

PRINCIPLE SIX

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES LIVE IN COMMUNITIES WITH STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES. THE BEST OUTCOMES ARE OFTEN ACHIEVED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS WHO CAN ASSIST CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN AN ONGOING WAY



Who ELSE MATTERS?



Who ELSE MATTERS?

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL FIND

- What children say they need from services working together to support them
- Information about and tips for:
 - connecting children to their natural networks: families, other children; culture; schools
 - talking with schools
 - working well with others
 - understanding and dealing with conflicts
- sharing information between services
- continuity of care and transition planning
- Great tools and resources for making partnerships work
- Tools for children and families
- A case scenario



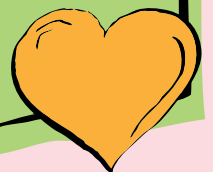
WHO ELSE MATTERS?

During periods of chaos, children and families can become disconnected from their formal and informal support networks. Wherever possible, assistance needs to be provided to help families to re-establish or recreate these networks so that support can be sustained.

The needs and issues facing children, young people and families who have experienced homelessness are often complex and ongoing. Often no single service has the capacity to respond to the broad support needs experienced during homelessness and in the transition to stable accommodation. As such, effective service delivery includes the development of partnerships with families and communities and across systems of support to ensure that outcomes are broad and sustainable. The importance of linking children to trusted adults who can continue to support them is recognised and built into transition plans.

“ When we became homeless we not only lost our home we lost all the connections, all the supports, all the people who helped us. It took a long time to find a new place where we fitted in, where we belonged, where we could feel a part of things. It was incredibly isolating and it challenged us as a family”

(parent)



Who ELSE MATTERS?

6.1

(RE)CONNECTING FAMILIES TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

Families who experience homelessness often face a whole range of challenges, and through the experience of having nowhere to stay can become disempowered, disconnected and isolated from their extended families and communities and the resources they can provide. Social psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner commented that every child needs someone in their lives who are 'irrationally crazy about them'. For parents to be able to be this for their children they too need a team of supporters who encourage and help them access the resources available in their local communities. Sometimes these supporters are formal providers (like workers in a homelessness service), but more often they are other family members close or far away, and people who live in former neighbourhoods. Parents tell us that during periods of homelessness they often lose touch with some of these supporters because:

- they move out of the local area
- they feel ashamed about their situation
- they have experienced conflict and no longer feel able to access the supports that existed prior to their homeless experience.

Services working with homeless families need, therefore, to help them develop strong, stable connections that are sustainable beyond their involvement in any particular program or system. Sometimes this can be achieved by helping them to link with other formal supports, but more often it is about helping them to link with informal networks while reconnecting them to ones that might have been fractured during periods of chaos and crisis. Most of your efforts as a worker should go into strengthening, rebuilding or enhancing a family's natural and familiar relationships.

Some natural support networks can be developed through:

- parents groups and play groups for infants
- involvement in the children's school (fete committees, reading days, tuck shop duty)
- family art and music programs

A very quick and easy scan of resources is attached as Tool 6A: People in our lives. Parents can fill out this diagram (which is based loosely on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model) during an early assessment or case-planning meeting; this can be followed up with a discussion about how the parent might stay in contact with these champions and continue to benefit from their support.



Workers should also consider how they might support these connections:

- by providing transport
- by enabling space for people to visit families while in the service
- by coaching parents in ways to rebuild fractured relationships and resolve conflicts.

The Australian Government has developed a series of resources to help families who are separated or separating. In them there is a wealth of tips and strategies for helping adults to remain connected to children. They can be accessed at: www.familyseparation.humanservices.gov.au

Who ELSE MATTERS?



RE)CONNECTING CHILDREN WITH CHAMPIONS

Just as it is important for parents to be connected to communities, so is it important for children to be so. Research on development and resilience has shown that children are most likely to thrive when surrounded by groups of strong, positive, trustworthy and consistent adults who enable children to take risks and to grow in a nurturing environment. Within the child's support network, while helping their parents to deal with any challenges that might arise, these adults can provide kids with:

- emotional support
- information and advice
- play and companionship
- material support.

Children, parents and workers in the *Finding their way home* study stressed the importance of children having consistent, stable and trusting relationships with adults in addition to their parents. This reflects research into children's coping that asserts the need for children to feel connected to and guided by positive, affirming and consistent adults who provide them with stability. Young people shared stories of workers who had been around for 'the long haul' and who had made a big impression on their lives.

Due to the nature of the service system, workers are not always able to be consistent, significant support people. Although children can greatly benefit from the short periods they spend with workers it is critical that workers are mindful of the potential harm to children that can result when they develop a bond with a worker and then the relationship ends abruptly without consideration of how the bond might be either maintained or recreated with another stable adult. The potential for harm should be minimised particularly when a child has already experienced losses, rejection, trauma or abandonment.

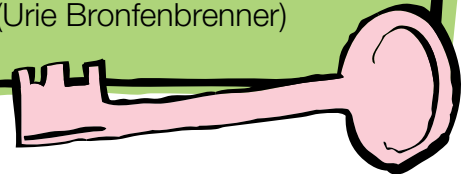
"He was like a kind giant for me. He was such a big dude but was the nicest person. He tried to help me out as much as he can. I remember the positive effect for me from when I was really young... He kept coming back and back, he was there for a long time so you could come back to him"

(Young man, aged 18)



If we can stand on our own two feet, it is because others have raised us up. If, as adults, we can lay claim to competence and compassion, it only means that other human beings have been willing and enabled to commit their competence and compassion to us—through infancy, childhood, and adolescence, right up to this very moment.

(Urie Bronfenbrenner)



Who ELSE MATTERS?

It is important that workers consider how the bond might be maintained, or recreated with another stable adult. If neither is possible it is important that the ending of the contact is sensitive and gradual. The worker should share feelings with the child or young person about the good things that they have done together and let them know that it is also hard for the worker to say goodbye. This is, after all, an opportunity to model honest, responsible ways of ending things for children who have often experienced the reverse.

Parents reported that during periods of homelessness, children often had special adults come in and out of their lives and that they often felt a sense of loss when they were separated:


“The boys had been abandoned by their father and then they felt abandoned time and time again by workers and people who moved in and out of their lives”

(Mother)

One parent reported that this had a damaging effect on her child, leading him to become closed off with adults:

“No one attached to him because he has a wall around him. He tried to put up the wall so he wouldn’t get hurt again. And his...worker just dropped him because they couldn’t crack him and they didn’t think it was worth it. I thought, ‘Great, another person who’s abandoned him!’

(Mother)



“It was real hard, man when he told me he couldn’t help anymore cos the youth service didn’t work with guys like me. It was like being kicked in the guts, man. Like he had turned his back on you. I could tell he was cut too – but they just said ‘no’ to him helping. I know my life had changed, but I still needed him just as much as before and there was no one else who I’d like made that connection with, man. I was like all alone again and that hurt... It felt like it was my Dad walking off on me again”

(Young man, aged 15)

Who ELSE MATTERS?

Recognising this, it is important that services work with parents to foster as many positive adult relationships as possible. Some semi-formal champions who might be available for children can be fostered through:

- organised sporting teams that are ongoing
- sporting or other recreational activities that don't necessarily need an ongoing commitment (such as orienteering or little athletics)
- team activities such as Scouts or Guides
- mentoring programs (such as Barnardo's Kids Friend)
- holiday camps and activities (such as those run by St Vincent de Paul, YMCA).

In developing transition plans, a key consideration needs to be "how do I foster relationships that will be able to support children and families through and beyond their periods of support from our program".



TOOL 6E 'It takes a village' can be completed either with individual children or with family groups, to identify how well connected children and families already are.

Workers should consider how their service might enhance these relationships and help families maintain these links.



Who ELSE MATTERS?

6.3

CONNECTING KIDS WITH COMMUNITIES

For children in the *Finding their way home* project, home was about being connected to their local communities, feeling like they 'fitted in' and that they had friends and other supports around them:

"the best thing about that place was we were good friends with the people who lived behind us, we removed part of the fence so that we could go from one place to the other easily"

(Young woman, aged 15)



Many shared that the most difficult aspect of moving was having to leave their schools, their friends and the local neighbourhoods, and they felt that if there was a way for them to remain connected to these people and places they wouldn't find moving so traumatic. Workers believed that this sense of connection was the greatest need and the most important therapeutic goal for homeless children.

Some of the children reported that not having transport was a significant issue for them and often kept their families from participating in community life. Although they realised that there was public transport available, not having enough money to pay for tickets meant that many felt trapped:

"if we couldn't even afford to have somewhere to stay how could we afford to be able to go places?"

(Girl, aged 12)

"It was hell because we had to walk everywhere because we didn't have a car"

(Girl, aged 12)

They believed that to reduce their isolation, to remain connected to their support networks and to improve their situation they needed support to access transport to be able to get to where their friends, families and supporters were.

Tool 6E 'It takes a village' can be completed either with individual children or with family groups, to identify how well connected children and families already are. Workers should consider how their service might enhance these relationships and help families maintain these links.

Who ELSE MATTERS?



CONNECTING KIDS WITH OTHER KIDS

Siblings, cousins, peers and friends are an extremely important source of support for children. During periods of homelessness children may take on roles of protecting, organising and nurturing younger siblings and even parents. The skills and sense of responsibility and connection developed during these hard times are a very important part of a child's safety and future. It is important to recognise and value this and allow some flexibility around how children care for each other while at the same time giving children permission to let go of some responsibilities once they know their family is going to be OK. It may be necessary for older siblings to help settle younger siblings in school for example, particularly if there is a very strong attachment and parents have been temporarily unable, for whatever reason, to fulfil that role.

[Q: What's the best thing about having a big family?] "That some people can take care of me while everyone's gone"

(Girl, aged 9)

[The worst thing about being homeless is that I "you don't get to see your family when you wake up...only some [of the people]...I miss my sisters so much"

(Girl aged 10)

When families are broken up during periods of homelessness (this can happen due to the removal of a child because particular services can't accommodate children of particular ages, or because other important extended family members need to stay elsewhere) it is important for services to consider how they might work with other agencies to ensure that some connection is maintained. In *Finding their way home* one young father talked about his experience:

"Yeah, its [real bad] you know. My girl had somewhere to stay with our kid and that was all good cos, you know, the baby was still small and needed somewhere to stay, right. But I had to sleep on the street to be near 'em, hey. Cos I got into a refuge but it was on the other side of town and it was too far, you know. I love 'em so much I couldn't bear being that far away from 'em - especially just after he was born. So I slept on a bench, in the cold. But it was worth it"

(Young man, aged 21)



Children need people in order to become human.... It is primarily through observing, playing, and working with others older and younger than himself that a child discovers both what he can do and who he can become - that he develops both his ability and his identity.... Hence to relegate children to a world of their own is to deprive them of their humanity, and ourselves as well.

(Bronfenbrenner)



Working with other services to enable families to stay connected seems vital during periods of chaos.

