



# Collaboration and services

## FACT SHEET 3

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All Australians want our children and young people to achieve their full potential and contribute constructively to the communities in which they live. To achieve this vision we need to reform the way we design and deliver services for children and young people. We have to build effective collaborations of policy administrators, practitioners and the research community—within and across their functional boundaries—to convert our shared desire into reality.

Despite best intentions and ongoing attention many children and young people in Australia still experience the multiple disadvantages of poverty, inadequate health care, poor educational outcomes, and the effects of dysfunctional family relations. These problems are generally inter-related and difficult to respond to effectively. To more effectively address the complex issues affecting children and young people, we must work together to build a broad understanding of the scope of these problems and to identify and implement innovative solutions that will achieve sustainable outcomes for children and young people.

## Policy

Collaboration is central to the development and effective implementation of a consistent policy framework. Bringing together people with diverse expertise and experiences ensures policy development is informed by a greater knowledge base; policy makers gain a broader understanding of a complex issue, are better able to identify and target problem areas and identify innovative ideas to address those problem areas. Collaboration enables the development of a policy framework that addresses a problem holistically and includes interventions and policy solutions that have greater acceptance and traction in the community.

## Services

The traditional service model is for each agency to deal with one particular issue or problem at a time,

rather than considering the presenting child or young person holistically. This approach has resulted in many different services being assigned responsibility for various elements of a person's care package. Such a fragmented intervention approach has been found to deliver poor client outcomes, especially for children and young people. Parents and young people are often bewildered about how to access and manage the support of agencies. Often the agencies delivering services do not communicate with each other. At best this means that children and young people (or their families) have to repeat their story to each agency they are referred to; at worst, the client falls between the services and their needs are not met. Furthermore, each agency has its own culture, language, aims and priorities. This makes it difficult for practitioners to see the young person as a whole and to offer a 'seamless service'.

The Advancing Collaboration Practice program has been established to support ARACY's work building cross-sector collaborations capable of implementing action that addresses the complex problems impacting the wellbeing of children and young people in Australia. The program builds stakeholder capabilities to establish and manage long-term joint working relationships and collaborative efforts. **For more information please contact ARACY on 08 9476 7800**

Effective intervention calls for a comprehensive service approach that addresses the needs of the whole person, their family and community in a seamless service delivery model, rather than dividing issues into separate functions and expecting children and young people to access different services for each of their 'needs'. To achieve this, services for children and young people need to share common aims, needs analysis, research, understanding and priorities. Rather than operating independently, service providers must form strategic partnerships with a range of other organisations that are providing services to the same target groups. Sharing information and making referrals is an essential part of this approach, but not enough. What is called for is a comprehensive and collaborative approach to strategic planning with partners, creating opportunities for the engaged participation of users. Collaboration will enable the development of new and flexible models of service development and delivery that cross disciplines and organisational boundaries.

## **Research**

There is a large body of knowledge about the development, needs and required services for children and young people. Much of this knowledge has been created by individual researchers or individual research bodies. However, increasingly it is understood that 'breakthrough' research and innovation occurs through collaborative practices, where groups of people share

information and pool knowledge and resources to create added value. The resulting synergies create novel spaces where people can interact and facilitate new knowledge that can be more broadly applied. Collaboration in research can also lead to mutual learning across agencies and sectors, add to the research capacity of participants, and open up avenues for exploration.

## **Bringing it all together**

Collaboration focuses the collective capacity of policy makers, service providers and researchers on addressing the needs of children and young people. It puts children and young people firmly at the centre of services and removes the need for individual services to compete for time, money and resources. Many initiatives have already made good progress in developing collaborations to benefit children. These services are now well positioned to build on the collaborative efforts that have been implemented to further develop their services and achieve best possible outcomes.

Successful collaboration requires transformational leaders and services teams who work across service and professional boundaries and in close contact with local partners and communities, to reform the way we design and deliver services to meet the multifaceted needs of children and young people.

# Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

ARACY is a national non-profit organisation working to create better futures for all Australia's children and young people. Despite Australia being a wealthy, developed country, many aspects of the health and wellbeing of our young people have been declining. ARACY was formed to reverse these trends, by preventing and addressing the major problems affecting our children and young people. ARACY tackles these complex issues through building collaborations with researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines. We share knowledge and foster evidence-based solutions.

## About the authors of this fact sheet

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