



yourtown
POWERING **kids**helpline

New voluntary parent support service

A submission to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

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yourtown is a trusted provider of services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, parenting and early childhood development, long-term unemployment, prevention of youth suicide, child protection, and support for those experiencing domestic and family violence. **yourtown** has evolved to helping hundreds of thousands of young people each year through a range of service offerings, supporting them through many difficult challenges.

Our services

- Employment, education, and social enterprise programs to help long term unemployed young people re-engage with education and/or employment
- Domestic and family violence refuge, accommodation, and therapeutic supports for women and their children, including post-refuge support
- Accommodation and therapeutic supports for young parents and their children at high risk
- Parentline, a telephone and online counselling and support service for parents and carers in the Northern Territory and Queensland
- Expressive Therapy interventions for young children and infants who have experienced trauma and abuse, or been exposed to violence
- Young Parents Program providing parenting support to help with child development, life skills and health and wellbeing activities in safe, supportive environments.
- Kids Helpline, providing professional counselling and support to 5–25-year-olds across Australia since 1991
- Kids Helpline @ School and Kids Helpline @ High School, which delivers early intervention and prevention programs through primary and secondary schools
- My Circle, a confidential, private, online peer support network for 13–25-year-olds to share information and build coping skills, and
- Mental health service/s for children aged 0-11 years old and their families, with moderate mental health needs.

ParentsNext

We provide specialised support for parents with children under six years of age, to plan and prepare for their future employment in regional South Australia, from Port Pirie. Our primary goal for ParentsNext is to empower parents to embrace life changes, improve their skills and self-confidence, and achieve their education and employment goals. More than 1,200 young parents participated in our ParentsNext program since it commenced in July 2018.

Employment Services

For over 20 years **yourtown** has been delivering specialist youth employment services. Our employment services programs, including Transition to Work, Skilling Queenslanders for Work, Get Back in the Game, and ParentsNext, provide young people with training to expand their options and help them find sustainable employment. Over the last seven years we have secured more than 37,000 job placements for young people. During 2022/23 there were more than 4,000 commencements in our employment services in Queensland, New South Wales, and South Australia.

Social Enterprises

yourtown has worked with young people and employers to break down barriers to sustainable employment for more than 20 years. As a leader in work-based enterprises we provide young people at risk of long-term unemployment paid jobs in the following areas: construction, landscaping, and asset maintenance to help their transition to open employment. In 2022/23, 201 young people were employed in our social enterprises across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania, with 90% transitioning into longer term employment in the open labour market or progressing into education.

Parentline

Parentline offers free confidential phone and webchat counselling and support for parents and carers of children in Queensland and the Northern Territory. It offers a safety net for families by providing support

when it is most needed. This includes after hours and weekends, where families feel isolated and where local services are unavailable. In 2022/23, parents and carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory attempted to contact Parentline over 12,000 times.

Family and Domestic Violence Refuge and Transitional Housing

Our Family and Domestic Violence Refuge offers supported accommodation for up to 12 weeks. A specialised team provides women and children with a safe and welcoming environment and creates opportunities for mothers to re-build self-concept and experience control and empowerment over their lives. The wrap-around care also includes linking with transitional housing and community outreach programs. **yourtown** also provides transitional housing for women and children exiting refuges. Transitional housing is a vital steppingstone for women and children moving towards long-term, safe and sustainable independent living in the community. In 2022/23, we supported 73 mothers and young children in our refuge and 14 families in our transitional housing.

Children and Families

yourtown provides accommodation and intensive individualised support to vulnerable young parents and their children through our San Miguel service. For over 40 years, San Miguel has provided a place to call home for vulnerable and at-risk families. In 2022/23, San Miguel supported 35 parents and 38 infants and young children.

Early Childhood Development Programs

We support vulnerable pre-school aged children to make a successful transition to school by using prevention and early intervention approaches to create health families and strong, child-friendly communities. This includes working with parents to better understand their child's barriers to reaching social development milestones, how to help them thrive at school, collaborative case management and support, and in-home help. In 2022/23, we supported 179 families.

yourtown welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (the Department) consultation on a proposed new voluntary parent support service model.

As an organisation we consider that every parent and child should have access to support, and that the role of parenting or caring for children, should be valued in and of itself. We also strongly believe that pre-employment programs are essential in order to provide opportunities for disadvantaged parents to find a way into meaningful employment, through access to critical study or employment supports.

yourtown is currently a ParentsNext provider in South Australia, having worked with more than 1,200 young parents since the service commenced in 2018, and we are very supportive of moving to a more effective voluntary parent support service, that parents want to engage with.

