

Keeping Safe Together – Summary of Proposed Model

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The service model proposed is a strategic partnership between Women's Health West and LifeWorks both operating as co-lead agency. Both agencies each bring a level of specialist expertise supporting women, children, men and families who have all been impacted by the trauma of family violence. Both agencies are providers of a broad platform of services that range from prevention to recovery of family violence.

Both agencies are being supported through other partner agencies in the West who will form part of the Project Advisory Committee including cohealth, Good Shepherd, Catholic Care and Mackillop Family Services. These agencies have helped to inform the development of the model as a new and innovative regional initiative.

The strength of the 'Keeping Safe Together' proposal is that it is evidence based, trauma informed and will be implemented through collaboration and partnership with the above mentioned organisations. The model is unique in that it provides an intensive therapeutic whole of family approach to assisting all members of a family to recover from the impact of family violence, using a coordinated multidisciplinary practice approach. There is no other similar model of this kind within the Victorian or Australian context that we are aware of that focuses on specific individual support services for men who use violence.

The Therapeutic Interventions for Family Violence demonstration project provides an ideal opportunity to trial this new and innovative approach in order build evidence and practice knowledge regarding about what works to intervene in a holistic way with families to break the cycle of violence and direct impact on children.

The project will be piloted two outer growth corridors in Melbourne's West including Melton and Wyndham and will see the employment of a number of specialised family roles who will work intensively and draw upon existing services to provide therapeutic case management support to a diverse range of families who are experiencing family violence.

The proposal is for Women's Health West and LifeWorks as joint partners and project co-lead agencies to implement and trial a new service model called 'Keeping Safe Together'. The 'Keeping Safe Together' demonstration project will seek to trial an innovative, flexible, trauma informed, whole of family intensive case management approach to support women, children and men who have all been impacted by family violence. Currently the service sectors working with family members where family violence is identified, do not work well and integrate together. We also know statistically that women and their children often return multiple times to their violent and abusive partners, thereby experience cumulative trauma and harm. Currently there are no programs available that provide intensive therapeutic support to families who have experienced and are seeking to recover and rebuild their lives following an experience of family violence.

Women's Health West and LifeWorks will draw on each agencies strengths and expertise in order to trial the new model. Both agencies have established support and model input from a variety of other local community service organisations in the region who have agreed to also partner and provide advisory in kind support to implement the proposed model. Those agencies are cohealth, Mackillop Family Services, Catholic Care and Good Shepherd. Representatives from these agencies will come together to form a 'Keeping Safe Together' Project Advisory Committee, to provide valuable professional advice and expertise as well as monitor the implementation and reporting of the project.

The 'Keeping Safe Together' model is informed by existing literature available on trauma informed family focussed approaches to support survivors of family violence. The available literature acknowledges that trauma disrupts the attachment schema for children and adults. This includes establishing safety, trustworthiness and transparency, collaboration and mutuality with clients viewed as experts in their own lives, collaboration across various systems, empowerment, client voice and choice as well as a recognition of cultural, historic and gender issues. The Family Connections model is a model with a strong evidence base that reduces the risk factors for abuse, enhances protective factors, improves child safety and reduces child internalised and externalised child behaviour. It achieves this through responding to the needs of multi-generational trauma and current trauma based on theories of attachment within an in-depth community based family focussed intervention framework.

The 'Keeping Safe Together' model is not only informed by literature on proven relational and attachment based approaches to working with parents and children impacted by violence, but also on therapeutic approaches to treat complex trauma such as cognitive behaviour therapy and developmental trauma model which involves establishing safety, affect regulation and coping skills as well as integration of traumatic experiences. The model is informed by a trauma informed case management lens using a strengths based approach. A trauma informed case management approach recognises the significance of trauma and trauma management in order to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatisation (Herman 2015).

