agency alliance manager;
- the chairperson of the operations group;
- the Department's district director or assistant district director; and
- other local services (for example, those services that may not be directly involved in the FSN but will be a key provider of services in the FSN location, such as universal services or specialist services).

The local steering group will initially meet monthly to support the establishment of the FSN. Once the establishment phase has been successfully completed the local steering group will meet quarterly.

The local steering group has responsibility for oversight of the establishment and successful implementation of the FSN within each district. The roles of the local steering group include:

1. Local area planning

- develop and implement interagency agreements including Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and information sharing protocols between FSN member agencies;
- population and service needs for the FSN population and geography;
- performance and outcome measures for the FSN;
- strategies to support and improve services to meet local plan objectives;
- identify and implement linkages and coordination points with other FSN's and partnerships within the region or catchment; and
- oversee local area service mapping and planning.

2. Operational management

- developing local processes and procedures for:
 - intake of clients through the common entry point;
 - assessment of client needs;
 - prioritisation of clients;
 - information sharing; and
 - referral and allocation of clients to agencies within the FSN based on the parameters of the operating framework and agreed MOUs.
- preparing workforce strategies across the FSN;
- reviewing processes and procedures within the FSN to ensure that they effectively meet their stated objectives; and
- assisting to build the capacity of local Aboriginal agencies.

3. Coordination of service delivery

- management and coordination of local processes and procedures;
- seek service capacity information at agency level and introduce mechanisms for monitoring availability of services across the FSN;
- coordination of information sharing process;
- identification of gaps in the range of available services to meet clients needs;
- provision of professional development and/or peer supervision at the local catchment level;
- identify and address emerging and systemic issues impacting on the quality and effectiveness of service delivery by the FSN; and
- provide a mechanism for conflict resolution.

Local Operations Group

Members of the operations group are drawn from the FSN agencies. The operations group comprises of:

- senior operational managers of FSN member agencies;
- the leader child protection;
- nominated practitioners from the lead agency, including those not involved in the intake/assessment function.

The operations group will meet monthly so that matters associated with the FSN's operation can be identified, addressed and resolved in a timely manner.

The operations group has responsibility for development, implementation and monitoring the operational processes, procedures and activities undertaken by the FSN.

The operations group will have responsibility for:

- facilitation of change management processes to transform existing family support services into an integrated partnerships-based service delivery system;
- supporting the implementation of operational processes and procedures such as client screening, assessment, prioritisation, referral and allocation to support the activities of the FSN;
- identification, promotion, and implementation of capacity building strategies for staff working within the FSN;
- monitoring service capacity across the FSN;

- development and maintenance of a service directory to support FSN activities;
- development and monitoring of strategies to ensure culturally competent practice across the FSN;
- coordination and facilitation of the use of data across the FSN so that demand, capacity and reporting can be undertaken effectively; and
- convening of time limited and specific purpose standing committees to undertake key projects on behalf of the FSN.

Liability

It is the responsibility of all parties in the FSN to maintain their own professional indemnity insurance. A potential litigant may choose to instigate proceedings against any or all agencies involved in providing a service, including the Department. For that reason all agencies need to have their own cover to protect their interests, as required in Department Service Agreements.