For more than 20 years **yourtown** has been helping young people find and keep jobs throughout Australia. We deliver face-to-face employment services that provide specialised support for young job seekers who are at high risk of long-term unemployment including early school leavers, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and other young people not eligible for income support. These programs have helped thousands of young people identify and access employment opportunities or commence apprenticeships and traineeships. They also supported young people to develop essential social, emotional and communication skills needed to be successful employees and maintain stable employment.

General comments

Essential components of a new model

In order for a voluntary model to be successful, the service offering has to be utterly compelling in order for people to want to voluntarily use it. It is vital that the new service addresses unmet needs of the target cohort, and does not replicate service/s offered elsewhere.

The aim of helping parents of young children to plan for future education and employment goals may seem straightforward. However, our experience in delivering support to vulnerable groups of young parents is that they require ongoing, tailored, and holistic support to address their complex and multifaceted needs. For example, the majority of potential participants will have experienced domestic and family violence and are also likely to have mental health and housing needs. A core component of this support will require identification of the practical and therapeutic supports required and help to navigate the complex ecosystem of services. Providers would need to have strong connections with various face-to-face and virtual support services to ensure parents can access appropriate and timely support.

For parents to trust a service to divulge their situation, providers' practice should be strengths-based, person centred, trauma informed, and culturally sensitive. Providers also need to connect with parents in ways that work for them. This involves flexibility in service hours, communicating through the preferred channels of parents, navigating access to face-to-face and digital support, and providing self-help resources on a range of topics.

It is essential that however the model is designed, it prioritises and advances the long-term economic security of parents as its core policy objective, and as a foundational principle for the wellbeing of participants.

It should also focus on the capabilities and capacity building of all eligible participants (regardless of their background or abilities), not their deficits, so that from the very moment people choose to enter the program they recognise that this is something that they can, and want, to 'be and do'.

It should also take a human rights approach, fostering respect, and upholding the dignity, autonomy, and capability of parents, and valuing their role as parents, while also upholding the best interests of children.

However, it is also recommended that in order to ensure the success of this new model, the Department needs to undertake more work with Business Councils and employers to build awareness of the economic and social value of family friendly workplaces, as well as inclusive and flexible employment practices.

The new service must also emphasise education goals alongside employment goals. Higher educational attainment is linked to better employment prospects and job attainment as well as lower use of income support. This is particularly the case when comparing those who have completed secondary education to early school leavers.

The criticality of human-centred, and co-design

Best practice design for the model should incorporate human-centred design¹ and co-design². To build an effective voluntary service, the program must be one that people will *want* to engage with.

As part of **yourtown's** service design process, we used human-centred and co-design approaches to challenge the way we did things, including internal processes, so that our services were re-designed, with young people, and around their needs. This included even re-designing the look and feel of the services that we offer, so that they are inviting to the young people that we are seeking to engage, whether face to face, or online. Learnings from this work informs our feedback on what a new voluntary parent support service should look like, and how it should be designed.

- Primarily, it should be co-designed with potential participants, so that the ultimate design results in a program that parents will voluntarily, and happily engage with
- It should not include punitive components, but should foster resilience and use capability building approaches to support young parents to engage
- Outcomes, goals and impacts need to be grounded in realism, by acknowledging and understanding the real-life challenges facing participants in the program, helping participants to foster resilience, and not set unrealistic or unachievable goals
- Need for a fair, inclusive and person-centred program – to support parents with young children to re-enter the workforce, or access more financially secure employment.
- Need for constructive solutions to strengthen the economic security for single parents, rather than penalise them.

Meeting parents' needs

How can the new service ensure that caring for children remains a priority for parents? How can the new service best meet the needs of parents and their children?

To build a service to ensure that caring remains a priority for parents means that the model should not be a traditional 9-5 service model. It should have sufficient flexibility and enable a provider to tailor their service to deliver services that meet the needs of parents, such as digital delivery, some after-hours workshops, or services, and offer choice to parents to align with their caring responsibilities.

¹ A problem solving technique that places real people at the centre of the development process, enabling the creation of products and/or services that resonate and are tailored to the audience's need.

² Design process that is participatory, in which community members are treated as equal collaborators in the design process.

