

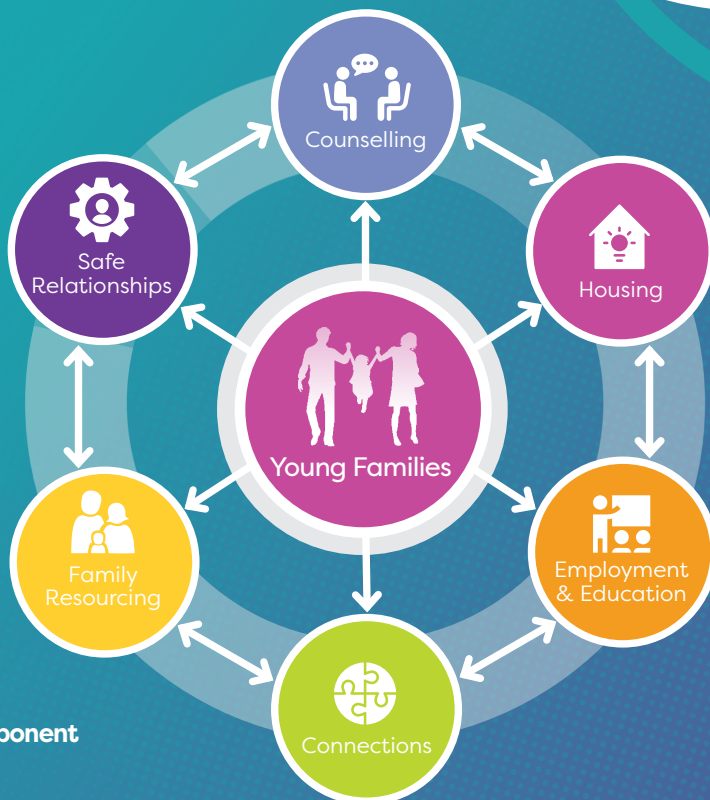


Thriving Young Families

Service Integration

Through our partnership with Hand Heart Pocket we are investigating what works for vulnerable young parents and their children to thrive, and evaluating the effectiveness of integrated service delivery.

Our transformative approach to backing vulnerable young families wraps support around a young family tailored to their needs, goals and hopes for the future. More information and early learnings from each component of the model are available on the [YFS website](#).



Issue: a fragmented service system



Young families facing a myriad of challenges may require support from a range of service providers to meet their needs and achieve their goals. Yet it can be hard to access the right services at the right time, and sometimes those services do not talk to one another. This can make the service experience disjointed and less effective than it could be if everyone was working together.

Thriving Young Families Integrated Service Model

Service integration aims to join up services to enhance client outcomes through:

- **Improved access** - comprehensive and appropriate services, tailored and aligned to clients' need at the right time
- **Increased efficiency** - achieving more from limited resources through information and skill sharing, reducing duplication of effort and streamlining systems
- **Enhanced effectiveness** - better outcomes for clients.

In the Thriving Young Families initiative, a team of inter-disciplinary professionals work together to wrap a package of support around each young family. The model includes long-term, relationship-based support from Family Resource Practitioners to address immediate issues and build skills, plus specialist support on key areas such as housing, safe and healthy relationships, education and employment, therapeutic intervention and peer support. It was designed based on young parents' insights, evidence, and experience.

Benefits: Young parents had a better service experience

"[the service is] tailored to what you need"

"[It is] better [getting support] at the same organisation because they can talk to each other and have different skills"

"you get the help you need in one place... it's exhausting getting help from different places"

Service integration in practice

Service integration requires working across disciplines to wrap support around a family in a way that effectively utilises the strengths of different disciplines to maximise benefits.

Practitioners bring a range of expertise to the team. Each role provides a combination of direct work with families and indirect, behind the scenes, work with teammates to support families and each other and to reinforce program objectives. This includes:

- **Working with intent and noticing issues**

The team is united by a shared vision of what the program is trying to achieve. Team members approach their work holistically and with curiosity. Regardless of focus area, workers engage with young parents as whole people and try to understand what might be going on for them, and where they might be able to benefit from another program component.

- **Increasing visibility, promoting uptake and building engagement**

Workers are attuned to the needs of young parents and, where relevant, facilitate engagement with other program elements. This includes letting young parents know about the other elements, identifying potential barriers to engagement, providing informal introductions, planting seeds of possibility and building motivation and readiness for participation. This is particularly helpful where young parents may be interested but feeling anxious about engaging with elements like counselling or employment.

- **Reinforcing key messages and skill building activities**

A core focus of the program is equipping young parents with the skills and resources to address adversity and manage any future bumps in the road. One worker may identify core resilience-based skills and strategies such as emotional regulation that other workers can pick up and reinforce through their interactions with that family. This strengthens the impact of skill building activities and helps families to build activities into daily routines and form healthy coping habits.