Who ELSE MATTERS?

6.5

CONNECTING TO CULTURE

Children and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) families often stress the important part that culture plays in their lives. Workers are encouraged to consider ways in which they might foster these relationships during periods of support.

In the Institute of Child Protection Studies report *They've Gotta Listen*, children who had been removed from their families shared that culture played a central part in their lives, commenting that:

"culture holds you together, keeps you going"

"it's like what helps you through"

"culture is who you are, so if you don't know it you don't know who you are"

"it's like your family, where you come from, something you've got in common, it's like everything"

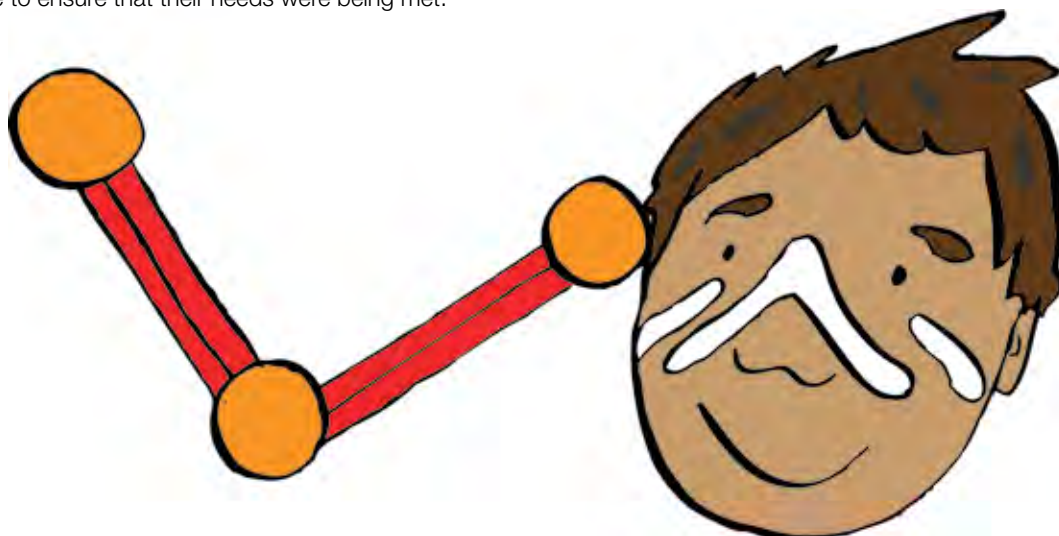
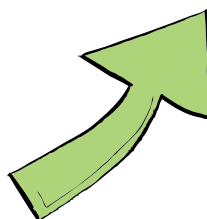
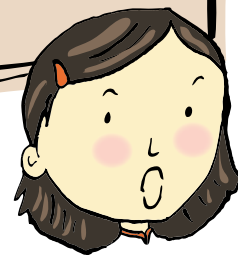
"culture's the thing that makes us different to other"

[young people]

Young people in the *They've Gotta Listen* project stressed the value that they placed on the support they received from their communities – the advice and guidance they received from elders and other important adults and the care they received from the community more broadly. They felt that often workers in the system did not fully appreciate the resources available in the community and that if they did, better links might be made to ensure that their needs were being met.

We're strong and we're courageous. We're deadly, man and we're gonna fight for our people. We're not gonna lie down.

(from They've Gotta Listen)



Who ELSE MATTERS?

The NT Government suggests the following strategies for keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) children connected to their communities and enabling culture to strengthen and build resilience in children:

✓ **RESPECTING** A&TSI culture in the home (eg admiring and talking about A&TSI role models, maintaining links to the child's culture through art, music, stories etc)

✓ **ATTENDING NAIDOC** celebrations and community events, eg local sporting carnivals

INCREASING your own awareness and understanding of A&TSI culture in order to be more supportive of A&TSI children in care

✓ **PROVIDING** a child with lots of support and positive reinforcement to enhance a child's positive view of themselves, their culture and identity

✓ **BEING ACCEPTING** of the child's family, their background, lifestyle and culture, and encouraging the child to discuss their family in a positive, yet realistic way

✓ **HELPING** children to discuss and appreciate differences, and teaching them resilience and strategies to deal with people who are not as accepting of differences

HELPING the child to keep a 'Life Story Book', which is a special journal about them that can contain information or photos about themselves and their family, where they are from, stories and photos about access visits, plus participation in cultural events.



Who ELSE MATTERS?



CONNECTING WITH SCHOOL

In *Finding their way home* families told us that although they often moved schools during periods of homelessness, the number of school moves was often less than half the number of house moves. Families shared that schools often provided kids with relative stability and played a pivotal role in helping kids weather the difficulties they faced when in unstable accommodation.

Children and young people in the study placed great value on their schooling – not only because they enjoyed learning and socialising with peers but also because they believed that it gave them some stability, particularly when their home lives or circumstances were chaotic.

"Schools can help kids by being safe and its somewhere you know what's going to happen next. That's good for kids"

(Boy, aged 10)

SAFETY: Schools also proved to be a 'safe place' for many of the children and young people participating in the project. While there, children felt shielded from the violence, the uncertainty and the fear they had experienced in the other spheres of their lives. They believed schools had worked hard to make sure they were safe (see Guide 1 for more on the importance of predictability, routines and physical, psychological and social safety).

NORMALITY: Children also liked going to school because it provided them with a sense of normality. This sense of normality appeared not only to be one of the reasons why children wanted to go to school but also one of the key reasons why children often did not talk about their situation with teachers and others. Many children feared that if they shared their family's circumstances they would be treated differently, given unwanted attention or, in some cases, looked down upon for their family's predicament.

Children explained that being embarrassed about their situation or how their homes looked kept them from seeking support. Others were instructed by parents not to let people at school know what was happening at home for fear of being taken from their families:

"They didn't know because you don't tell them because it's like too embarrassing"

(Boy, aged 6)

"Mum didn't want people at school to know where we were living so I didn't go to school all the time"

(Young man, aged 14)

"I dunno if schools can help. They might tell Family Services and then you would get taken away and put in a [youth] refuge and I know people who've been in the refuges and they say it sux - they'd rather be on the streets or being bashed or whatever [than being in a youth refuge]"

(Young man, aged 14)



Who ELSE MATTERS?

Although they felt reluctant to seek assistance, some of the children felt that schools should identify and then support families who were homeless. They believed that having someone at school that knew their situation would be useful because they would understand their behaviours and help them if needed. They did, however, argue that it was important that children and families should have the choice as to whether they would tell their stories and with whom they would share them:

"It should be up to the student whether they let their teacher know their circumstances – because it depends if you like them or not"

(Young woman, aged 15)

"Teachers would know that someone was homeless because they wouldn't have a school bag or a lunch box or a hat"

(Boy, aged 6)

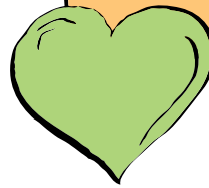
SOME TIPS FOR WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

With the knowledge and involvement of the child and parents, services can help kids remain connected:

- **Resolve fears:** Families often report concerns about schools knowing about their home situation, so it is important that you spend time with them addressing these issues before making contact with the child's school. Help parents to think through whom they feel comfortable connecting with at school, who are the safe people? Help them also to think through how they can talk about their situation with their child's school and what kind of support they want to ask for, for their child. Be prepared and ready to help the family and the school build a working relationship with one another.
- **Make contact with the child's school** and explain the type of support that you and your service are providing to the family. Do this with the family where possible. Talk about any safety plans that have been developed and make it clear to schools what arrangements are in place.
- **Work with each child to identify a support person** – someone in their school that they know and trust, who they can talk to about any worries or concerns that they might have. Ask to set up a meeting between you, this person, the child's parents and the child (if they feel comfortable). Explain some of the difficulties that the child might be experiencing and organise a plan for the child to follow if they need support.

Teachers involved in a collaboration research project in 2006 all (Winkworth 2006, p33) identified collaboration as the most constructive and successful way of addressing the challenges faced by students with complex barriers to education and those who are working with them:

“ If you get a group of people there and committed then you can just about solve any problem”



Who ELSE MATTERS?

- **Be aware of the kids' normal routines:** children will often be involved in school sports teams, drama groups or out-of-hours school care. Wherever possible support the family (by providing transport and financial assistance) to keep children involved in these activities. They are important for maintaining a child's sense of belonging and a sense of stability. Schools will often have funds to help this to occur.
- **Be aware of schemes and supports that are available in your local area:** some schools have Schools As Communities workers, counsellors and pastoral-care teams. Ask the school about programs that you might tap into to help families remain engaged.
- **Provide a friendly learning environment:** children often find it difficult to do homework and to keep on top of assignments during periods of homelessness. Provide spaces where kids can study individually or in groups. Offer to help children with these tasks when parents are overwhelmed by their situations or, better yet, offer other support so that they can spend this time with their kids. This will help to reduce kids' feelings of falling behind and incidences of giving up on school.
- **Talk with teachers, families and children about learning expectations:** during times of upheaval it will be very difficult for some children to concentrate on learning new things at school. It is very important to recognise that during these periods the most important goal is a sense of safety, stability and belonging for the child. Reinforce this with teachers and talk explicitly about things like homework, progress and how children can get extra support.

Everyone (parents, teachers, workers) should be giving the child the same messages:

- they are doing well
- this is a tough time
- their most important task is to stay safe, enjoy school and do the best they can
- regular, genuine, positive feedback about strengths, skills and progress
- it's ok to have bad/sad days and how to ask for or accept help on those days
- they are not alone
- if they need anything (lunch, a hat, to talk to someone) or are feeling ashamed or worried there is a way for them to let a trusted adult/teacher know
- things will improve, and they will be able to focus better on school work when they do
- what to do if there is any bullying, teasing or rejection from other kids at school
- **Talk with teachers about behaviour:** if parents and schools have concerns about a child's behaviour it is important to remind them that "bad" behaviour is a clue to how distressed and unsettled a child is feeling. It is a way of asking for help. Extra supports, calm predictable environments and skilled compassionate adults are needed to help a child feel safe and able to gain some control over their lives.

EXTRA HELP FOR CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

The **ACT Department of Education** has special programs to support children who need extra help. Some of these programs include: special education for children with disabilities, learning assistance program for children who need extra help with literacy and numeracy, financial assistance and bursaries, student transport program, national tuition program 'an even start', English as a Second Language program. **Visit: www.det.act.gov.au**



Who ELSE MATTERS?