The following features are key for a service to meet the needs of parents and children and to ensure parents can prioritise caring for their children:

- adjunct childcare arrangements delivered by the Provider or in collaboration with other organisations that can provide this function
- holistic support that is focused not only on pre-employment but addresses barriers to parents supporting themselves and their children
- strong networks with other services in the support ecosystem to ensure parents receive appropriate assistance with nonvocational issue
- flexibility where parents can engage in different ways, including by phone, online or face-to-face
- opportunities for parents to connect with other parents, including peer support (both face-to-face and virtual) and an informal drop-in space
- family friendly spaces (ie., having dedicated spaces, and potentially dedicated entrances for participants), as well as virtual spaces that appeal to parents, and
- Providers with a Mission and values that have some connection to and a culture of listening to parents, children and young people.

However, to deliver a service with such flexibility and after-hours services also requires appropriate funding for a service delivery model that accounts for penalty rates and after hours supports and services, as well as recognition of peer mentoring roles as funded positions.

Eligibility

Who would benefit from a voluntary pre-employment service?

A voluntary service would work well with parents whose children are three to four years of age and are settled with their parenting processes and routines. These parents who want to upskill and return to work when their children are in kindergarten can balance parenting and pre-employment tasks.

In our experience, it is harder for parents to engage when they have babies as young as nine months because their focus is looking after their baby, and they do not have as much time or flexibility to focus on pre-employment training and upskilling.

Apart from parents who receive Parenting Payment, who might benefit from this service? Do you think other parents on other income support payments should also benefit?

If the current goal of employment services system is one that 'leaves no-one behind', then the model should be open to anyone who needs pre-employment support and who comes through the door. If founding the model on the principle of advancing the long-term economic security of parents is identified as a core priority, then this program could act as an early intervention and timely support for any parent who needs support to gain employment as a step towards economic security.

Therefore, the service should be for all parents who want to engage and upskill to increase their chance of finding employment when they are ready, including parents on other income support payments (e.g., refugees). Parents who are not eligible for income support (e.g., some migrant groups) would also benefit from the service, like the Group 2 young people in Transition to Work who are able to access support.

What type of support should the new service target? How should it be targeted?

The new service should offer, pre-employment and employment support, as well as pathways to recommence education, including:

- holistic support that offers pre-employment upskilling and addresses other non-vocational barriers that are impacting on the lives of parents and their ability to support themselves and their families – this should include but not be limited to

access to specialised counselling as required, appropriate education pathways, and specialised services that support parents and families, particularly those experiencing domestic and family violence

- support for parents to ensure they have the equivalent of secondary education qualifications at a minimum and work towards achieving educational aspirations that are linked to their employment goals
- assistance to parents to network, navigate and broker support across the ecosystem, including warm referrals to health and mental health professionals, family and domestic violence support, financial experts, play groups, etc. In addition, parents should be helped to navigate Centrelink and its payments, such as the Family Tax Benefit, and
- post placement support for the parent and also the employer if needed

Providers should be allowed to deliver information sessions for potential parents so that parents are aware of the support offered and the voluntary nature of the service. This outreach capability could be offered in Centrelink, playgroups, and childcare centres.

Services Australia must be seen as an informative, warm, and welcoming place for parents to access information about the new service.

What support services should we consider for young parents who left school before completing high school? Do they need a more specialised service? If so, what do they need, and how should it be delivered?

Younger parents who left school before completing high school would need a holistic and tailored approach. In the initial stages, the support may need to be more focused on parenting. The pre-employment component should focus on literacy and numeracy training and pathways to gain relevant qualifications, including access as appropriate to mainstream and alternate education services. Providers should also deliver micro credentials (short competency-based learning opportunities aligned to labour market needs that can be assessed) for parents as 'taste-testers' for various jobs and industries. This would lay the foundation for parents to develop their aspirations and for Providers to target their pre-employment pathway.

Younger parents may be intimidated in settings with parents who are older and more experienced. This cohort would feel more comfortable with Providers who develop safe spaces (physical and virtual) where they can engage with each other through different modes.

Incorporating a specialist service within existing Transition to Work providers for younger parents is worthy of consideration. Transition to Work providers who have already demonstrated their youth specialisation credentials, through evidenced performance, have already been contracted to provide safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces for young job seekers, this already includes young parents.

Timing

When do you think the opportunity to participate in voluntary pre-employment support should be offered to parents?

Parents need to be informed that the service exists then they can make the decision about whether they want to participate at the time that suits them. Champions of the service at Centrelink can market the service and facilitate the referral to the service.