- **Sustaining outcomes through complementary support**

Program components have a different mix of duration and intensity. The focused roles offer short term support to address immediate circumstances, while the family resourcing provides longer term, individualised support. These supports are complementary and enable tailoring of support over time.

- **Providing specialist advice and training to the team**

Each worker brings specialist knowledge and experience and acts as a resource to the team.

They support each other's professional development through practice reflection, case consultations, and discipline-specific training.

Sarah's story

Sarah's experience with the program exemplifies how one young mum engaged with the different service elements. It demonstrates the importance of building a stable foundation and layering support over time.

Sarah and her three children left a domestically violent relationship and were staying with a friend temporarily. Sarah's friend recommended Thriving Young Families.



Linkage with Housing Specialist

Sarah was linked with the Housing Specialist to address her immediate needs. Within two weeks Sarah and her children moved into their new home (prior to the current housing crisis).



Linkage with the Employment and Education Mentor

Sarah was able to start planning for her and her children's future. The FRP encouraged her to start thinking about employment and linked Sarah with the Employment and Education Mentor, who supported her to enrol in a course.



Support around safe and healthy relationships

When opportunities arose, Sarah and the FRP had informal discussions on healthy relationship dynamics.



Linkage with therapeutic support

With housing and financial stability, Sarah was willing to explore her mental health concerns.



Connection to peer support

Sarah joined the peer activities to connect with other young mums.



 Sarah achieved her goals and was thriving.

"I was able to establish trust to grow and be able to get somewhere".

"I felt empowered and a sense of belonging".

Empowering others through the Young Parent Influencers

Sarah joined the Young Parent Influencers to use her experience to help support and empower other young parents.



Uptake and engagement

Since July 2021 45% of families engaged with multiple components. This has increased over time as service offerings have evolved and young parents' trust in the service has increased.

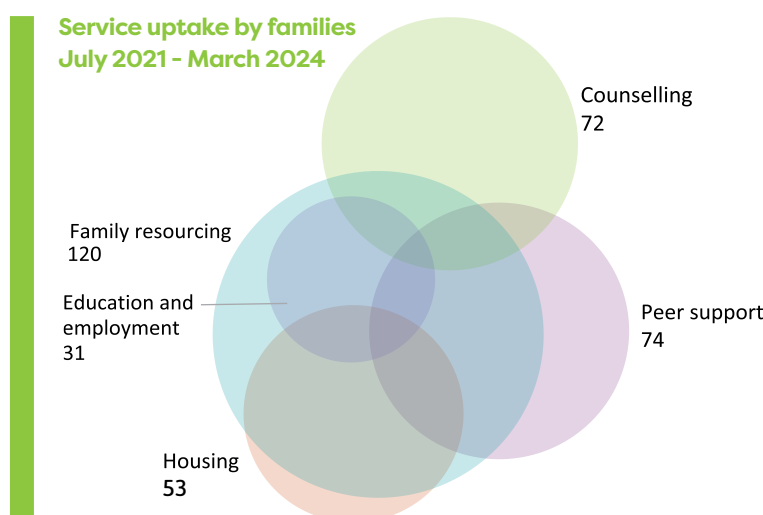
Typically, young families engaged with a Family Resource Practitioner in the first instance. The majority (more than 70%) went on to engage with another component of the program. Some young parents chose to only engage with the peer support component of the program to connect informally with peers through group activities.

The range of different entry points and service offerings available caters for young parents with differing needs.

Without an integrated approach, every connection to a new support is a possible fail point in the service system.

Benefits: Young parents felt empowered and in control

"You can say no and yeah, make a choice"



Promising results

This transformative approach to supporting vulnerable young families has shown promising results.

81% of participants who completed the program experienced positive improvements towards thriving.

Benefits from the initiative and overall feedback from young people and practitioners indicate that although working in an integrated way can be hard, it is worth the effort. As young people, young parents have a diverse range of needs and goals for themselves and their children. Equipping them to thrive requires a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary approach that sees them as whole people and works across generations for the best possible outcomes.

Benefits: Positive changes in mental health, coping skills, confidence, and wellbeing

"We're in a better place now and I can do more stuff now because they've shown me how to deal with stuff better"

"[They have] given [me] a better opportunity to be a successful person"

Equipping practitioners

Transitioning to an integrated, multi-disciplinary service model required significant changes in practice over a two-year period.

This was supported through:

- **Training and development** – understanding model components and different roles
- **Coaching and facilitated reflection** – incorporating new knowledge and skills into practice
- **Team building** – building shared vision and values, mutual respect, understanding and trust between practitioners
- **Co-location** – facilitating cross-pollination of knowledge and incidental learning
- **Information sharing** – updating systems and practices to enable collaborative practice.



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