CONNECTING WITH OTHER SUPPORTS: THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

As families often become overwhelmed by the challenges before them so can services who operate within tight budgets, for limited periods of time and with sometimes minimal contact with the families. Workers can feel hopeless and, over time, become disillusioned with their work and the role that they play in the lives of families. Those who have been around for a while argue that it is for these reasons that collaboration is key: that only by working together can they help families overcome the challenges they face. As one worker who was interviewed as part of the *Finding their way home* project shared:



“The issues that many of our families come in with are massive and can be overwhelming for both the family and for us as a service. Working with other programs helps reduce the load a little and it sends a message to families that there are other people around them who are there if needed too. That can be heartening because otherwise workers can be overwhelmed, you know, so it can be good to work with others...oh and to enable that things are sustainable when their time with your program is up”

(Worker)

WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

Collaborative practice has been defined in lots of different ways. For the purposes of this document, it might be described thus:

Collaborative practice is a strengths based approach to working with children, families and communities and the agencies and institutions which support them, which recognises the importance of sharing human, social, physical and financial resources to achieve outcomes that go beyond what any person or group can achieve on their own.

This definition includes some important messages:

- 1 Collaboration is strengths based:** it recognises that clients, families, communities and organisations all have a number of strengths, opportunities and resources that might be engaged to find solutions to challenges. As a first step, collaborators work with families to help them identify these resources, to respond to their challenges themselves and THEN add supports that will empower families to respond.
- 2 Collaboration places the child and the family at the centre:** it's about achieving outcomes that primarily meet clients' needs and, through them, the organisation's needs.
- 3 Collaboration works within the family's ecology:** children and families live in neighbourhoods and communities filled with risks and opportunities. Some of the challenges they face (such as poverty, violence and isolation) are endemic to their local environment rather than just being a personal issue. As such, collaborators investigate these challenges and mobilise communities (sports coaches, charities, neighbourhood centres, service systems and policy makers) to provide ongoing support to families.
- 4 Collaboration recognises that individuals and organisations have limitations:** be they time, finances, skills and opportunities. It promotes a pooling of resources and the engagement of people who can help provide supports in a shared way over a longer period of time. Partners are recognised for what they can contribute rather than what they cannot, and work together to meet unmet needs.
- 5 Collaboration is planned:** by working together to identify needs, goals and strategies for dealing with challenges together.

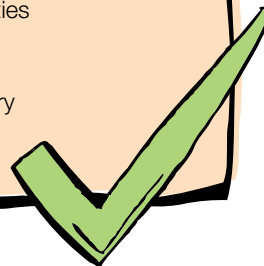
Who ELSE MATTERS?

WHY COLLABORATE?

Child-centred practice recognises the importance of knowledge and expertise being actively shared between professionals who are involved with children and young people at each stage in assessment, case planning and service delivery. An ongoing dialogue with other professionals, including feedback about critical decisions, is an essential part of protection and support. Professionals from different systems (for example: education, health, police) who are involved with children and young people need to share knowledge and expertise and cooperate closely at every stage of intervention. Previous studies and inquiries clearly demonstrate, however, that cooperation between professionals, including information sharing, is very patchy and tends to deteriorate after the early stages of intervention (from Moore 2009, p36).

SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION NEEDS

- 1 Pooling of resources** in 'an environment of sincerity and hope' and in the interests of a child and family's wellbeing. Resources can be physical, human, social and financial and they include information, time, skills and labour, space and buildings.
- 2 Build collaboration at all levels** so that the work is sustainable and supported within an organisation (senior management, middle management and case management levels all need to value and support collaboration).
- 3 Communicate** with others who know kids well and can help you understand. Communication takes time and care so factor in time to talk informally and formally. When undertaking innovative and flexible work in response to a child's needs it is particularly important to communicate regularly with all partners in order to be aware of potential issues and address them in a timely and constructive way.
- 4 Cooperate** with others who can help solve kids' problems. An attitude of goodwill and of keeping the goals (the best interests of the child) at the forefront will go a long way.
- 5 Create** with others who can provide new opportunities for kids. Two heads are better than one. Use the different skills and experience of partners to look at, explore and problem solve together. Be prepared to try new approaches.



Who ELSE MATTERS?

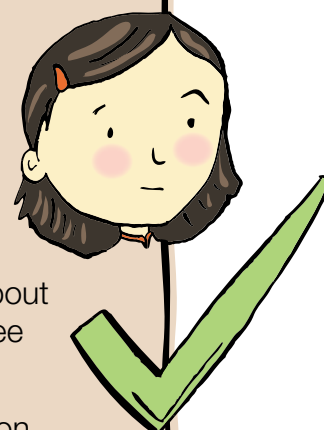
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THE 'HOWS' OF COLLABORATION

IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE RESOURCES

Stay Informed: In the ACT there are a number of organisations that keep lists of available services and supports. Some of the key resources that are useful for services working with children, young people and families include:

- PARENTLINK develops information resources and can help parents and services find supports. They're contactable on: **13 34 27 (8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday); www.parentlink.act.gov.au**
- THE CONTACT BOOK is developed by the Citizen's Advice Bureau and is an up-to-date guide to all community services in the ACT
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK is an online e-list where community sector people communicate about programs, training and networking opportunities. It's free and you sign up by emailing: **cdnet@case.org.au**
- THE BIG RED BOOK is developed by the Youth Coalition and includes a wealth of information and contacts relating to programs and supports for young people. It's available online at: **www.youthcoalition.net**



Who ELSE MATTERS?

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK:

To be able to capture the resources that exist in the local community sector, services must actively network with others and develop formal and informal relationships that they can build on for families now and into the future. Some useful networks to be involved in include:

- **SAAP Kids** is a network for organisations working with homeless families.
- **The Intensive Family Support Program** hosts a series of workshops, training sessions and interagency activities.
- **The Youth Coalition** has monthly meetings and is attended by services working with young people and their families.

COLLABORATING

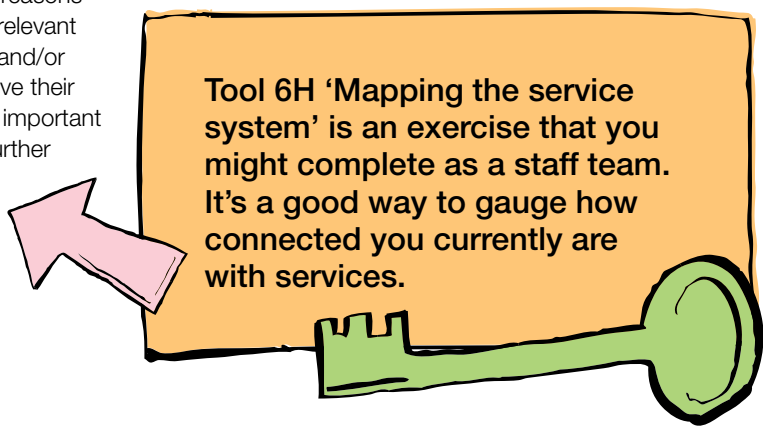
Collaborative action for decision-making involves each party to the decision being clear about each other's roles and respectful of others' perspective or 'agenda'. If a decision is made at a meeting an effective chairperson is needed to ensure that everyone is heard, that the decision is collaborative and that everyone is clear about the decision. Where parties disagree with the final decision this should be noted in the Minutes. Decisions relating to a family or child moving are sometimes not 'happy' decisions and so the family and/or child should be given every opportunity to understand the reasons for the decision and be provided with any relevant practical or emotional support. The family and/or child also need to be given information, have their questions answered and be clear who the important people are in terms of follow up and any further decision that may be made in the future.

TO SHARE OR NOT TO SHARE

In Making it Happen: Working together for children, young people and families, the UK Department for Schools and Families identifies six key points related to sharing information among services. They include:

1. Explain openly and honestly at the outset what information will or could be shared, and why, and seek agreement – except where doing so puts the child or others at risk of significant harm.
2. The child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration when making decisions on whether to share information about them.
3. Respect the wishes of children or families who do not consent to share confidential information – unless in your judgement their [judgement not to do so would involve serious risks of harm to a family member].
4. Seek advice when in doubt.
5. Ensure information is accurate, up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those who need to see it, and shared securely.
6. Always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share or not.

Once you've determined what information might need to be shared, it's important to work this through with parents and children.



Tool 6H 'Mapping the service system' is an exercise that you might complete as a staff team. It's a good way to gauge how connected you currently are with services.

Who ELSE MATTERS?



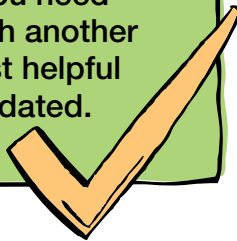
TALKING TIP: EXPLAINING WHY YOU WANT TO SHARE INFORMATION

Here are some examples of things you might say to a child when discussing information sharing. Tailor them to the age and personality of the kids you're working with.

- **To be able to get more resources:** "I was thinking about some of the things you said you needed and remembered that there's a program at the local community centre that might be able to help with that. What do you think about us giving them a call or you, your Mum and I meeting up with one of the workers to talk it through?"
- **To find a solution:** "It sounds like things are a bit tough between you and your Mum but that you don't think you can talk to her. What do you think about the three of us sitting down and talking things through?" Follow this up with "You can take the lead if you like or I'm happy to work out some messages you want shared and to take the lead instead. What do you think?"
- **To help someone understand:** "So you're alright about talking to Sally about your feelings, yeah? Do you think it would be OK for me to tell her a bit about the things you've told me or maybe we could write them down together so she can understand what's going on?"



Tool 6F 'Sharing my story' has been developed for workers to fill out with kids and parents. It should be used when you need to share information with another organisation and is most helpful when it is constantly updated.



- **To get advice:** "I really thank you for telling me about what's going on and I want to help you come up with ways to sort things out. I'm a bit stuck though and I was wondering if it would be OK to talk to my boss or one of the other workers about how we could fix things up together. She's had more experience and might have some good ideas. Do you think that would be OK?"
- **Because you have a responsibility to:** "I'm really worried about you and need to get some help. You know how we talked about what I need to do when I'm worried about your safety or about what might be happening to you? Well it's like that now and we need to talk about some options, OK?" (see Guide 1 for more ideas on this one).

WHO'S BEST PLACED?

When you work together with other organisations, it is helpful for all to work with the child and their family to identify a 'lead professional', a person whose role it is to:

- be a single point of contact for a child or family. This person should be someone that they trust and ideally someone that they identify themselves
- help co-ordinate services so that good outcomes can be planned, delivered and reviewed
- help minimise overlap and maximise consistency and integration
- provide ongoing support.

This person is NOT responsible or accountable for other people's work but instead can ask respectful questions and provide feedback to the child or family.

Who ELSE MATTERS?

6.9

PLANNING FOR TRANSITIONS AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

Too often homeless families move from one program to another and have to begin from scratch – retelling their stories, connecting with new workers and programs and going over old ground. To reduce unnecessary overlap, to increase the likelihood that achievements are sustained and to ensure that transitions are seamless, time must be invested in planning for children and family's transition from services and systems.

In regards to transitioning, there are a few principles that you might consider:

- 1 Begins on day one:** to ensure that families can effectively 'move on' from services and for all the successes and wins to be sustained, services need to begin planning as soon as possible.
- 2 Building on resources:** families often have the capacity to deal with life's challenges themselves. What they often don't have (particularly during periods of chaos) are champions around them who acknowledge these strengths and resources and build them up. Providing families opportunities to recognise these assets and to build on their skills and knowledge is an important part of transition planning.
- 3 Doing with, not for:** engaging families and children in transition planning helps them feel empowered, more informed and more confident. Children and families who feel a part of the transition planning are more likely to stick to plans and to meet challenges that arise.

