



Western Australian Family Support Networks An Integrated, collaborative service delivery model

Introduction

This document provides an overview of the Western Australian (WA) Family Support Networks (FSNs) and the key elements of the FSN model.

FSNs are a partnership of community sector services and the Department of Communities (Communities), providing a common entry point to services and delivering earlier, targeted support to families with complex problems and those most vulnerable to involvement with the child protection system.

FSNs operate across the metropolitan area in four service corridors. Each corridor is managed by a Lead Agency from the community services sector. Each lead agency is partnered with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO). The table below lists FSN locations and Lead Agencies.

Service Corridors	Lead Agency	ACCO Partner
Mirrabooka / Joondalup	Mercy Community Services Incorporated	Yorgum
Perth / Midland	Centrecare	Wungening
Cannington / Armadale	Centrecare	Wungening
Fremantle / Rockingham	Communicare	Yorgum

Lead Agencies partner with local family support services (Partner Agencies) to form an FSN alliance of agencies in their corridor. This alliance provides targeted support to families including counselling, parenting support, homelessness services, and family and domestic violence intervention.

Aim

FSNs provide family support services to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. The core aims of the FSNs are to help families:

- Improve parenting skills to safely care for their children at home.
- Receive an integrated and coordinated service response to divert them from the child protection system.
- Develop and strengthen culturally safe support networks.

Families who require intensive support services can often find it difficult to navigate the service system or are reluctant to engage. When required, the FSN will actively reach out to connect with these families and support them to access the services they need.

Common entry point

The Lead Agency establishes a common entry point for families to access family support services within each service corridor. At the common entry point, the Lead Agency manages a team including the Alliance Manager, Assessment and Support Officers, Intensive Case Managers and an Administration Officer. A Child Protection Leader is also co-located at the FSN.

No wrong door

FSNs use a 'no wrong door' philosophy. This means that regardless of which agency families first present to, they are connected to the services and supports they require. This reduces the need for families to repeat their stories as they connect with different services.

Service streams

FSNs provide two streams of service:

1. The **Assessment and Coordination** service prioritises referrals from Aboriginal families. It accepts referrals from Communities, FSN Partner Agencies, Non-Partner Agencies in the community and families themselves. The service works with vulnerable children and families, young people aged up to 25 years and families involved with or known to multiple agencies, including Communities.

This service assesses family needs and either coordinates a range of services to work with the family or linking the family with a Partner Agency that will coordinate the services they need and/or provide case management.

2. The **Intensive Case Management** service prioritises referrals from Aboriginal families. This service accepts referrals from Communities only and is for families who require intensive support to keep their children safely at home. In this service stream, families may be reluctant to engage or difficult to reach and the Lead Agency provides active and persistent case management to achieve meaningful engagement and the case plan goals. Most case management and support are provided within the family's home through practical 'hands on' support.

Collaboration

Allocations meetings are held regularly, bringing together representatives from each of the FSN agencies to facilitate an integrated service response to families. This is particularly important for complex cases where multiple services are involved, so that agencies are aware of which other services are working with the family and to identify who is best placed to undertake case management.

Trauma-informed

Many families accessing FSNs have experienced significant trauma and need extensive supports to improve their stability and wellbeing. FSN services recognise the impact of multiple traumas on children and families and the critical importance of building safe and trusting relationships. Physical and psychological safety, self-regulation skills and the strengths-based development of children or young people are a focus of FSN activities. When required, FSN's link children and families to specialist supports.

Culturally responsive

A critical component of the FSN model is a focus on supporting vulnerable Aboriginal children and families by actively engaging local Aboriginal services as partner agencies and building relationships with local Aboriginal communities.

FSN agencies are designed to deliver a more culturally responsive way of working by maintaining an understanding of the concepts of 'family' and 'kinship' as they exist for Aboriginal people. This also means recognising the therapeutic value of connection to culture,

family and community when working with Aboriginal families, supporting opportunities for families to participate in their culture and draw support from their community.

Active Hold

If a service is not immediately available following assessment, the FSN will implement an 'active holding' strategy so that the family is supported while they are waiting to receive a service, rather than being waitlisted. This enables the FSN to monitor the family and take action if required to prevent the situation from getting worse.

Child Protection Leader

A senior child protection worker is co-located at the 'common entry point'. This provides information, consultation and advice to FSN agencies when there are safety and wellbeing concerns for a child. The child protection leader undertakes assessments, makes decisions and engages timely and integrated involvement of child protection services where required.

Partnerships

The community sector lead agency partners with other family support services to form the local FSN alliance. The lead agency manages the common entry point, providing easier access to support for families. The assessment and support officers undertake initial screening and assessment to determine which agency or agencies are the best placed to respond to the specific needs of the family. After the joint case allocation process, FSN agencies work together, to support the family.

Governance

An integrated governance framework enables strategic and operational oversight and provides further information sharing opportunities, leading to more effective referral pathways, integrated local service planning, and a coordinated system response to vulnerable families.

FSN steering committees identify unmet need and demand for services in each corridor. Through working together and coordinating service delivery, service capacity is better understood and resources can be allocated or re-allocated in direct response to changes in community need across the corridor. FuSioN provides further evidence of capacity issues and is used to inform decision making about resource allocation.

Fusion

FSNs are supported by a joint data collection and case management IT system called FuSioN, which enables workers to access relevant case information including assessment, case notes, case planning and review information, to assist them in their work with a family. Workers are able to view which agencies are involved with the family, what work is being undertaken and when the work has been finalised. This reduces duplication in service provision and prevents the family from having to provide the same information to multiple agencies.

Outcomes

The FSN contributes to a key Communities outcome that families and individuals are assisted to overcome their risks and crises, are kept safe and are diverted from the child protection system.