

Preparing young people for their future

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTICE





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Introduction

The past swirls and reverberates through children's experiences, shaping their present and influencing their future.

When attuned, supportive and reliable, positive early relationships create the opportunities for children to learn, adapt and connect as they grow. When filled with experiences of stress, trauma and disruption, children are forced into self-protective states that close them off from relationships, making them more resistant to change and locking them into behavioural routines which repeat the strategies they have used to survive the threat and danger that has permeated their lives.

As children grow into young people, the demands from their environment increase. Peers become more influential. Their roles in their families change with expectations to assume different responsibilities. They experience the pressure of academic performance more acutely. They begin to explore their identity – where they have come from, who they are and who they want to become. Again, for those with secure and predictable relationships, adolescence shapes the motivations, skills and capacities that young people require to move confidently into young adulthood. Even then, the most resourced young people can still test those around them.

For those with histories of destructive relationships, adolescence erupts into sequences of risky behaviour, intensifying relationship conflict, and reduced levels of engagement with supportive adults. These young people may engage in antisocial behaviour. They find school and any structured opportunities for learning challenging and often unrewarding. They find it difficult to settle and experience comfort even when it is offered to them. They are reactive to small shifts in interpersonal dynamics involving family, peers and others in their community.

These young people inhabit an adolescence that cycles through past patterns of distress, confusion and abuse. They are stuck clinging to familiar ways of reacting for fear that any change may make things be and feel even worse for them. Their future will not change until the impact of the past is repaired in their day to day experience of the present. In this future, young people are prone to experiencing persistent, pervasive and cumulative forms of disadvantage. It isolates them. It disrupts their relationships. It amplifies the likelihood of compounding incidents of homelessness, mental health problems, unemployment, substance abuse and trauma associated with interpersonal violence. It increases the probability that they will engage in crime and/or be victims of crime.

The evidence is clear that the longer young people remain in conditions of such chronic stress, the more likely it is that they will not be able to break away from these circumstances. This cycle has ongoing negative impact on their health and well-being.

Anglicare NT has a deep commitment to preparing young people effectively for their future – one which is hopeful, safe, empowered, culturally strong and within which young people flourish. It is ingrained in the ways that staff think and talk about their interactions with young people they support. It is reflected in the ways that leaders and managers resource the collaboration that takes place between them, their staff and young people. It is embedded in the broader narrative the organisation leads with government and the community about prioritising the needs of young people, especially those affected by social and economic disadvantage.

It is in this context that Anglicare NT and the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) have forged a partnership with an ambition to evolve and strengthen a trauma based approach to practice with young people across its Youth Services.

This practice framework is one outcome of the collaboration between the two agencies.

Over the past six months, ACF has undertaken a number of strategies to support the development of this practice framework, including the completion of:

- an environmental and research scan that defined the knowledge base relevant to achieving best practice outcomes for support services delivered to young people and
- a series of consultations with staff across Anglicare NT Intensive Youth Support Services (IYSS) and Out of Home Care Services and managers in these areas.

This document integrates the outcomes of this project to date to present a proposed practice framework that integrates culturally strong, strengths based, person centred and trauma informed approaches as the basis for guiding the work of the Anglicare NT staff who deliver these service activities.



It should be noted from the onset that practice frameworks are generally devised to be understood and applied easily. A practice framework is a working document that serves to represent and guide the orientation and decision-making of staff in a team or an organisation. These types of documents integrate research and theoretical knowledge into the content without a reliance on strict academic referencing.

The outcome of this project contains a strong commitment to resourcing children, young people and their families to act in ways that support their own strategies to challenge the effects and causes of disadvantage, disruption and trauma in their lives. It is sourced in the view that such transformation is found in the strength of the established and emerging relationships of care and support around them.

It also recognises that given the context of the Northern Territory, the majority of the young people offered support and care by Anglicare NT are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. This requires an understanding of young people's needs related to the experiences of violation and oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over generations. Colonisation has undermined cultural ways of knowing and showing respect, trust, and mutual care. It has damaged, but not destroyed, Aboriginal people's experience of interdependence and the importance of connections that individuals have to family, community and country. Efforts to integrate the impacts of the past with ways to address the present needs and challenges facing Aboriginal children, families and communities must, at its core, have an understanding of the consequences of intergenerational trauma.