4 Mirroring support: wherever possible, the assistance that is provided in your service needs to be made available to families after they leave. Usually this requires linking them with formal and informal supports in the community who can help them when they need encouragement and assistance.

5 Well planned and communicated: planning is more than identifying possible supports and listing them for families.

Helping families connect to services and other supporters (through warm referrals, pre-transition meetings and service visits) can help all partners get to know each other and have a clear picture of what is expected. Documenting expectations and teasing out any difficulties before families leave your service is imperative!

Talking to children about transitions

Transitioning from any service can be a challenging and scary time for children and families, particularly when they don't understand what's happening or have a clear picture about how they and their family are going to get the support they need. As noted earlier, children can feel abandoned and let down if services don't support them to find new people to help them and to allay their fears. A very quick and simple transition plan might include a list of things that your service does and who might take on these roles in the future.

We've mocked up a tool that can be used to help with this, which is included as Tool 6G 'Holding It Together'.

Who ELSE MATTERS?



WHAT KILLS CONNECTIONS?

Often workers realise the benefits of working collaboratively with other organisations but sometimes find it difficult to do so because:

- they're worried that families might be reluctant for other people to know their story for fear of being reported to child protection services
- they're worried that families might think less of them because they can't provide supports to meet all their needs
- they're not confident that other programs can provide the same level of quality that they think they can provide
- they've had bad experiences in the past where external services have failed to do the things they said they would do
- they think it's easier to just provide all the supports themselves.

When thinking about collaboration, teams must consider these issues and determine whether they are legitimate concerns by asking a range of questions. It is quite appropriate for services to determine that supports might be best provided in house. However, some questions that might be considered include:

- are families really afraid of child protection services and if so have we spent enough time talking to them about the role of CPS and how they work with families? Would this family meet the threshold for intervention and if not have we talked to the family about this? If they do meet the threshold, what responsibility does the service have in protecting the children and how can the service, in partnership with the family, work with CPS in a constructive way?

- will families really think less of the service, particularly when the program's limitations are acknowledged and where the strengths of engaging other programs (in meeting broader needs, in sharing expertise, in enabling continuity of care, in facilitating more creative responses to challenges identified) are effectively communicated?
- how can this service support other programs to provide quality assistance to families, or are there alternative providers that are available who can assume this role when there are concerns about what's being provided?
- how can this service work with others to develop a clear case plan with clear expectations, case goals and outcomes that can be monitored to ensure that partners are meeting their agreements?
- are there any limitations in providing supports to meet all the family's needs? Or would there be benefits in teaming with others so that supports might be available more broadly and for a longer period of time?

Working with the complex and challenging issues that often come with homelessness, with limited resources and across a complex service system will inevitably bring about some conflicts. If you can recognise that conflicts will occur no matter how well intentioned or committed (to the wellbeing of children and families) workers and services are, you are one step closer to solving them. Conflicts can be approached as a useful and informative part of the process. When you understand what is driving the conflict it is possible to address it.



Who ELSE MATTERS?

THE INEVITABILITY OF CONFLICT

Here are some ideas on how to reduce conflicts between services and workers in human services and child and family welfare contexts. Dorothy Scott argues that

- 1 Conflict is reduced by having a 'lead professional' working with families. The lead professional should be chosen on the basis of which person has the most effective relationship with the family.
- 2 Conflict is often made worse by the tendency of some teams and organisations to generate their internal cohesion by making another organisation the 'common enemy'
- 3 A change of leadership may be necessary to bring about a new climate of collaboration
- 4 Anxiety and 'the anguish of our own impotence' is the reason for much of the projection and displacement of anger which occurs between people who are concerned about the wellbeing of children and young people. This feeling of anxiety needs to be acknowledged so that more constructive and collaborative approaches to problem solving can be pursued. Scott, 2006)

ASSESSING COLLABORATION

For collaboration to be effective, partners must continually monitor their roles and determine whether the partnership is achieving the intended client outcomes it was developed to achieve.

VicHealth has developed an excellent resource, the Partnership Analysis Tool which is available on line at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au.

"If human service workers are to fulfil the full range of their professional responsibilities and functions, the willingness to engage in conflict transactions is essential...because differences of interest and commitment are virtually built into the job specifications..."

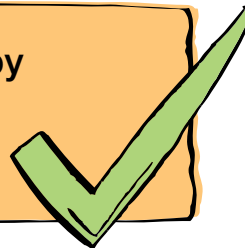
(Bisno 1988, cited in Scott 2005)



Collaborative practice is inevitably challenging because of the 'multiple and complex nature of the inherent potential sources of conflict'

(Scott 2005, p.132)

One of the activities developed by VicHealth is included as Tool 6I 'Partnership Checklist'



Who ELSE MATTERS?



WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SERVICES & COMMUNITIES

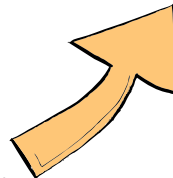
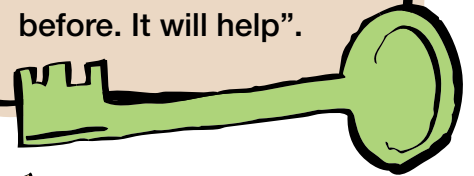
The following is an excerpt from They've gotta listen: Indigenous Young People in Out of Home Care. The full report is available at: www.acu.edu.au/icps/

Cultural competence: To confidently provide opportunities for young people to connect to their communities and to provide services that responded to their cultural needs, participants argued that organisations needed to have developed a level of cultural competence.

Overcoming discomfort: Participants argued that although many non-Aboriginal workers and organizations were keen to support Aboriginal families they felt unable to do so. Many feared being culturally inappropriate and felt that they did not have the skills or knowledge to adequately respond to Aboriginal families needing support. As a result, some referred clients to overloaded Aboriginal services while others did not engage in ways that they might with non-Aboriginal families. Those that did support Aboriginal families directly reported that they were often second-guessing themselves and felt inhibited and were worried that they were doing the wrong thing. They believed that this often kept them from fully engaging with Aboriginal families...

Developing courage: Aboriginal participants felt that non-Aboriginal workers needed to be courageous and to take risks. They believed that if non-Aboriginal workers were respectful of their culture and valued its role in a young person's life they would be supported by the community even if they made mistakes – particularly if they were open to criticism and being guided by Aboriginal people. Non-Aboriginal workers found this reassuring and felt that this message needed to be spread widely so that others too might endeavour to further engage in cultural issues.

“We need to get to know one another in order to collaborate. We all need to take responsibility to make it happen. Everyone is very busy, maybe you need to give invitations to people to chat. We need to build the cobweb, there always has to be the first person...It will help, we'll be able to do things we couldn't before. It will help”.

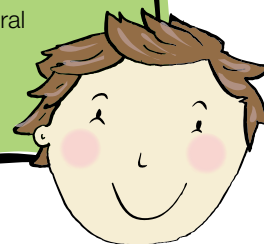


Who ELSE MATTERS?

✓ **Developing partnerships and knowledge:** They also called for more training and for the identification of key people who might assist them to meet their client's cultural needs. Many valued the opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services to meet together to identify challenges and solutions and, just as importantly, to develop relationships.

✓ **Working together:** Collaboration was seen as being a central part of service delivery to Aboriginal families – as participants recognised that Aboriginal workers and key Aboriginal leaders were already stretched in regards of time and resources and that workers and carers felt unable to respond to issues alone. Collaborative work is also required due to the multifaceted nature of issues faced by children, young people and their families. No one organisation can effectively work on their own in this context. There was a feeling, however, that together they could appropriately respond for the children.

✓ **Working with the community:** Aboriginal workers argued that it was important for non-Aboriginal services to make connections with key community members and, where possible, employ them to provide critical advice. They also stressed the importance of non-Aboriginal workers who have strong connections with the Aboriginal community to use these relationships and knowledge to assist their peers, to help develop further connections between players and to share their experiences with others. These 'champions' could take some of the pressure off Aboriginal workers and services and may be more approachable by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people looking for support. Sharing the responsibility for developing non-Aboriginal workers' cultural competence also recognises the 'drain' that many Aboriginal workers feel when discussing cultural issues which are often personal and sometimes distressing.



Who ELSE MATTERS?


6.12

CASE SCENARIO

THE RYAN FAMILY

The Ryan family has been in your service for some time and may need to be referred on shortly due to your service's stay limitations. When they first came into your program, Mum (Barbara) was anxious and feared for her safety and that of the children (Marcus 9, Jessica 5 and Tabitha 3). She and her children had been living up north but left to escape significant spousal abuse. Barbara is Aboriginal and shares that leaving her community was one of the most traumatic experiences of her life. She and the kids miss the extended family and the community that had supported them. Marcus is in Year 2 at school, having missed significant periods of class after moving 5 times in the first few years of his education. He has not settled into his new class and is constantly in fights. His principal has put him on a contract where he is only allowed to be at school for 2 mornings a week. Barbara is not happy about this because she knows he is so far behind and thinks that his outbursts are related to his poor reading skills. She has had no luck in negotiating more time at school. Marcus hasn't attended school regularly enough in the last year for his reading problems to be properly assessed or for any supports to be put in place.

Jessica is in kindergarten and is well loved by her teacher and friends. Tabitha appears to be a fairly stressed child and does not like to leave Barbara's side. However she is healthy and well loved. Barbara is a great Mum but often feels as though she is failing her children because she is so anxious all the time. She is socially isolated and tells you that she would love to meet other parents in her situation. Barbara's anxiety is partly related to her fears that her ex-partner may try to track them down and could turn up in Canberra. For that reason she hasn't made contact with anyone from her community. She also has some serious ongoing health issues that need attending to. Barbara also has no money and no household goods. She and the children arrived in Canberra with a suitcase of clothes and a few toys.

- 
- What are some of the Ryan family's strengths, resources and needs?
 - What type of assistance could be organised to help Barbara and her children, particularly in light of the fact that they will soon be moved into independent living?
 - Barbara and the children have developed a strong relationship with one of your service's staff. How might the strengths of this relationship be capitalised on: now and into the future?
 - How might Barbara and the children be supported to tap into the community's strengths and resources (both locally and more broadly)?
 - What would need to be done to facilitate this and to overcome any barriers that they might face?
 - What barriers may there be?



Who ELSE MATTERS?



PARTNERSHIP CHECKLIST

This activity was developed by **VicHealth** and is available as part of the Partnership Analysis Tool which is downloadable at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

In this activity, partners rank themselves against each of the items in a checklist (below) describing the key features of a successful partnership. The checklist is designed to provide feedback on the current status of the partnership and suggest areas that need further support and work.

