

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).





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

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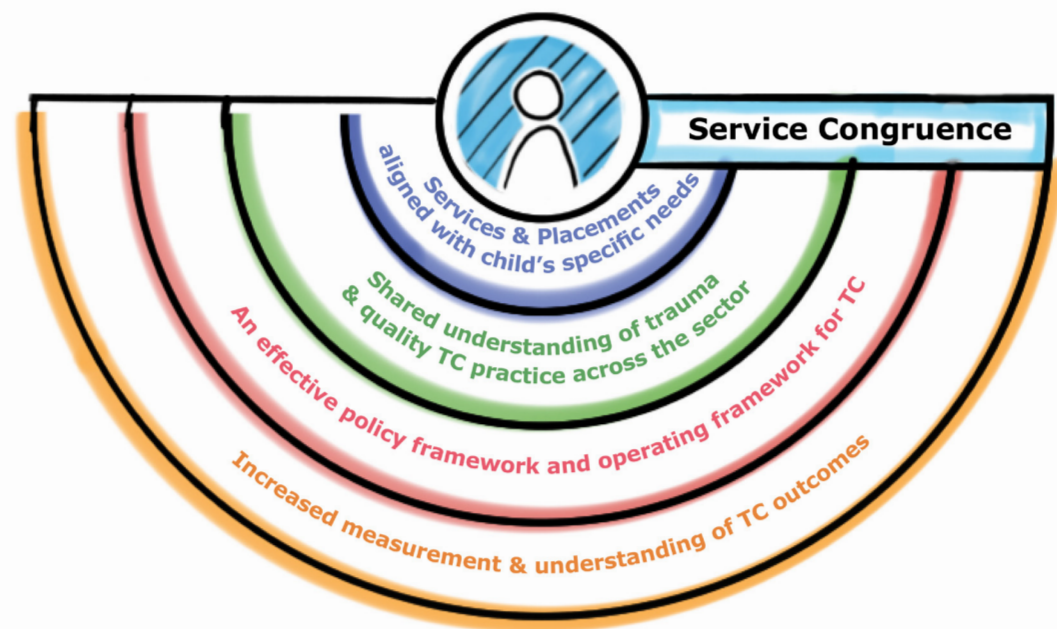
Therapeutic Care is a beneficial approach that addresses the needs of children and young people in OOHC and has the potential to improve their long-term outcomes.

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.

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Importance of delivering culturally sensitive Therapeutic Care

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.

It is paramount that Therapeutic Care be culturally sensitive and responsive and recognises the trauma of separation. Therapeutic Care must be holistic in its approach, address intergenerational trauma and promote healing.

Research and community advice demonstrates that children and young people develop their identity, values and cultural awareness when they live in a stable environment. A stable environment provides continuity of relationships with family, kin and community, and promotes attachments.

Preservation or restoration to family, kin or community is always the preferred outcome if it can be safely achieved (as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles). However, these options may not always be viable in the short or longer term.

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

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.

We share a common sorrow gained through years of dispossession, oppression, forced removal of children and disadvantage.

We need to work together to overcome the impacts of trauma and to find our own ways to heal together, and to help our children recover from intergenerational trauma.

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



What is Therapeutic Care?

Research indicates the need for more trauma-informed responses to help children and young people recover from the complex impacts of trauma, abuse, neglect and/or exposure to other forms of severe adversity (e.g. a range of developmental, behavioural or mental health needs).

Trauma-informed casework and care

All casework and care with children and young people living in Out of Home Care (OOHC) needs to be trauma-informed.

The impact of trauma and adversity on children and young people, including on their brain development, needs to be understood and planned for by carers, caseworkers and practitioners; and measures taken to address these impacts.

This more intensive approach is also referred to as 'Therapeutic Care'.