Providers should go to childcare centres and playgroups to deliver information sessions about the service and the support it offers. These information sessions should be targeted to parents with children who are about to go to kindergarten rather than parents of babies. The former cohort would be more likely to be contemplating going into or returning to the workforce. Information should also be embedded in websites that parents visit, including Parentline /

Parent Helpline / Ngala Parenting Line and parenting websites, and promoted and advertised in services that parents utilise, including libraries, medical centres, and hospitals.

Parents are more likely to engage in the service when they attend the service, see the safe spaces, and meet staff who can explain the specific offering of the service and answer any questions.

In your experience, what is the ideal age of the youngest child to offer voluntary pre-employment support?

In our experience in delivering pre-employment services to parents, parents with children who are three to four years of age are settled with their parenting processes and routines. These parents who want to upskill and return to work when their children are about to commence kindergarten can balance parenting and pre-employment tasks and are more able to effectively engage in voluntary pre-employment support.

In our experience, it is harder for parents to engage when they have babies because their focus is looking after their baby, and they do not have the time or flexibility to focus on pre-employment training and upskilling.

Should parents be able to decide themselves when they want to participate in the service, regardless of the age of their child?

Yes, parents should be able to decide when they want to participate in the service because the situations and lifestyles can vary across families.

How could we tailor the new service to the differing needs and levels of support for parents? What types of needs might require assistance for a longer duration and for how long?

Services should work to the individual service plan for each parent and provide the support needed for the time parents require it. Different cohorts would have different challenges that services need to cater for, e.g. parents that have children with special needs, parents who are early school leavers, and parents experiencing domestic and family violence. There should be no maximum period of service. Access to specialist counselling i.e., in relation to mental health and wellbeing, domestic and family violence, needs to be a pre-requisite of the service. Either delivered through partner referral pathways or directly by the provider.

How long should support be available to parents for? Why do you think that time period? Should support be available for as long as parents want to receive it, or should it be available for a year, or a few years?

Ideally, there would be no maximum period of service. There are some individuals who need extended support, given the complexity of their lives, the fluidity of pathways and barriers that they face.

People's situations regularly change, and they could benefit from a support service at different stages of their lives. Rather than terminating support once children are in kindergarten, the service should continue to be offered during the critical transition phase of children commencing school until they are established and settled in school. For example, the time it takes for children to be settled will vary depending on their family situation and their ability to cope in a new school setting.

Features of the service

What we've heard so far

Parents have indicated that they would like a service that has better and more useful content and communications that describes the features of the services; and values and respects parenting as important, as paid employment; and offers features and benefits parents want and need.

Do you agree with the above statements? What else would you include in the new voluntary pre-employment service to assist parents to reach their education and employment goals?

The above statements align with the findings from our many years of working with young parents, as well as our more recent human centred design learnings with young parents. Parents need to be made aware of the service and the support it offers. Opportunities need to be explored to connect with parents to increase their awareness and knowledge of the service.

Some of the parents in our ParentsNext service and other parenting and early years programs experience multifaceted and ongoing issues. We believe that parents would benefit from a service that helps them to navigate and broker support for them and their children from the wider ecosystem. If the wider ecosystem is lacking due to location or other accessibility issues, the provider needs to be able to demonstrate how they would be able to meet those needs, directly or virtually. A specific focus of the service should also be on financial management and practical parenting.

What types of arrangements would make parents feel respected and valued in a new service?

Connection, Authentic Engagement and Trust are critical elements of a successful service. A service that employs staff with strong relational skills will help engage parents and help them to feel respected. In addition, parents and carers would feel respected and valued when services create opportunities for positive life experiences for them and their families. This can be achieved by offering social activities with adjunct care (e.g. movie nights), paying for sporting fees, and opening outside of standard business hours. Trust is also built through delivering a service where the parent feels safe to be themselves, be vulnerable and open to change and development, by being open about their needs and barriers, and working with the providers to navigate the complexities of their lives.

Pre-employment support

What types of support could be included in the new service?

yourtown believes that the following support should be offered:

- Accessing affordable and quality childcare
- Finding secure housing
- Managing your money, including budgeting
- Relationship support, including for those experiencing family and domestic violence
- Parenting support, including support for kids' physical and mental health
- Peer support and mentoring support from volunteers to minimise social isolation due to the nature of parenting young children and especially for parents in regional areas
- Finding work, including developing resumes, help applying for jobs, or coaching for interviews
- Coaching and mentoring to build confidence and self-esteem.
- Access to literacy and numeracy support
- Vocational and career guidance
- Job preparation workshops, including digital upskilling/skills
- Organising work experience
- Finding opportunities for volunteer work
- Pathways in to existing or new social enterprise transitional employment opportunities where parents can receive paid employment and case management support

- Undertaking training and education
- Exploring opportunities for self-employment, and
- Accessing healthcare and therapeutic support including counselling support.