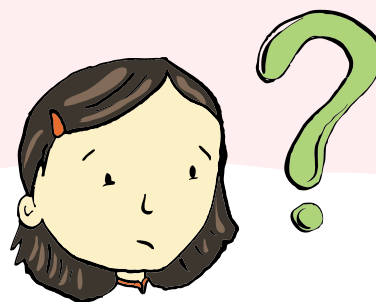
The questions address the major issues of forming and sustaining meaningful partnerships.

WHAT USE IS A CHECKLIST?

- Checklists act as summaries of complex actions and interactions between various stakeholders.
- They are valuable because they highlight the factors that contribute to a successful partnership and direct attention to the issues to be considered in assessing effectiveness. They point out the things to look for and consider. They can also guide future action, as well as providing a focus for reflecting on the current state of affairs

THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST:

- The lead agency can fill in the checklist and present the results to a meeting of the partnership. Canvassing the various partners' views at a meeting is a way of testing out the accuracy of the lead agency's perceptions.
- Each partner can be given a copy to complete independently. They can compare and discuss the results at a meeting. This approach ensures the views of every partner are given equal weight.



Who ELSE MATTERS?

TO USE THE CHECKLIST ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOLLOW THE SUGGESTED APPROACH:

1. Make copies of the checklist and, working as a group, consider each of the statements in relation to the partnership as a whole.
2. For each statement, rate the partnership on a scale, with a rating of 0 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and a rating of 4 indicating strong agreement.
3. Look at the scores in each section as this will show trends and illustrate areas of good practice as well as helping to identify aspects of the partnership in which further work needs to be done.
4. Consider aggregating the scores across the sections and using the key to establish an indication of the overall strength of the partnership. This will also provide a basis for monitoring aspects of the partnership over time. Aggregations are a gross measure, but can be good starting points for discussions about the project and the partnership.

- The checklist can be completed as a group activity.
This approach will tend to emphasise consensus among members.

The checklist is a global measure that accepts there will be different perceptions.

Consequently, there is some value in citing different examples that either confirm or test the global result. For example, most partners may be working well but one or two may be seen to be less co-operative. The 'outliers' need to be considered, but they should not skew the dominant response. Similarly, a partnership may rate well against some of the key features and not in others.



Who ELSE MATTERS?



PULSE CHECK “WHO ELSE MATTERS”

PULSE CHECKS ARE HERE TO HELP ORGANISATIONS BY:

- promoting discussion;
- identifying strengths and any gaps that need action; and
- helping to set priorities

The pulse check can be used whether you have already developed child-safe policies and practices or are just starting out. It is not exhaustive - you will find that as you discuss it you may think of other areas that need attention in your organisation.



STEP 1: go through the indicators and list how your service acts on each one

STEP 2: each person rates how well the service does this

STEP 3: brainstorm things that could be done to improve how the service acts on each area



Who ELSE MATTERS?

Rate your level of agreement with each of the statements below, with 0 indicating strong disagreement and 4 indicating strong agreement.

.....

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
1. DETERMINING THE NEED FOR THE PARTNERSHIP					
There is a perceived need for the partnership in terms of areas of common interest and complementary capacity					
There is a clear goal for the partnership					
There is a shared understanding of, and commitment to, this goal among all potential partners					
The partners are willing to share some of their ideas, resources, influence and power to fulfill the goal					
The perceived benefits of the partnership outweigh the perceived costs					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
2. CHOOSING PARTNERS					
The partners share common ideologies, interests and approaches					
The partners see their core business as partially interdependent					
There is a history of good relations between the partners					
The coalition brings added prestige to the partners individually as well as collectively					
There is enough variety among members to have a comprehensive understanding of the issues being addressed					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
3. MAKING SURE PARTNERSHIPS WORK					
The managers in each organisation support the partnership					
Partners have the necessary skills for collaborative action					
There are strategies to enhance the skills of the partnership through increasing the membership or workforce development					
The roles, responsibilities and expectations of partners are clearly defined and understood by all other partners					
The administrative, communication and decision-making structures of the partnership are as simple as possible					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
4. PLANNING COLLABORATIVE ACTION					
All partners are involved in planning and setting priorities for collaborative action					
Partners have the task of communicating and promoting the coalition in their own organisations					
Some staff have roles that cross the traditional boundaries that exist between agencies in the partnership					
The lines of communication, roles and expectations of partners are clear					
There is a participatory decision-making system that is accountable, responsive and inclusive					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
5. IMPLEMENTING COLLABORATIVE ACTION					
Processes that are common across agencies, such as referral protocols, service standards, data collection and reporting mechanisms, have been standardised					
There is an investment in the partnership of time, personnel, materials or facilities					
Collaborative action by staff and reciprocity between agencies is rewarded by management					
The action is adding value (rather than duplicating services) for the community, clients or the agencies involved in the partnership					
There are regular opportunities for informal and voluntary contact between staff from the different agencies and other members of the partnership					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
6. MINIMISING THE BARRIERS TO PARTNERSHIPS					
Differences in organisational priorities, goals and tasks have been addressed					
There is a core group of skilled and committed (in terms of the partnership) staff that has continued over the life of the partnership					
There are formal structures for sharing information and resolving demarcation disputes					
There are informal ways of achieving this					
There are strategies to ensure alternative views are expressed within the partnership					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

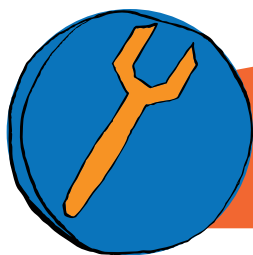
	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
7. REFLECTING ON AND CONTINUING THE PARTNERSHIP					
There are processes for recognising and celebrating collective achievements and/or individual contributions					
The partnership can demonstrate or document the outcomes of its collective work					
There is a clear need and commitment to continuing the collaboration in the medium term					
There are resources available from either internal or external sources to continue the partnership					
There is a way of reviewing the range of partners and bringing in new members or removing some					
TOTAL:					

Who ELSE MATTERS?

	0 STRONGLY DISAGREE	1 DISAGREE	2 NOT SURE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
AGGREGATE SCORES					
Determining the need for the partnership					
Choosing partners					
Making sure partnerships work					
Planning collaborative action					
Implementing collaborative action					
Minimising the barriers to partnerships					
Reflecting on and continuing the partnership					
TOTAL:					

AGGREGATE SCORES	
0-49	The whole idea of a partnership should be rigorously questioned
50-91	The partnership is moving in the right direction but it will need more attention if it is going to be really successful
92-140	A partnership based on genuine collaboration has been established. The challenge is to maintain its impetus and build on the current success

Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6A: PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES TOOL 6B: PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as used by Reclaiming Youth International

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 2.11, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 & 6.9



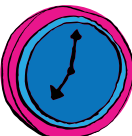
WHY?

- To help identify important others in the lives of families and children
- Identifying resources and supports



WHO WITH?

- Children, parents and families



TIME?

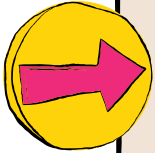
- 5-15 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

- A copy of the template/s

Who ELSE MATTERS?



WHAT TO DO:

- Explain that these activities attempt to identify some of the support people in the life of the family and the children.

WITH PARENTS

- Ask parents to identify who they receive help from within each of the four domains. Have them write the names of these people/communities and talk about what type of support they have provided and may continue to provide to the family.
- With the family, consider:
 - What might keep the family from staying connected with these supports
 - What might the service do to help them maintain/reconnect with these supports
 - How might these supports be used to meet other challenges in the long run (can they help provide parenting advice, babysitting, information about support, respite, fun time)

WITH CHILDREN

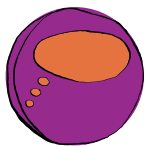
- Ask kids to think about people in their lives who can help them and their families
- Explain that there are different places and different types of people who can help out:
 - Those in their families, including those who live with them and those who don't
 - Their friends, and friends of the family
 - At school: class mates, teachers, counsellors and others
 - In their community: neighbours, workers, other people who care
- Ask kids to brainstorm some of the people in their lives who might provide them with support and get them to put them into one of the four circles (add another if they don't fit)
- Help kids (and ideally parents) to consider:
 - Which helpers kids are connected to
 - Which helpers they might not be getting as much help from as they could
 - Ways to maximise on the support

Who ELSE MATTERS?



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Have families / kids cut write all the people they get support from on small discs and then stick them into the circles. This allows a bit more creativity and for all family members to participate when in groups



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Rather than just mapping these supports, it's important for services and workers to consider how they enable children and families to capitalise on these important resources. Spend some time considering how these important people in the lives of children and families might be best assisted to support them while involved in your service and beyond (can you provide transport so that kids can stay involved with their sports teams, can your service allow sleep overs or babysitting, can you support parents to talk to teachers about how they might best help the kids at school?)



HAZARD ZONES:

- This activity can highlight children's loss and can bring feelings of grief to the fore. Allowing children to feel these emotions is important as is working with parents to maintain and reconnect children to those who helped them in the past. When relationships are maintainable, working with kids to form new relationships (with new friends, supportive adults etc) is also essential.



People in our lives

Who do you receive help from?

What might keep the family from staying connected with these supports?

What might the service do to help them maintain/reconnect with these supports?

How might these supports be used to meet other challenges in the long run?
Babysitting? Parenting advice? Respite? Information about support? Fun time?

