

NSW Therapeutic Care Framework

A framework that guides service provision and works towards improving outcomes for children and young people in statutory Out of Home Care (OOHC).

1

Children and young people in OOHC have often experienced trauma, abuse, neglect and/or are faced with severe adversity before being placed into care.

Therapeutic Care is a beneficial approach that addresses the needs of children and young people in OOHC and has the potential to improve their long-term outcomes.

A definition of Therapeutic Care

Therapeutic Care for a child or young person in statutory OOHC is a holistic, individualised, team-based approach to the complex impacts of trauma, abuse, neglect, separation from families and significant others, and other forms of severe adversity.

This is achieved through the provision of a care environment that is evidence-informed, culturally responsive and provides positive, safe and healing relationships and experiences to address the complexities of trauma, adversity, attachment and developmental needs.

2

Culturally sensitive Therapeutic Care system

It is important to acknowledge the pain and suffering that separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people from their families and communities has caused, especially those from the Stolen Generations and to their families and descendants. For this reason, preservation or restoration to family, kin or community is always the preferred outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people if it can be safely achieved.

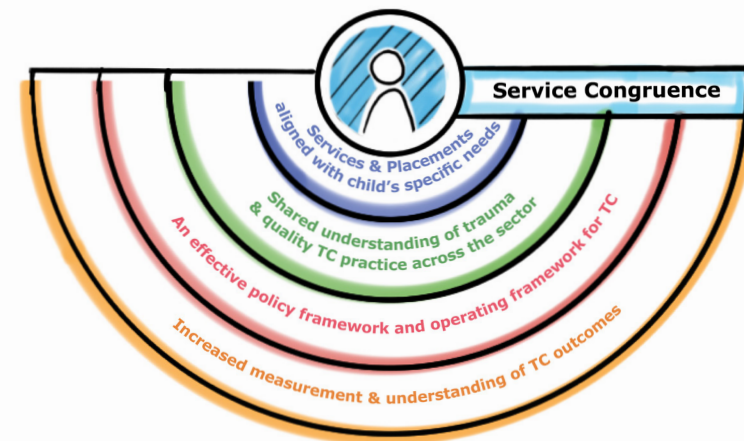
In taking a holistic approach to Therapeutic Care, we must consider the cultural context of children and young people. A culturally sensitive perspective affects how we understand underlying issues such as attachment, and recognises that cultural connection is critical to identity and wellbeing.

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When Aboriginal people and kids are heard then together we can find stronger ways that meet kids' needs in culturally safe ways... Involving Aboriginal people and Aboriginal ways means we can find real lasting solutions that ease the trauma and loss for our kids and builds resilience for the future.

Aunty Sue Blacklock, (Winangay Chair),
Member of the Order of Australia (AM);
ACCP Ambassador for Children.



NSW Therapeutic Care Framework | Core principles

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Children and young people focussed

- 1** Children and young people will be active participants in the development of their care and case plans, including cultural plans, where appropriate. These plans should be based on in-depth assessments that are trauma-informed and respond to their individual needs.
- 2** Therapeutic Care programs need to be planned and based on appropriate assessments of the child or young person, taking into account their development stage, own views, needs and preferences.
- 3** The mix of young people in care should be taken into account in order to consider a young person's individual needs (i.e. including encouraging safe and supportive relationships between peers); and to maximise the opportunity to address shared client needs.
- 4** Promotion of safe, healing relationships between children and young people and their family, kin and community are important for family, social, community and cultural connections. This is a particular priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- 5** Therapeutic Care addresses aspects of the child or young person's life including health and disability needs, community, culture, education, and recreation.

Organisations

- 6** Agencies should have a clearly articulated statement that: outlines the values and culture behind their evidence-informed Therapeutic Care program; is advised by relevant trauma and attachment theories; and clearly defines their program logic/ theory of change. This statement should be understood and agreed to throughout the organisation.
- 7** All care team members should have relevant experience and qualifications, or be working towards relevant qualifications. They should also receive Therapeutic Care training that addresses the rationale and theoretical underpinnings of practice.
- 8** Therapeutic Specialists will support staff and carers in providing a safe and healing care environment for children and young people.
- 9** Carers should be trained, supported and adequately assessed to ensure their capacity for providing a consistent, healing response to children and young people.
- 10** For Intensive Therapeutic Care settings/homes, appropriate staff-to-child ratios coupled with consistent rostering of staff should be used to create a safe and stable environment for children and young people.

Environment

- 11** The physical environment provided to children and young people in OOHC must be safe, nurturing, and predictable to enable effective reparative care.
- 12** Care teams should aim to create a 'home-like' care environment to build opportunity for positive, healing experiences and relationships.

System

- 13** A shared understanding of Therapeutic Care helps organisations and their external stakeholders to act congruently and with a shared purpose.
- 14** Congruent action must also be taken across agencies and government bodies, particularly education, health, disability and child protection – to provide children and young people with integrated responses to their needs.
- 15** A good system requires robust central-level and district-level governance. The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including government, should be clearly articulated and understood to enable agencies to fulfil program requirements.
- 16** Outcomes (i.e. safety, permanency and wellbeing) for children and young people need to be measured and evaluated.