For all these reasons, the practice framework brings to life the everyday practice commitment of Anglicare NT staff and centralises the premise that reparative intervention is preparative for young people with experiences of trauma and loss in their lives.

The organising purpose of the practice framework is to support the staff employed by Anglicare NT in these services to undertake activities in an informed way, co-ordinating with each other, the efforts of the young people, their families, and the broader community within which these services are delivered.

What are the services we offer young people?

Anglicare NT provides a range of services to at risk and vulnerable children, young people, families and important people in their networks of relationships. In all of our services, we understand that many of the children and young people have a complex range of needs that arise from experiences associated with:

- abuse and family violence
- the death and/or loss of important individuals in relationship networks
- high conflict family relationships
- caregivers with mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction and other issues that have made their care of children be inconsistent and detrimental to their development
- limited opportunities to express and connect with culture of origin
- lack of stability within care environments
- lack of positive experiences of educational systems
- involvement with justice system as victims and/or perpetrators of crime
- direct use of alcohol and other drugs
- experiences of homelessness
- direct discrimination, racism and exclusion and
- impoverished or painful peer relationships.

This project contains a strong commitment to resourcing children, young people and their families

The types of services delivered by Anglicare NT that are informed by this practice framework are described below.

Out of Home Care services for children and young people who are referred through Territory Families in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. These services aim to provide stable care environments to the children and young people accepted into the services for as long as they are required. These services are staffed by paid carers and support staff. Each child and young person who is accepted into the service is supported through the implementation of care plans that are collaboratively established by Territory Families and Anglicare NT. At all times, these services seek to engage the child and young person's family and community network where it is safe and possible to do so.

Intensive Youth Support Services to at risk and vulnerable young people in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. Each young person is supported by a Case Manager who walks alongside the young person to set and achieve goals that help to resolve relational and developmental barriers that are causing high levels of stress and distress. The focus of the service is the young person and their relational environment.

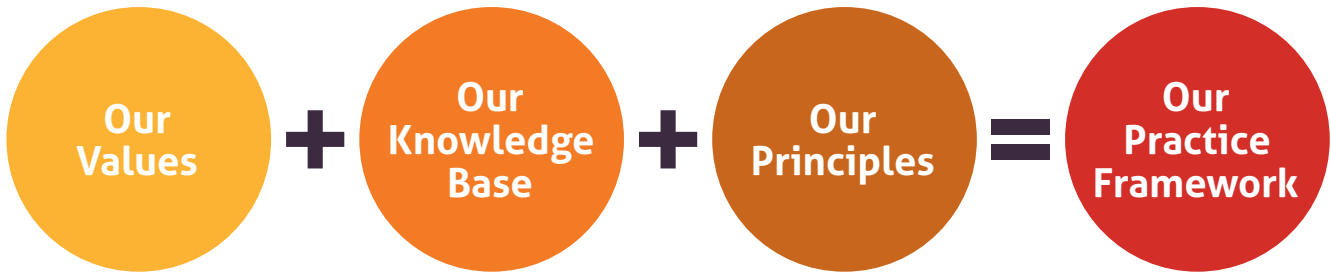




What makes up a Practice Framework?

According to Tucci and Mitchell (2016), a practice framework is made up of a number of intersecting elements. Each element is one part of an integrated approach which has as its objective to guide the decision making of specific staff in the delivery of service activities with their relevant service users. It is represented in Diagram 1 and explained in more detail below.

Diagram 1. The elements of our Practice Framework



Our values

The value base of the practice framework draws from the broader value set of the organisation as a whole. It ensures that there is a consistency between the practice framework underpinning the service, the design of the service and the organisation’s vision and ethical orientation. This consistency supports the sustainability of the service and realises the potential of the service to achieve organisationally sanctioned and understood outcomes.