People in my life



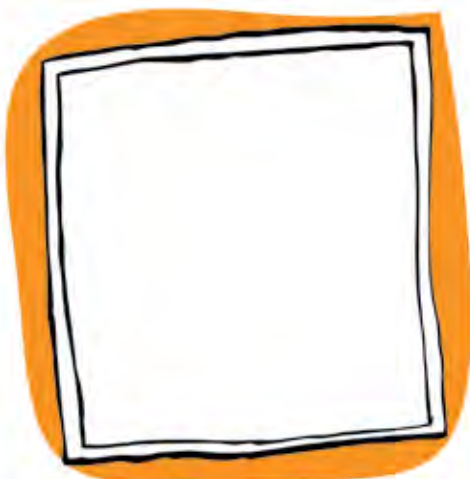
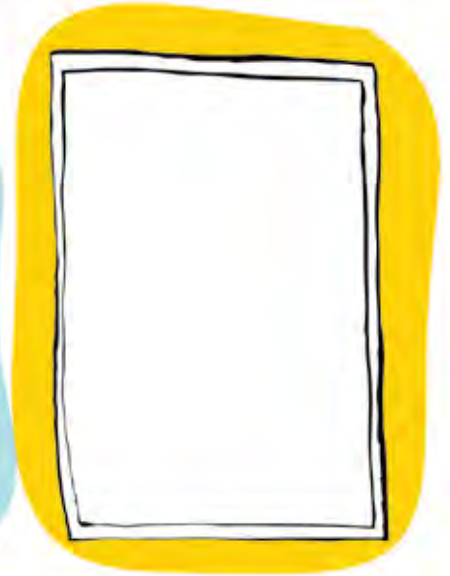
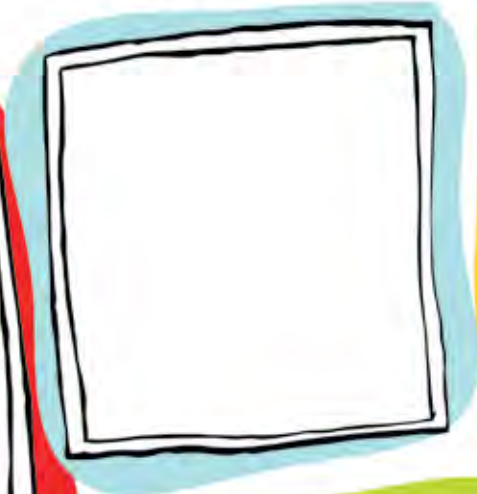
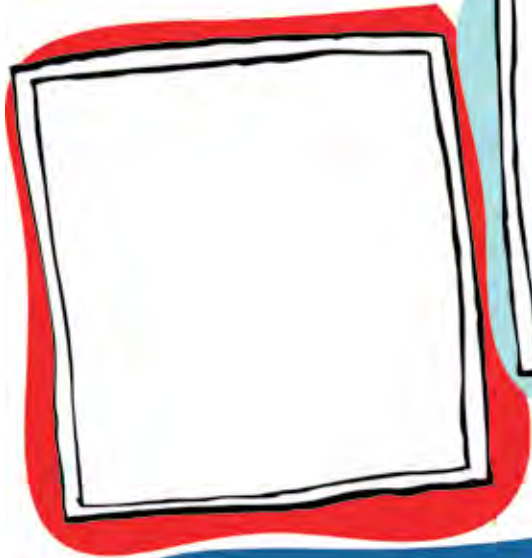
Family that lives with me?

Family that doesn't live with me?

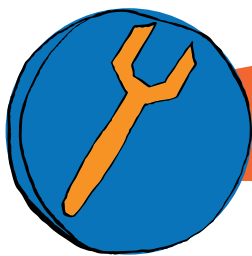
Friends of the family? Teachers? Counsellors?

Friends? Class mates?

Anyone else?



Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6C: HELPING HANDS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 2.11, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 & 6.9



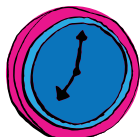
WHY?

- To help the child identify some of the important people and supports in their lives
- To celebrate their connections to others
- To assist workers finding formal and informal supports for the child and their family over time



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 5 to 14 years
- One-on-one, in groups or families



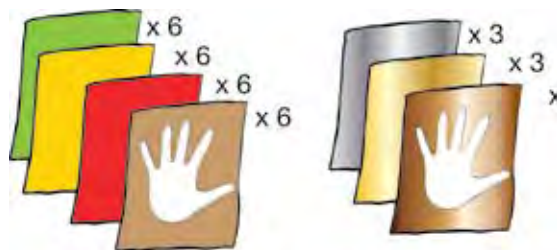
TIME?

- This activity can be fiddly so make sure you give it at least ½ hour. It can be run over a number of sessions if necessary

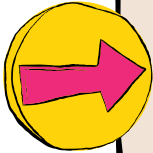


YOU'LL NEED?

- 12" Styrofoam wreath (available from craft shops)
- Assorted paper (ie metallic, coloured and textured)
- Black marker
- Coloured craft sticks
- Glue
- Scissors
- Photos of the child's family (optional)



Who ELSE MATTERS?



WHAT TO DO:

1. Make a hand pattern by drawing around the child's hand or by using the pattern given. Trace on thick cardboard as a template and cut out.
2. Trace around pattern then cut 6 each green, yellow, red and brown paper hands. Cut 2 each silver and gold and 3 copper hands from metallic corrugated paper.

(NOTE): Trace pattern onto back of corrugated paper.)

3. Starting at the outer edge of the Styrofoam wreath, glue one row of hands around the edge in the following order: red, yellow, green and brown. Glue a second row of hands around the inside edge of the wreath. Glue a third row of hands in metallic colours on top of the first two rows in the following order: silver, copper and gold. Carefully push the coloured craft sticks into the outer edge of the wreath.

4. As the kids to answer the following questions by writing the names/drawing a picture or sticking a photo to the hands at the top of the pile. You might want to use them all or just a few:

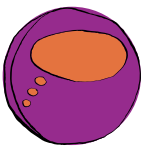
WHO I GET HELP FROM:

- When I feel sad
- When I'm doing my homework
- When I'm lost
- When I'm lonely
- When I need a laugh
- To help my family
- To talk to my Mum/Dad
- At school
- When I don't feel safe
- When I need to know what's going on
- When I hurt myself
- When I need a hug



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Rather than using the wreath, make a collage by sticking the hands on a large piece of cardboard dispersing them with photos of people important in the lives of children / families, words about helping cut from magazines. This makes a positive piece of artwork that can be hung in a child's room to increase a sense of ownership while reminding them of those special people in their lives.



TO THINK ABOUT:

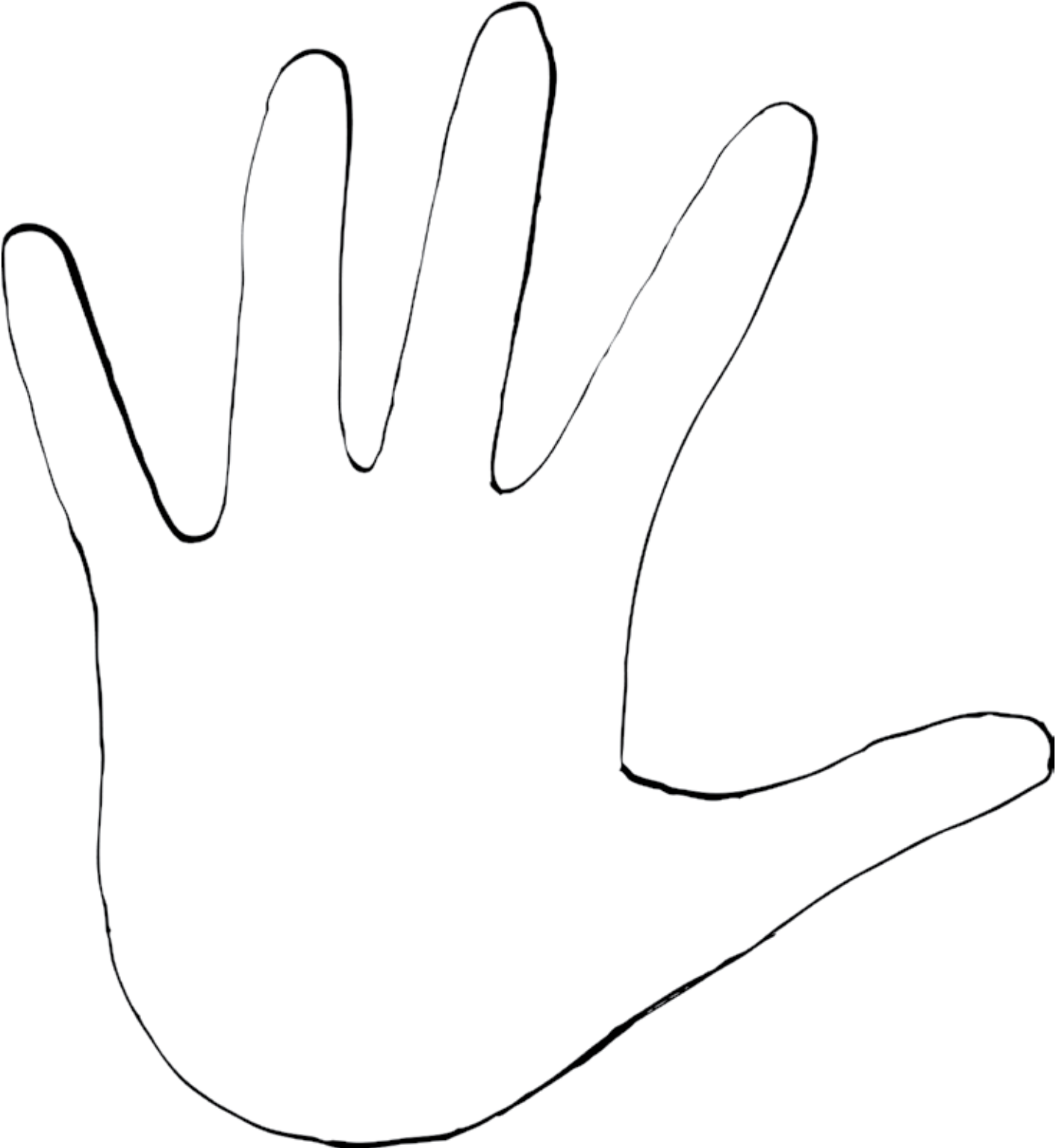
- It is important that while children who are in our services feel as if they are well connected with their workers. However, it's also important that we use the relationships we develop with kids as a way of linking them to others so that when they leave our programs the progress you've made can continue. Constantly reflect on how successful you are being in bolstering the number of supportive adults kids have in their lives.



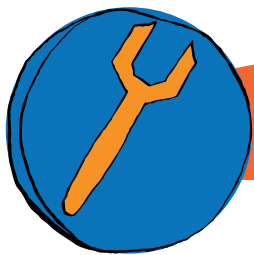
HAZARD ZONES:

- This activity can highlight children's loss and can bring feelings of grief to the fore. Allowing children to feel these emotions is important as is working with parents to maintain and reconnect children to those who helped them in the past. When relationships are maintainable, working with kids to form new relationships (with new friends, supportive adults etc) is also essential.

Hand template



Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6D: MY SUPPORTERS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 2.11, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 & 6.9



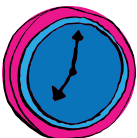
WHY?

- To help children identify their support people
- To help children recognise that they are not alone
- To identify supports who can help children and families now and into the future
- Good for:
 - Breaking the ice
 - Building kids up
 - Identifying community resources



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 6+ (either with their families or individually)



TIME?

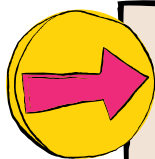
- 25 minutes +



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copy of the template
- Coloured markers/pencils

Who ELSE MATTERS?



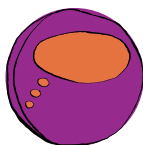
WHAT TO DO:

- Explain to kids that we all need people in our lives who are there to help out at different times and in different ways.
- Ask the kids if they can think of people in their lives who help them out and ask them a little bit about how those people support them.
- Have kids identify friends, family, adults, community members or others who might fulfil the various roles identified on the sheet.
- When kids aren't able to fill in a particular role leave it and come back later, asking "What might we do to find someone who fits here?" – use this to inform your case plan.
- Complete the activity by celebrating the fact that there are people around the child who are there to support them and that they are obviously special to have these champions.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Rather than filling out the proforma, you might want to call out the roles and get the kids to think of someone who helps them in that way.
- Have kids write down the names of all the people in their lives who help them in different ways. Call out the roles and get the kids to draw symbols around the people who support them in the different ways identified. Children may come up with a broader list as a result.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- With the child's permission spend some time with parents: helping them to understand the part that these important champions are in the lives of their children and affirm the special relationship that they have with their children



HAZARD ZONES:

- Some children will find this activity difficult to complete. It is important after step 2 for the worker to consider whether or not the child (a) has enough champions around them and (b) is going to find the activity confronting.
- It's important that you communicate that sometimes its OK for boxes to be left empty and that one of your jobs might be to help them find people who can take on those roles.

