



Communities  
& Justice

# Specialist Workers for Children and Young People Program

Program Specifications  
version 1.3



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# Purpose of Specifications

## Purpose

The purpose of these Service Specifications is to provide DCJ Departmental staff, NGO service providers and wider stakeholders with clear and consistent information regarding the aims, objectives and scope of the Specialist Workers for Children and Young People (SWCYP) program.

## Background

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women in NSW. In 2022-23, 47.7% of women aged 18+ who presented to a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) in NSW indicated that they were experiencing domestic and family violence, which is consistent with the prior year (47.9%).<sup>1</sup> 86% of adults who experienced domestic and family violence (nationally) in the last 12 months had a child/ren in their care who witnessed ("saw or heard") the violence.<sup>2</sup>

Homelessness and experiencing domestic and family violence has significant risk of decreasing the ability of children and young people to access education, maintain physical and mental health and fully participate in society, as well as increased risk of future victimisation.

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* recognises there is a service gap for children and young people victim-survivors/witnesses of domestic and family violence and indicates the importance of trauma informed, therapeutic recovery related service delivery.<sup>3</sup>

In November 2021, the NSW Government announced \$20 million in additional funding for the DFV sector under the Domestic and Family Violence National Partnership Agreement 2021-23. This funding included \$6.55 million for specialist workers to provide trauma-informed support for children and young people in 20 priority refuges. Since then, the NSW Government has continued to invest in supporting children and young people who are homeless or at risk and have experienced domestic and family violence by continuing this service.

In 2024, the NSW Government released an evaluation of the Specialist Workers

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<sup>1</sup> \_AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services: 2022-23 Annual Report data tables <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data>

<sup>2</sup> AIHW National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators, 3.5 Domestic violence, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/national-framework-indicators-data-visualisations/3-5-domestic-violence>.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government, Department of Social Services, The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, Recovery and healing <https://www.dss.gov.au/ending-violence>

for Children and Young People program which found the program is achieving positive outcomes and recommends the continuation and potential expansion of the program to other women’s refuges.

On 6 May 2024, the NSW Government announced a \$230 million over 4 years emergency package to enhance support for domestic, family and sexual violence victim-survivors, which included \$48 million to secure and increase funding for workers who support children accompanying their mothers to refuges.

This funding has enabled the SWCYP program to continue to 30 June 2026, and expand to additional refuges from 2024.

## Program Objectives & Outcomes

The objectives of the SWCYP are to:

- Identify children and young people in priority refuges who require specialist children’s support
- Provide direct and tailored services and support to children and young people that are trauma informed, family centred and culturally safe
- Support children and young people to access mainstream and specialist services.

The expected program outcomes align with the [SHS Outcomes Framework](#) and may include:

Domain	Core Outcome	Potential Indicator
Safety	Clients feel safer	Proportion of clients that report they feel safer since engaging with the service
	Clients feel supported to make progress in addressing their needs	Proportion of clients with demonstrated progress in engaging with services to address safety needs and addressing their individual safety needs/goals related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being supported to access information and services to remain safer</li> </ul>
Housing	Clients make progress addressing their housing needs	Proportion of clients with demonstrated progress in engaging with services to address housing needs and addressing their housing needs/goals related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased knowledge of housing options</li> <li>• Increased skills in maintaining suitable housing</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing actions to maximise housing opportunities</li> <li>• Transitioning to safer, more stable living arrangements (return to home, transitional accommodation, tenancy)</li> </ul>
		Proportion of clients presenting as experiencing homelessness that are appropriately housed at the end of the support period
	Clients sustain their tenancy	Proportion of clients who receive tenancy support from service providers that sustain their tenancy or other accommodation (where that accommodation is appropriate) for the support period, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early or crisis intervention to sustain an existing tenancy</li> <li>• Post-crisis support to sustain a new tenancy</li> </ul>
		Proportion of clients who are appropriately housed at the end of the support period
Wellbeing	Clients have improved personal wellbeing	Proportion of clients with improved personal wellbeing
	Clients have increased capacity to tackle future challenges	Proportion of clients with demonstrated progress in engaging with services to address wellbeing needs and achieving their wellbeing goals in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased engagement with health services</li> <li>• Improved relationship with family (where appropriate) and support networks</li> <li>• Increased connection to community</li> <li>• Increased connection to education</li> <li>• Increased connection to employment.</li> </ul>

The relevancy of each of these outcomes will depend on the age of the child or young person, their personal needs and the needs of their parent/s and family.

Services are not currently required to specifically report on outcomes as part of the service's reporting requirements (further detail can be found on page 9). Services may wish to link case studies back to the SHS Outcome Framework when describing how funding has contributed to the achievement of outcomes.

## Principles

All activities in this service should be underpinned by the SHS program practice principles. These include:

- Person centred – recognising when working with people that a person's

needs are not static. The service response is built around the needs, circumstances, experiences and choices of the person, rather than a programmatic or predetermined service offering. This includes individually tailoring the intensity and duration of support and the accommodation setting in which support will be delivered. A person-centred response also considers the needs of the family or household in achieving a long-term housing outcome, including building individual and family capacity, skills, resilience, considering the needs of children, and building connections to community.