Our knowledge base

The knowledge base of a practice framework establishes the scope of ideas which serve as the major influences to the decision making and actions of practitioners who are applying it. Firstly, it sets out the evidence that is used as the rationale to choose the theoretical approaches and/or conceptual models which underpin how practitioners will undertake their role. This evidence is sourced from the literature, as well as any other research undertaken in the formation of the framework, such as consultation with staff, external agencies and service users. Secondly, the knowledge base describes the relevant concepts and understandings that are pivotal in helping practitioners know how to orient themselves in their work, know what to do, and know how to monitor if what they are doing is helpful and effective. Finally, where there are different and distinctive sources of theoretical approaches being adopted, each needs to be integrated so they can be effectively applied by practitioners. In essence, the knowledge base of the practice framework serves to define the scope of the program logic applied to achieve outcomes of the work undertaken by practitioners in a service.

Our principles

The principles of a practice framework guide practitioners to understand the essential characteristics of the ways of working adopted by a collective group of practitioners or an organisation. Principles reflect the intent and purpose of a chosen approach. They also help practitioners to operationalise the knowledge base effectively. The practice framework would be impossible to implement if any one of the principles was to be ignored.



What are our values?

We are a faith based organisation committed to social justice

Anglicare NT is an agency of the Anglican Church of the NT, formed to respond to social needs across our diverse communities. Respect is one of our overarching values. We hold respect for:

- the values and beliefs of all staff, clients and communities with who we engage
- the history and living culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly of the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where we seek to work and
- the work, beliefs and teachings of the Christian Church, particularly of the Anglican Church, respecting its commitment to Anglicare NT as a community service that responds to the needs of individuals and communities across the Northern Territory.

We are committed to offering services where all are welcome and included

At all times, our services embrace all Territorians. No one is denied the respect, justice and community of our work. Similarly, our staff reflect the full diversity of our community. Anglicare NT is an equal opportunity employer, ensuring a workplace free from discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, age, disability, religion or race. **The values in our motto of respect, fairness and community are the cornerstone of everything we do.**

We are committed to challenging the past and ongoing oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Anglicare NT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the original custodians of the countries on which we work. We seek to pay respect, and acknowledge Elders and clans in the various communities in which we work. Given the high level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in services the agency provides, Anglicare NT seeks to work in partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families, communities and organisations. We are committed to implementing the Reconciliation Action Plan across our agency, and the promotion of Aboriginal self-determination through partnerships and services with, and in support of, Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. Anglicare NT acknowledges the damaging effects of disempowerment, racism and cultural degradation perpetrated on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the past and the present, systemically, sometimes unintentionally, by mainstream Australians. Reconciliation is one of the key ways in which this damage can be repaired.



What is our knowledge base?

In this section, the basis for the framework is described. It is a common knowledge base that spans Anglicare NT Youth Services for this project.

It specifically addresses the following core knowledge areas:

- understanding the impact of trauma on children and young people
- understanding strengths based approaches to practice
- understanding person-centred approaches to practice and,
- understanding the importance of culture when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Understanding the impact of trauma on children and young people

Because the brains and bodies of children and young people are so vulnerable and immature, trauma leaves deeper tracks of damage. In these circumstances, children's brain and body systems will be harmed, affecting the way they react and relate to others and their physical environment. The following summary has been adapted from Tucci and Mitchell (2015):

Trauma reduces the capacity of the thinking part of children's brains to shape the way they react to challenges in their environment. As a result, children and young people appear to behave instinctively and sometimes inappropriately, without knowing why. They are also not able to easily influence their feelings when faced with perceived threat or increases in their experience of stress.

Trauma impairs the growth and activity of the connecting structures between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. As a result, children find it difficult to know, name and express their feelings. They can find it difficult to read social cues and respond in social exchanges. It increases children and young people's base arousal level such that they live in a constant state of vigilance and heightened alarm. As such, vulnerable children and young people are easily triggered by seemingly minor issues. Their responses are often seen as 'out of the blue' or 'overreactions' to situations.

Past experiences of trauma lock down children and young people's capacity to adapt to change in their environment. They are more likely to use fixed and repetitive behavioural routines in situations where they feel distress and unease. These routines involve movements and actions that feel familiar and comforting to them - even if they are destructive or harmful to others. These children and young people lack the adaptability and flexibility necessary to respond differentially to varying situations and contexts. They have a limited range of coping strategies.

Whilst these strategies may have been effective in assisting them to survive in unsafe situations, they are often inappropriate responses in situations where there is an absence of danger. Children and young people affected by trauma find it difficult to make meaning from their experiences. They have few or no effective internal maps to guide their actions. As a result, they react rather than respond.