My supporters



If I needed a hug, I'd go and see...



My best friends are... because...



The people who love me the most are...



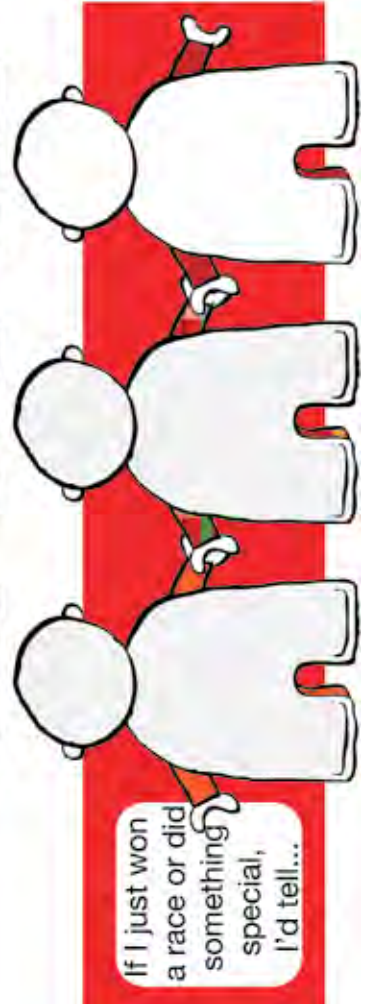
The people who cook the best food are...



If I felt scared, I'd go to...

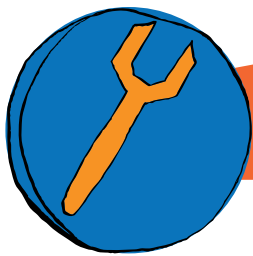


If I wanted someone to tell me a story I'd ask...



If I just won a race or did something special, I'd tell...

Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6E: IT TAKES A VILLAGE

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 2.11, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 & 6.9



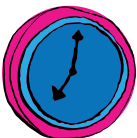
WHY?

- To identify community resources
- To help workers think about what supporters children might be (re)connected to as part of their case work



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 7 to 10 years



TIME?

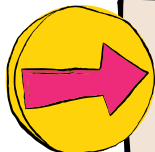
- 15-45 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

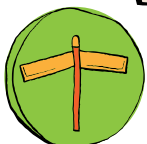
- A copy of the template
- Coloured pencils and coloured markers
- Other craft material (optional)

Who ELSE MATTERS?



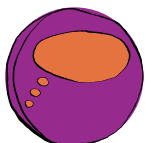
WHAT TO DO:

- Explain to the children that there is a saying that 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Ask them what they think this means.
- Give the kids a copy of the streetscape and ask them to draw people who are special to them and who have supported them and their families.
- Ask them to choose a couple of the special people from their drawing and ask them how they are helpful: in what ways do they help out? How easy is it to get help from them when you need it? Are you still in contact? What could we do to keep you connected?



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- When completing with kids from the same family line up a number of A3 sheets and draw a long street that flows from one page to another. Get the kids to each draw houses and people that are special to them on their individual pages and then hang them all up on the wall so that the street is recreated. Have the kids walk along the streetscape and consider what people they have in common and how there are lots of different people around also.



TO THINK ABOUT:

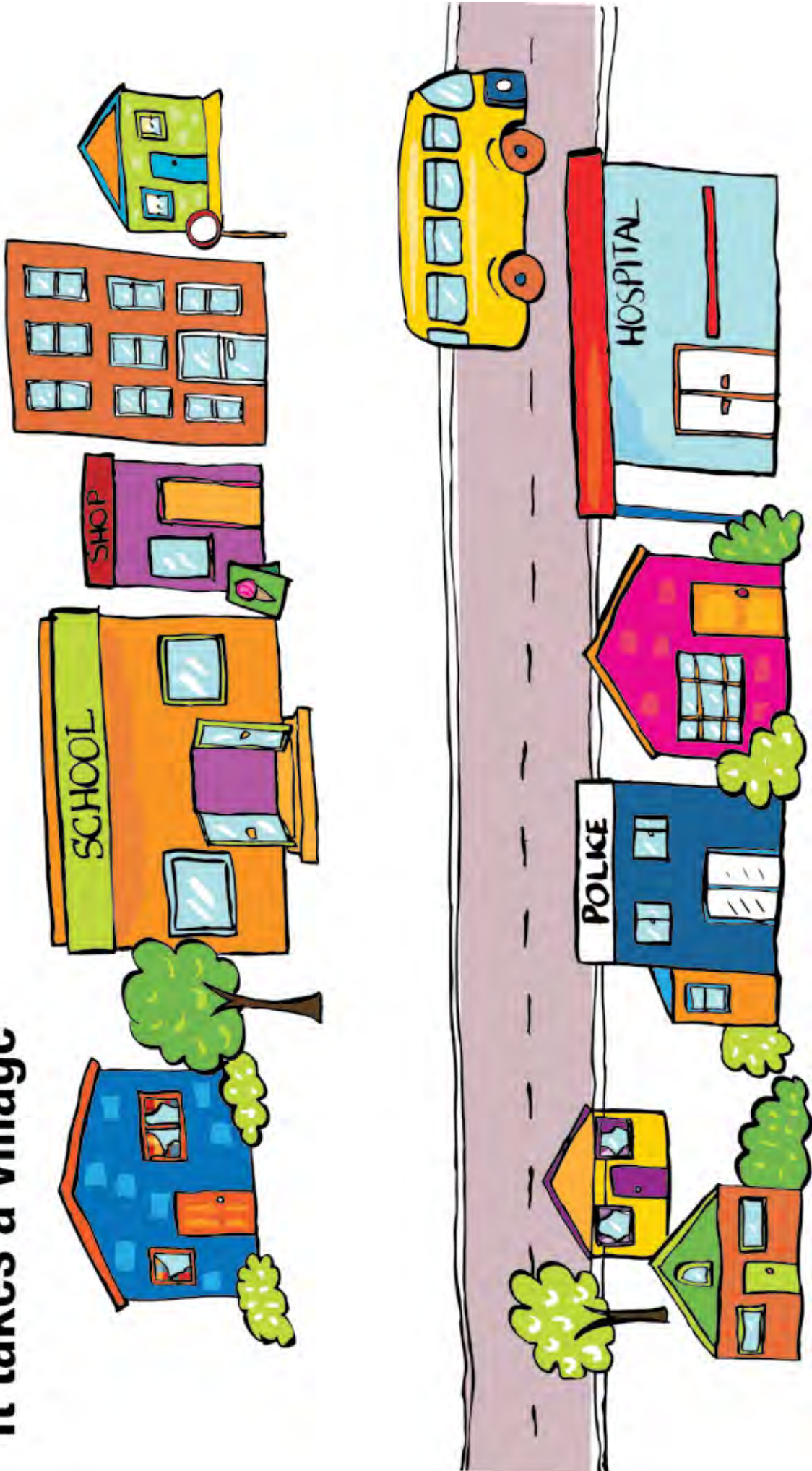
- We have included a number of tools to help kids of different ages to identify supports. Most are used to focus on a particular point in time. Giving kids an opportunity to reflect on how things have changed over time can also be helpful – why not bring out these worksheets later or get the kids to re-do after some time has elapsed. Help them consider how things have changed.



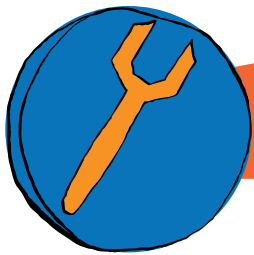
HAZARD ZONES:

- This activity can highlight children's loss and can bring feelings of grief to the fore. Allowing children to feel these emotions is important as is working with parents to maintain and reconnect children to those who helped them in the past. When relationships are maintainable, working with kids to form new relationships (with new friends, supportive adults etc) is also essential.

It takes a village



Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6F SHARING MY STORY

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 5.1, 5.7, 6.8 & 6.9



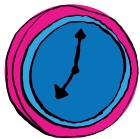
WHY?

- To reach an agreement with children about what they are happy for workers to share with their parents, other family members and workers



WHO WITH?

- Children 5+



TIME?

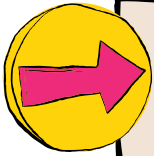
- 5mins to 20mins



YOU'LL NEED?

- A copy of the template

Who ELSE MATTERS?



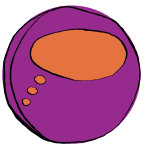
WHAT TO DO:

- When children raise issues that you think might need to be shared with others, remind them of your agreement in regards to confidentiality: that you'll keep things to yourself unless you are worried about the child and / or when they give you permission to share this information. Explain that this form will help them decide what things are OK to share and what's not.
- Prior to completing the form with the child, services should already have considered and filled out the "If you tell us that you or your family aren't safe" section and have it ready to explain to the child.
- After doing so, complete the top part of the form with the child, highlighting any particular concerns or broad issues that they are happy for you to share with them. Sometimes it might be helpful to probe or offer suggestions of things that they might be happy to share (ie when you do something that others might be proud of; when you're not feeling safe; when you need something to happen; when you'd like something explained). A similar question might be asked in relation to things they don't want shared (ie when they're worried about how people might react). In regards to the latter, it is OK for workers to gently challenge the things that they don't want shared or to ask them if it would be OK to give them some ideas about how information might be shared so that their worries are less likely to eventuate (ie you're worried that your Mum might be embarrassed: how about we write her a letter that she can read by herself and then talk about it a bit later?).



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Write things that children most often talk about on small cards. Set up a continuum for the children (by using sticky labels / cards that say "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree") and ask them to answer the question "I'm happy for you to talk to ... about" by placing the cards with the discussion topics on the continuum in relation to their willingness for information to share. Ask them questions about why they've placed the cards at a particular point and probe as to whether there might be particular ways of sharing that they would consider OK.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- It is important that children and parents are clear about your service's policies around information sharing. Obviously if your service is of the view that parents are able to access all information about their children then you would not do this exercise with kids in regards to what you will share with parents. Instead, you would need to clearly explain to the child why your policy is in place and what you would do with certain information.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Children may use this activity to disclose particular information. Be prepared for this and give them enough information through the process so that they are well aware of how you might share what they've told you.

Sharing my story



Who needs to know?

Handwriting practice area with three horizontal dashed lines.



When is it OK to tell them?

Handwriting practice area with three horizontal dashed lines.