Therapeutic Care

Therapeutic Care is a growing field of research and practice that embeds the latest developments from trauma theory, child brain development and attachment theory into service delivery. Therapeutic Care environments may also consider other proven and promising approaches that can lead to change, growth and healing for particular children and young people in care (e.g. Circle of Courage, Sanctuary Model, Positive Peer Culture, Teaching Family Model and Project Re-Education).

Therapeutic Care is a holistic, individualised, team-based approach to the complex impacts of trauma, abuse, neglect, separation from families and significant others and/or other forms of severe adversity.

Children and young people who have experienced high levels of trauma and disruption in their lives, and who have more complex needs require a more intensive, holistic care approach including the guidance of therapeutic specialists.

This is achieved through the provision of a care environment where responses to the child or young person are consistent and predictable. The individual programming for each child or young person is developed with clinical input and is evidence-informed, culturally respectful and responsive; and provides positive, safe, reparative and healing relationships and experiences to address the complexities of trauma, attachment and developmental needs.

Therapeutic Care provided to the right child or young person, in the right way, at the right time.



Sector

The term 'Sector' refers to both government and non-government organisations or agencies, and wider staff groups such as caseworkers, team leaders, supervisors, managers, clinical supervisors, practitioners, etc. This includes the wider set of contributors such as health, education and disability services who provide direct care and support to children and young people in OOHC.

Flexibility

The term 'Flexibility' refers to the ability to change the level of Therapeutic Care and support being provided by initiating lesser or additional intensive forms of Therapeutic Care and support, when required.

This is determined by the individual needs of a child or a young person living in OOHC, at any given time, along their continuum of care.

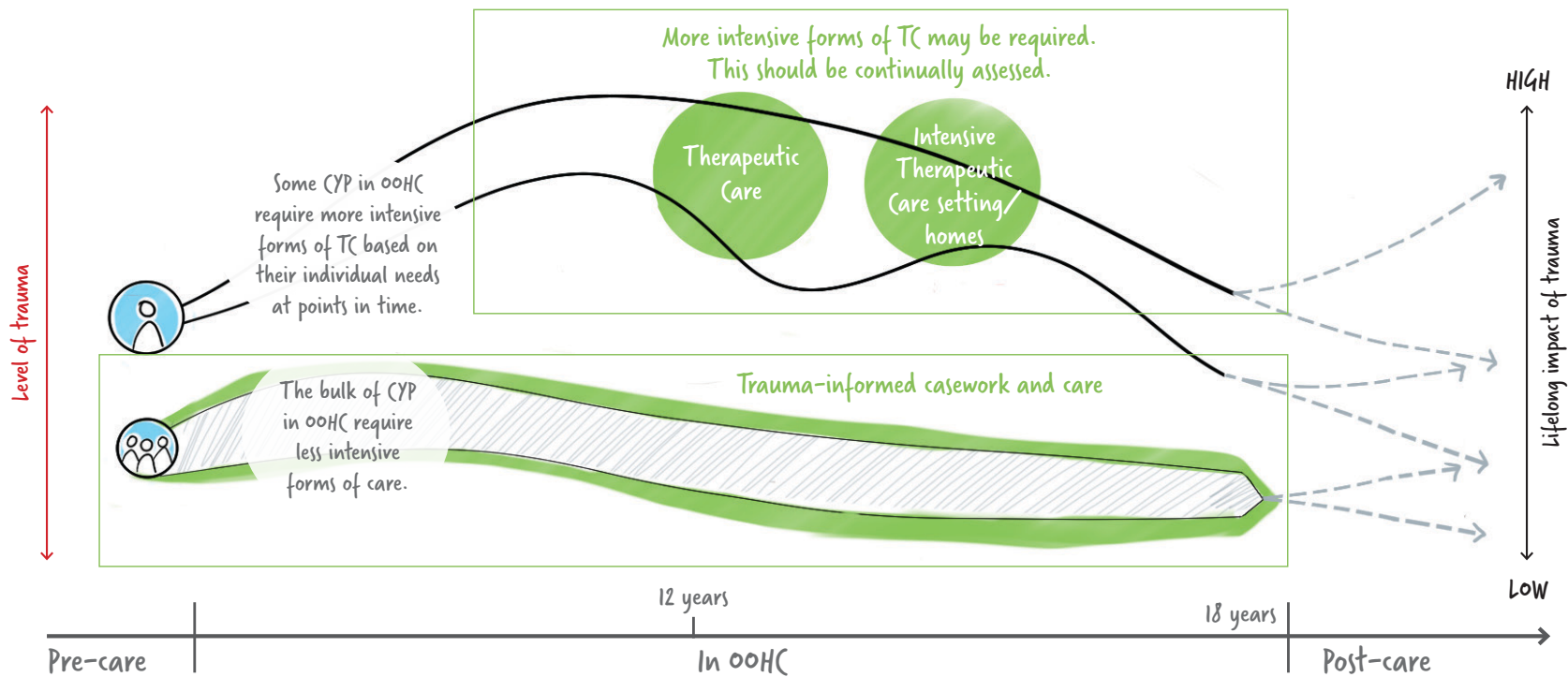
More broadly, exploring and developing alternate Therapeutic Care approaches to address the individual needs of a child or young person, as they arise.