There are currently no known holistic models within the Victorian and Australian context which simultaneously address the needs of victims, survivors and men (who are known as predominant users of violence) within families. The Keeping Safe Together model addresses this service gap and is heavily informed by David Mandel's Safe and Together Model of cross system collaboration adapted to the Victorian context. The Safe and Together model is a field tested approach to helping child welfare and other organisations make good decisions for children impacted by family violence using a cross system collaborative approach. What is most highlighted with this approach is the ability to improve outcomes for children and families by increasing capacity to intervene with all family members including perpetrators of family violence, as it relates to the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children.

The key principles relating to the proposed new 'Keeping Safe Together' model include a focus on:

- Safety and accountability for all family members
- Childs best interests
- Increased parenting capacity
- Relationship based modelling and improving secure attachment
- Trauma informed
- Whole of family approach
- Intensive and sustained intervention
- Systemic and multi-disciplinary
- Cross sector service coordination and integration
- Consent based with an emphasis on client information sharing to inform whole of family approach
- Working across the spectrum of service response from early intervention all the way to recovery
- Flexible service approach working out of business hours and providing assertive outreach
- An ability to service a variety of family formations from separated families, extended families to reconciled families living together
- Access to flexible brokerage funds to support and enable families to reach goals

The proposed model will be implemented across two sites within the growth corridors in Melbourne's West, that is Melton and Wyndham. These areas also represent statistically the areas of highest prevalence of family violence according to Victoria Police L17 data. The new demonstration project will trial the delivery of an intensive, whole of family, therapeutic case management model to a total of up to 25 families (12 -13 per site). The proposed model sees a specialist unit established in both locations using a multidisciplinary, flexible approach which includes assertive home based outreach and flexible response service hours (12pm – 8pm) in order to increase access and facilitate engagement with diverse families. The specific components of the model involve:

- A collaborative multi-disciplinary integrated team based approach to supporting families
- A holistic understanding of the complexity of family needs taking into account risk factors and multiple domains to client lives through motivational interviewing
- Outcomes based approach in order to increase family success and decrease failure
- Development of processes and protocols that facilitate referral, assessment and intervention
- Ensuring a learning approach that informs practice over time and strengthens cross sector collaboration
- Drawing upon existing specialist family violence and family centred practices
- Ensuring that the voice of clients is paramount throughout the service experience with clients actively empowered in decision-making
- Linking into other existing services and programs to support families including AOD, housing, disability mental health
- Implementing strong triage and assessment to inform intervention approaches
- Development and use of information tools such as client data ICT and service brochures

The project will see the employment of an overall full-time Project Manager, four full time Family Therapeutic Coordinators (2 per site), four full-time specialist practitioners, with the ability to support the Family Therapeutic Case Managers and work with all family members across both sites, A FTE administrator / receptionist will also be required in order to support the administration of the demonstration project for its duration.

The Family Therapeutic Coordinators will be family therapy trained with the ability to implement and combine both therapeutic and intensive case management interventions with a diverse range of families from a variety of cultural backgrounds who have experienced family violence. These newly established roles will work collaboratively with families in order to assess their needs and establish achievable goals using an attachment, trauma informed and gendered lens. Apart from linking into existing services and coordinating regular care team meetings, the Family Therapeutic Coordinators will also be able to draw on the expertise, consultation and involvement of a number of specialist practitioners employed within the project in order to support the family to achieve their identified goals dependant on the needs of each individual family. This includes a Specialist Children's Practitioner, an Intensive Support Practitioner for victims / survivors, two Men's Intensive Support Practitioner for men who use violence.

The clinical supervision and practice development for staff involved in the delivery of the project will be provided by The Bouverie Centre through a community of practice approach, supporting implementation and documenting experience based learnings over time in order to facilitate knowledge transfer. In addition to the Departments own evaluation, the Bouverie Centre will also facilitate a cooperative enquiry using experience based learning to inform the refinement of the model over 12 months.

Family intervention outcomes will be measured using pre and post testing tools such as surveys tracking change over time. The family outcomes star model is the approach which will be used to inform goal setting and achievement of outcomes over time.