What I don't want them to know

Handwriting practice area with three horizontal dashed lines.

My signature

Handwriting practice area with three horizontal dashed lines for a signature.



We'll talk about this again on: ___/___/___ and we'll see if it's still what I want.

If you tell us that your or your family aren't safe or that you've been hurt then we might need to do something about it.

In our service we will

Step 1:

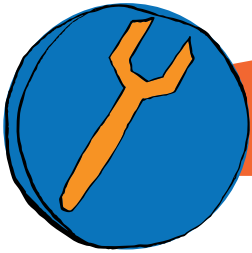
Step 2:

Step 3:

My worker has explained this to me

Blank box for drawing or illustration.

Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6G HOLDING IT TOGETHER

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6, 2.11 & 6.9



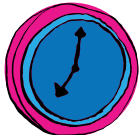
WHY?

- To help plan ongoing support for children and families
- To alleviate children's fears about losing support after exiting program
- To identify alternative options



WHO WITH?

- Children 8+ and families



TIME?

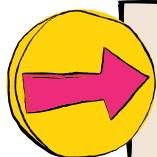
- Ongoing



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copies of the form
- A copy of the child and family's case plan

Who ELSE MATTERS?



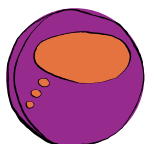
WHAT TO DO:

- In the first column work with the child to identify the supports that they are currently receiving from you and from your service
- In the second column identify any supports that you have arranged that can mirror or take up the support that you have been providing if ongoing assistance is required
- In the third column list the contact details of alternative programs / supports that are available



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- This activity can be documented using Tool # "Here and there"



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Transition planning is essential and is best when it begins when the child and family first access your service. Children tell us that it can be traumatic not knowing how their family is going to be supported after they leave your program and workers tell us that they feel anxious for families who have left without making plans. A document like this should be included in all case plans and be filled out regularly.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Children can feel set up if you list supports and resources that have not been pre-arranged and co-ordinated. Make sure that contact is made with the programs that you list in column two (and three if possible) so that they know what is necessary and how things will proceed.

Who ELSE MATTERS?

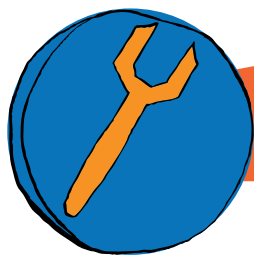


HOLDING IT TOGETHER

What our service does with you	What else we have planned	Where else you might get help

SOME KEY NUMBERS FOR YOU:

Who ELSE MATTERS?



TOOL 6H: MAPPING THE SERVICE SYSTEM

LINKED TO:

- Sections 6.7 & 6.9



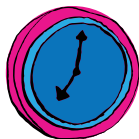
WHY?

- To develop a better understanding of the services and supports available to children and families in your local area



WHO WITH?

- Workers/staff teams



TIME?

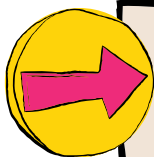
- This activity can be completed in around 20 minutes with ongoing opportunities to update



YOU'LL NEED?

- Template
- Local resource lists (ie CONTACT, the Big Red Book)

Who ELSE MATTERS?



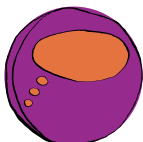
WHAT TO DO:

- As a group identify the different service sectors that exist in your local area. (These might include homelessness services, child protection, family violence services, education, welfare, alcohol and other drugs, family support, police etc)
- Label each segment of the map and identify which services you might put in that segment
- Brainstorm the various organisations for each sector
- Write the names of the services that would be of most benefit to your service in the centre of the map and those less so further out (use lines / colours to portray the strengths of connection / relevance to your program)
- Look at the map as a group and consider:
 - Are there any other organisations critical to supporting children and families who are not on the map?
 - Are there ways of better engaging those services that are far out (ie those who are not strongly engaged)?
 - What actions need to be taken to better engage key organisations/sectors?



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

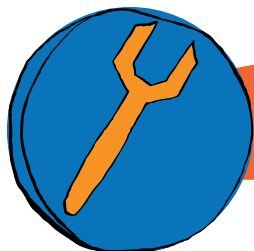
- This activity can be completed for individual families: write their name in the middle of the map and identify (a) what services and supports they are CURRENTLY receiving assistance from and (b) those that could be beneficial. Consider:
 - How might these resources best be captured?
 - How might we work with the family to engage with these supports if they think that they could be helpful?



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Networking is essential for maximising on supports for children and families and yet it's probably a part of practice that is most neglected. Consider what opportunities there are around to meet workers from other programs and develop a plan at a staff meeting to get out and develop relationships.

Who ELSE MATTERS?



OTHER TOOLS RELATED TO PRINCIPLE 6

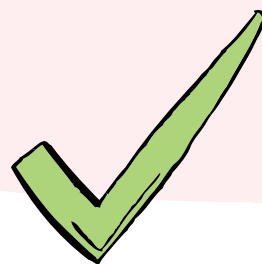
LINKED TO:

Tool:	Relates to sections
1F	6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6
2E	6.9
5C	6.9
5D	6.9

Who ELSE MATTERS?

TOOLS FOR WORKERS/ORGANISATIONS SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

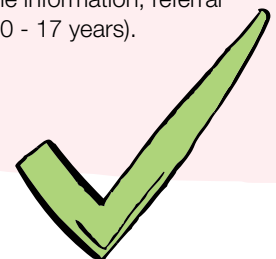
- **Parentlink** provides parents with a whole host of resources on parenting, family support programs and other assistance. It can be accessed online at: www.parentlink.act.gov.au/
- **Child care centres** exist in most ACT regions and are often available for both casual and long day care. These centres can provide respite for families but also provide children with a safe environment in which they can learn and grow.
- **Child and family centres** run in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin and provide parents with information, support and services for all family members. The supports available are based on the needs of children and their families and have a strong emphasis on providing outreach services in homes, schools and the community. For more information, drop in to one of the centres or go online at: www.dhcs.act.gov.au/childandfamilycentres/contact_us
- **Parenting programs** are run by a number of family programs including Barnardos, Marymead, Winnunga Nimityjah and the regional community services. Specific programs are also run for fathers, families affected by mental illness, and A&TSI parents. More detail about the programs can be found on the Parentlink website.
- **Young parents programs** are provided by a number of ACT's youth centres and by Barnardos through their Parenting Outreach Program. More information about these services are available in the Youth Coalition's Big Red Book, available online at: www.youthcoalition.net/public/Projects/BRB.html
- **The Canberra Family Relationship Centre** is run by Relationships Australia Canberra and Region, Centacare and Marymead. It is the first point of call for families going through separation or seeking assistance to strengthen relationships. Canberra FRC provides information about family relationship issues, ranging from building better relationships to dispute resolution. More information is available at: www.familyrelationships.gov.au/canberrafrfc
- **Family counselling** is provided by the YWCA, Centacare and the Conflict Resolution Service.
- **Schools as Communities** is a program that runs in many ACT preschools and primary schools. Their role is to identify and develop links and partnerships between home, school, local services and businesses. Workers can help families find and access information, supports and services within the local area.



Who ELSE MATTERS?

TOOLS FOR WORKERS/ORGANISATIONS SOME SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

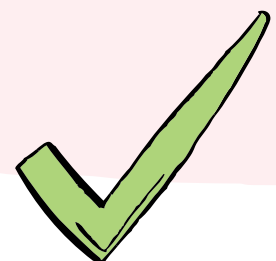
- **Barnardo's Australia - Kids Friends** provides a service matching children/young people aged 6 to 16 years with a mentor. **6241 5466**
- **Barnardo's Australia - Parent Outreach Program** provides outreach family support to parents over 25 years of age (with children aged 0 –17 years) with complex needs. **6228 9500**
- **Belconnen Community Service - Family Support** provides support to families in the Belconnen area with children aged 0– 17 years. **6278 8100**
- **Belconnen Community Service - Good Beginnings** provides support, skills and community connections to families with one or more children under the age of 5 in the West Belconnen area. **6278 8112**
- **Canberra One Parent - Family Support Service** provides personal support, information, referral, advocacy, education and transport to sole parent families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years. **6247 4282**
- **CatholicCare - Family Support** provides support to families to assist in drawing on existing skills and developing further skills and resources to deal with distress or conflict. **6162 6100**
- **Communities @ Work - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in the Tuggeranong and Weston Creek area. **6293 6500**
- **Companion House - Children and Young Peoples Program** provides assessment and therapeutic interventions with refugee and migrant families who have been affected by torture and trauma prior to coming to Australia. **6247 7227**
- **Companion House - Community Development Program** provides support for communities affected by war trauma, human-rights violations and/ or torture; governments; and community agencies (including volunteer groups) to develop awareness, skills and linkages between community organisations and communities. **6247 7227**
- **Families ACT - Family Support and Parenting Network** provides the family and parenting support sector with advocacy and representation; sector development. **6282 2644**
- **Gungahlin Regional Community Service - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in the Gungahlin region. **6228 9200**
- **Lone Fathers Association - Telephone Information and referral** provides telephone information, referral and court support to lone fathers and their families (children and young people aged 0 - 17 years).



Who ELSE MATTERS?

TOOLS FOR WORKERS/ORGANISATIONS SOME SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

- **Majura Women's Group - Community Group** is a self-managing group that facilitates parenting, social, educational, arts and community activities for women and young children to develop their skills and develop networks of mutual support and social contact. **6139 1681**
- **Marymead Child and Family Centre - Families Together Support Program** provides a continuum of high intensity to low intensity family support to achieve the goals of family preservation or restoration. At least 80% of referrals came from Care and Protection Services through the CIS operations manager. **6162 5800**
- **Marymead Child and Family Centre - Family Skills program** provides parenting education to parents with complex and high-support needs in a group setting. **6162 5800**
- **Marymead Child and Family Centre - Grandparents Support Network** provides support, information, referral and advocacy for Grandparents who are the primary carer for their grandchildren aged 0 - 17 years. **6162 5800**
- **Northside Community Service - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in Inner North Canberra. **6257 2255**
- **ParentLine - Telephone Counselling and Family Support** provides telephone counselling, referral, information and support to the ACT community with concerns regarding parenting. **6287 3833**
- **Relationships Australia Canberra and Region - Fee Subsidy (for Counselling)** provides a fee subsidy to facilitate affordable relationship and family counselling to ACT Families on low incomes with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years. **6122 7100**
- **Society of St Vincent de Paul - St Joseph Children's Camp Subsidy** provides camps, and follow-up activities between camps, to children aged between 6 and 12 years who are experiencing disadvantage. **6282 2722**
- **Southside Regional Community Service - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in the Inner South. **6126 4700**
- **Uniting Care Kippax - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in the West Belconnen region. **6254 1733**
- **Woden Community Service - Family Support** provides support to families with children and young people aged 0 - 17 years in the Woden region. **6282 2644**



Who ELSE MATTERS?

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