Level of trauma

A child's journey through care

A child or young person (CYP) may experience different levels of care during their time in OOHC.

All CYP in OOHC should receive trauma-informed casework and care.



CYP in OOHC are a vulnerable group. Many have experienced trauma, abuse, neglect and/or are faced with other forms of severe adversity.

CYP with higher care needs and/or levels of trauma may require more intensive forms of care.

This can be provided across different care settings (e.g. foster, relative or kinship care, or in an Intensive Therapeutic Care setting/home) with a special focus on Therapeutic Care, and a range of supports and services.

Young people over the age of 12 who require a more intensive level of care and treatment may require support in an Intensive Therapeutic Care setting/home.

Ideally they should be supported to step down into a home-based setting (e.g. relative/kinship or foster care) as their care needs and trauma impacts reduce. This can be the result of additional supports and services provided.

Every CYP's pathway is different throughout their OOHC journey. The pathway is not always linear.

In light of this, a CYP's needs should be continually assessed to allow the flexibility to increase or decrease the level of support and services required as their care needs change.

The success or otherwise of Therapeutic Care programs, casework and care (in OOHC) can make a big difference to the lifelong impacts of trauma. It can also greatly influence a person's ability to participate fully in society, and whether or not they will enter into other systems such as health, justice and disability services.

NSW Therapeutic Care Framework | Core principles

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



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.

Therapeutic Care outcomes

Improving outcomes for children and young people in Out of Home Care (OOHC).



The Sector

- 1** Increased capability and quality of services within the sector and among OOHC care providers.
- 2** Better capability for matching the right service or support to the child or young person, and for evaluating the outcomes.
- 3** Flexibility for agencies to choose their own evidence-informed program to deliver the Therapeutic Care Framework core principles.
- 4** Better alignment of policy, funding and contracting models, to improve individual outcomes for children and young people.



The Child

- 1** Provision of the most appropriate and least intensive form of care that facilitates healing of the child or young person's trauma.
- 2** Improved individual outcomes relating to safety, permanency and well-being, through individualised Therapeutic Care that is clinically informed and culturally responsive.
- 3** Improved experience of care for children and young people, and improved communication with carers and care teams.
- 4** Children and young people will be active participants in developing their care and case plans including cultural plans, where appropriate; and will be given information about the outcome of decisions concerning them.
- 5** Diversity (i.e. disability, culture, language, religion, and sexual identity) is taken into account when working with children and young people, and when considering various theories and approaches.



Community & Government

- 1** More positive engagement for the child or young person with their cultural heritage and with their community.
- 2** Ability to measure and evaluate outcomes.
- 3** A collaborative, whole of government approach.
- 4** Better social return on investment and reduced costs of downstream service provision (i.e. health and justice).