Work-related support

Should this service support parents of young children who want to work to prepare for and find work?

Services should support parents with aspirations to prepare for and find work. These parents should be provided with career guidance, access to relevant job-specific training and work experience linked to career opportunities, opportunities in social enterprise transitional employment, job search and interview preparation and support, collaborative support in conjunction with other support services such as housing assistance and mental health support, and support for the parent when they obtain a job to make the transition to sustainable employment.

Communication strategy

How should the new service be communicated and promoted?

The service should be promoted in the community. This can include Providers running information sessions in settings where parents are, e.g., playgroups, childcare centres, and community events where there are families.

Champions of the service at Centrelink can market the service and facilitate the referral to the service. The Department can also promote the program on television and social media.

Service delivery

Should there be different services for parents from different communities or regions?

A place-based approach should be adopted where the service is tailored to the needs of the community which would vary depending on location and demographic composition.

Which vulnerable groups might need more or different help? What would that look like?

Services would need staff who are able to engage the different communities and navigate their ecosystems. The following groups would need specific support:

- First Nations peoples – Services would need to understand the family and kinship systems and ways of connecting
- Remote and regional areas – Service would need to connect parents with support and services that may be lacking in these areas, and employ First Nations staff, particularly female staff, to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Parents experiencing domestic and family violence – Staff should participate in training to increase their awareness of the issues and appropriate responses
- Parents of children with special needs or disabilities – Services would need the time to be able to support this cohort with their families
- LGBTQIA+ parents – Services would need to provide safe spaces and employ allies,
- Parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – Services would need to understand the cohesive ties within various cultural communities, and
- Young parents with caring responsibilities beyond their own children (eg., siblings, parents, kin).

How might this support be strengths-based, and participant led? How can this be embedded in practice?

Services can establish a parent advisory or participation group who would guide the service development and offering of the services as well as advocate for the needs of parents both within the service and outside the service.

Including paid peer mentoring roles would bring lived experience expertise to the service and complement other qualified roles.

What skills and qualifications should frontline staff have? Which of these might be mandatory requirements?

There should be sufficient diversity within the workforce to reflect the diversity of the parents and carers using the service, for example employing bilingual staff.

Domestic and family violence training should be mandatory. For services supporting young parents, youth mental health first aid should be mandatory. Other roles should have social worker, counselling and/or community engagement skills. Skills and experience in working with First Nations peoples and other diverse groups are also important.

Employing staff with lived experience may be useful in engaging parents with opportunities for paid peer support roles.

Based on your experience, what delivery mechanism would be most effective?

Face-to-face, online or a mix of the two.

Mixed modalities (face-to-face, video, phone) are effective delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of parents. Delivery should primarily be face-to-face to enhance engagement, but there should be flexibility in delivery on a case-by-case basis, e.g. when children are ill or for parents in regional areas where travelling to the service site can take hours. However, a hybrid model of digital and face to face might be more appropriate and efficient for young parents in rural and remote areas who lack easy access to a service provider.

How might communities of practice be embedded as a feature of the new service?

Do you think this would be valuable?

A national community of practice would be valuable to share learnings and resources nationally.

However, there should be one provider per designated service delivery area who should have skills and demonstrated experience in pre-employment and supporting parents. The provider should also have links with other services in the community to deliver a local community of practice. These learnings could then also be passed on to the national community for broader benefit.

If a dedicated point of contact for providers was established in Services Australia, what type of support would be required?

Champions of the service would actively promote the service to parents who are in Services Australia. They would talk about the support that is offered and strongly encourage parents who may benefit to attend an appointment with the service. When parents attend their initial appointment, they can see and experience how the service would support them in a safe and welcoming space, this needs to happen at the time of connection with Services Australia and the provider's premises.

How do we ensure a trauma informed approach to service delivery, and that services are culturally appropriate?

Training to improve the awareness of and sensitivities towards different vulnerable groups can help services to be culturally appropriate. Engaging with local First Nations communities to understand cultural healing, and safety are key components to embedding a localised and 'on country' service that is responsive to cultural safety.

Given that approximately 80% of participants in ParentsNext are estimated to be affected by domestic violence,³ it is critical that the new program is designed to ensure that participants both *feel* and *are* safe at the service that they engage with.