- Informed choice – all service providers delivering services as part of the program will ensure a commitment to individual informed choice and self-determination.
- Trauma informed and evidence-based services – recognise the impact of trauma on those individuals accessing services, and develop and implement trauma informed policies and practices based on evidence of what works.
- Strengths-based – using a strengths-based approach to service design and implementation focuses on building on individual and family capacity, skills, resilience and connections to community.
- Collaborative – collaborate with other homelessness services, mainstream service providers, housing providers and community organisations to problem solve, share expertise and resources in order to achieve best outcomes for people. This collaboration is a core part of a person-centred approach and key to preventing and breaking the cycle of homelessness. To be effective, service providers have an important leadership, promotion and collaboration role within the broader homelessness services system.
- Rapid re-housing – re-house people as quickly as possible to prevent further breakdown of connections, routines and relationships.
- Stable housing options – support people into sustainable, independent living from crisis or transitional accommodation arrangements as early as practicable, while recognising a lack of exit options may require flexibility around timing. Ensuring that the housing options are affordable for the person.
- Stability for people with complex needs – stabilise accommodation for people with complex needs as a priority, so that interventions to address other areas, such as mental health, can be more effective.
- Coordination of supports – identify the need for, and coordinate, multi-disciplinary support early in the support process, to build sustainable change.
- Reintegrate – maintain, establish or re-establish family, community, education, training and employment connections where practical and

appropriate to do so.

- Risk mitigation – recognise and manage the risks associated with transitions and the process of change, in order to support people through change.
- Client voice – ensure people accessing support are able to express their views in the design, delivery and continuous improvement of services, through a range of appropriate mechanisms, including direct consultation.
- Continuity of care – the program recognises the importance of continuity of care as a key factor in creating trusting, respectful and positive relationships between the person and the service. This means that a program participant should be able to access the same support worker, or where more than one service is involved, it is well organised and coordinated.
- Culturally safe – service delivery will consider the Aboriginal or culturally and linguistically diverse needs of the person as part of the overall support planning approach. The service must be culturally sensitive and provide culturally appropriate services.

## Program Description

### Program Overview

This program aims to break the cycle of disadvantage and improve client outcomes for children and young people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who have been impacted by DFV. Service providers are required to utilise funding to provide direct, therapeutic, client centred and trauma informed services to children and young people.

#### **In Scope**

SWCYP is a flexible program which should be delivered in response to children and young people's individual strengths, needs, goals and circumstances. This extends to the title of the SWCYP staff, where each service is encouraged to consider their local context when determining role titles of SWCYP staff delivering the service.

Below is a list of service components that may be provided, noting this list is not exhaustive:

- Assessing client's needs, developing a case plan and providing case management.
- Providing specialist services such as mental health support and counselling.

- Referring and supporting clients to engage with other services, including those that may provide long-term and step-down support after the family leaves the refuge.
- Ensuring that children, young people and families are connected with education/training, community, culture, family and country.
- Facilitating one-to-one and group sessions with parents and children to provide support to children, discuss their needs and address their concerns.
- Providing advocacy assistance to children and parents and to act as a linker between the child and other support services.
- Providing specialist practice guidance to build staff capacity.
- Collaborating with the local service system to ensure wrap around services are available to families.
- Staff capacity building, supervision, professional development, or training for specialist workers that directly relates to improving service deliver for children and young people can be funding with the allocated SWCYP funding.

### **Brokerage**

From 2024/25, funding may also be used for flexible brokerage if required, to help achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. Brokerage assistance may only be used for children and young people who are actively being supported by the SWCYP program.

The primary purpose of SWCYP funding is for specialist workers' wages to support children and young people accompanying their mother to the refuge. Brokerage expenditure can be used as a secondary purpose to support case management plans and achieve better outcomes for the child or young person that may not have been achieved otherwise.

Brokerage assistance can only be provided where:

- Funds are used for items directly related to the achievement of goals set out in the child and young person's case plan regarding connection and reconnection to education/ training, community, culture, family and country;
- Implementing the agreed case plan goals requires particular goods and services which:
  - The family is unable to directly access;
  - The service provider is unable to provide from other program resources;
  - The service provider is unable to access from other services/agencies; and
  - Where the family cannot afford the cost of the goods or services



within the required timeframe.

Brokerage assistance may only be used for goods or services that are provided free as part of a service or program the client is eligible for with another organisation or agency (e.g. Medicare bulk billing) when the free service is not available within the required timeframe to meet the child or young person's case plan goals.

Service providers are responsible for record keeping and acquitting brokerage expenses as part of their annual accountability process.

Further guidance about brokerage is contained in the [Specialist Homelessness Services Program Specifications](#).

### **Out of Scope**

SWCYP funding cannot be used for accommodation costs including temporary accommodation, rent and rent arrears.

## **Target Group**

SWCYP is designed to provide direct services to accompanied children and young people aged 0-18 years who are living in a refuge and who are experiencing, or who have experienced DFV.

Where capacity exists, children and young people of an accompanying adult who have experienced domestic and family violence, who are receiving outreach support from the refuge are also eligible.

## **Reporting requirements**

Providers will be required to acquit the funding as a part of the annual financial acquittal process.

Service providers are required to meet the data collection requirements outlined in their SHS contract and the [Specialist Homelessness Services Program Specifications](#).

DCJ has provided a specific flag in CIMS which services must use to identify the child or young person receiving a service under this program.

Each service provider is required to submit two case studies to DCJ on a quarterly basis highlighting how the funding has contributed to the achievement of outcomes. A case study template has been provided by DCJ.

## **Support and advice**

Service providers delivering the SWCYP seeking further information can contact their local DCJ contract manager or email the program management team on [dfvprograms@dcj.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dfvprograms@dcj.nsw.gov.au).