At the heart of trauma-informed care is the need to recognise the profound impact that past and current experiences have on a person's sense of safety. One of the key challenges with so many participants in ParentsNext was that while they wanted to work when they could, many need or wanted to prioritise parenting, and/or recovery from the trauma of family violence.⁴

Both these mindsets can help services to ensure a trauma informed approach where they understand how life experiences of parents can impact their current situation and their needs. Staff can take a strengths-based approach and ensure parents feel safe in the environment and their interactions with staff and are given time to process information and make decisions.

It is also important to consider how trauma impacts a person's brain, body, and behaviour. Services would need to ensure that their practices and procedures are designed to ensure client's safety, both physical and emotional, building trust with clients to accept that the service, and they, are 'safe' to engage with.

Engagement strategies

Engagement strategies and financial support

How might we encourage parents to participate in the new voluntary pre-employment service? What strategies or assistance would make it easier for parents to participate in a voluntary service?

Adjunct childcare arrangements delivered by the Provider or in collaboration with other organisations is vital to encouraging parents to participate in the service. Parents also need flexibility to engage in different ways, including by phone, online or face-to-face modes. Services Australia must be seen as an informative, warm and welcoming service for the initial engagement.

What sort of incentive would encourage parents to participate in the new service? Do you think this would be necessary?

Parents may be encouraged to participate in the new service if certain family cost of living expenses could be covered to access to the service and provide positive life experiences for the family. For example, the Participation Fund could be broadened, or a Brokerage Budget established to pay for children's sporting fees or transport costs to attend the service.

Given the complex and difficult issues that parents experience, they would be encouraged to participate in the service if they would receive assistance to navigate the often-complicated pathways to gain professional therapeutic support. For mental health support, this could include warm referrals to services as well as discussing options for face-to-face and virtual support. For those experiencing domestic and family violence, this could include accessing accommodation and support and assistance with making the transition to independent living.

³ NESA, NESA's Response to the ParentsNext, including its trial and subsequent broader rollout Senate Inquiry, January 2019.

⁴ Bowman, D & Wickramasinghe, S 2020, *Trampolines not traps: enabling economic security for single mothers and their children*, Brotherhood of St Laurence Fitzroy, Vic

What other engagement strategies would be effective or required to encourage disadvantaged parents to participate in a voluntary service? Should a new service provide some financial assistance to enable parents to participate in the new service or to achieve their education and employment goals?

Parents would be more likely to attend the service if their transport costs to attend were covered. This is especially the case for parents in regional areas who could spend hours travelling to the service, which is not an easy task with children. There should be some level of flexibility in how they engage with the service, by face-to-face or virtual modes.

Broadening the purpose of the Participation Fund to pay for engagement activities (e.g. training costs, IT or phone access, transport, childcare, medical expenses) would increase attendance and engagement.

In addition, access to the same caseworker will enable the development of trusting and ongoing relationships.

Funding structure

What should be the funding model for providers?

In your experience, what incentives drive providers to achieve the best outcomes? What are your thoughts on outcome payments to providers? If so, what types of outcomes, what value should they be, and how can they be measured? How do we ensure that outcomes payments reward providers but do not create perverse incentives to push parents into particular activities for the purpose of securing a payment?

The funding model should use a service fee arrangement, with an upfront payment and progression payments to keep providers accountable. Progression can be demonstrated by improvements in an assessment tool such as the Outcome Star.

However, given the intensive nature of the model, and the need for bespoke components (such as, the technology required for virtual service delivery; training of staff and ongoing professional development e.g., in cultural and trauma informed safety, or mandatory training; paid peer mentors; as well as work outside of normal working hours etc), the payments system needs to be appropriate to meet the 'real' cost of service delivery. Too often these components are not factored into the payment framework, meaning that service providers (primarily not for profits driven by their mission of helping people) have to operate on the 'whiff of an oily rag' in order to deliver a high-quality service that matches the design intent.

What should be the provider funding arrangements to undertake engagement strategies?

A Brokerage Fund should be funded separately to undertake engagement strategies such as financial incentives for participants and provider outreach.

How might the Participation Fund be a feature of the new service?

The Participation Fund should be pooled and used at the discretion of the provider.

What types of interventions should be funded for participants?

The interventions should be wide ranging to meet the needs of parents and families.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore these issues with you in further detail. Should you require further information about any issues raised in the submission, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Marion Byrne, Head of Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy at **yourtown** via email at mbyrne@yourtown.com.au.