Their beliefs about themselves are determined by the very people who violate them. They hold onto ideas about relationships which are not helpful to them in their communication with peers and other adults like teachers. They can find it difficult to see adults as supportive. They are cautious about being hurt and are more likely to stay closed to the development of new connections or relationships.

They do not easily understand or engage with consequential learning. Their brains are so over-activated that they are able to take in very little and not learn new information easily. In particular, their memory systems continue to remain under stress. They fail to consolidate new learning. Their working memory for even the easiest set of instructions can be severely compromised.

Children and young people affected by trauma experience the present with little reference to their past, even though their behaviour, feelings and physiology are affected by their experiences of violation. They do not have access to the qualities that make them who they are. They have a transient sense of their own identity. Their future is without plans or a sense of possibility.

Through shaping and reshaping relationships and day to day interactions, intervention offers children and young people opportunities to heal some of the damage caused by such experiences of trauma. In order to achieve these important moments of repair, the approach to therapeutic work needs to be informed and supported by practice orientation that prioritises the needs of children and young people and gently and carefully responds to these needs.

While working with children and young people to reshape relationships and day to day interactions, staff must be mindful of the ongoing structures that may continue to reinforce trauma responses. The way young people are perceived and treated by the education, child protection, justice and health systems can reinforce their relational experiences, requiring a response that advocates for children and young people's rights, while simultaneously modelling other patterns of relating.

Understanding a strengths based approach to practice

Strengths based models of intervention have been shown to be replicable and effective in supporting individuals experiencing disadvantage and crisis. A strengths approach offers a genuine basis for addressing the primary mandate of community based support services – people taking control of their lives in meaningful and sustainable ways. It aims to:

- empower people to take a lead in their own care process
- work in collaborative ways on mutually agreed upon goals
- draw on the personal resources of motivation and hope and
- create sustainable change through learning and experiential growth.

A strengths based approach is a specific method of working with and resolving areas of concern experienced by individuals. It does not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties. Rather, it attempts to identify the positive resources available to individuals (or what may need to be added) as the basis for addressing the challenges resulting from the problems. Specifically, a strengths based model:

- seeks to understand and support the important variables contributing to individual and family/community capability
- provides a common language that does not further disadvantage people by ascribing them as causes of the problems they experience
- works to ensure that intervention strategies are client driven and relationship focused
- engages distressed people with respect and understanding
- perceives capacity building as a dynamic process that evolves over a life time
- affirms the reparative potential in people and
- aims to enhance strengths as opposed to deficits.

Strengths based approaches adopt a number of these principles. As with most principles, how well they are integrated into the approach by practitioners determines how effectively service-users can be supported to change and grow.





Understanding a person centred approach to practice

A person centred approach moves away from the practitioner holding an expert position to a model of working that puts trust in the innate tendency of people to find their own resolutions to problems in their personal or collective pursuit of achieving fulfilment of their potential.

Using a person centred approach, a practitioner works to build a relationship in which service users are supported to experience themselves as trustworthy, curious about the world, creative and compassionate. This relationship with the practitioner is the key through which change occurs. Service users are supported to feel free from threat, both physically and psychologically by practitioners who are deeply understanding (empathic), accepting (having unconditional positive regard) and genuine (congruent).

Person centred approaches rely on discovering what people want, the support they need and how they can obtain it. It puts service users at the centre of planning, listens deeply to them and their family and friends, learns over time what it is they want for their life now and in the future, and then acts on this.

The practitioner works to mobilise resources to assist the service users to resolve problems for themselves, follow their personal goals and achieve outcomes which are in keeping with their own ambitions and life purposes. The key features of a person centred approach are:

- the person is at the centre of planning and decision making
- family members and friends are full partners
- the development of a plan which reflects the person's capacities, the person's current and future needs, what is important to the person and specifies the support they require to make a valued contribution to their community
- the implementation of a plan that builds a shared commitment to action that uphold the person's rights and
- the review of a plan through processes of continual listening, learning and action aimed at helping the person to get what they want out of life.

Anglicare NT has articulated a person centred approach which reflects its organisational values of respect, fairness and community. In general, the aims of services with this value base are to:

- respect and see the whole person
- support a person to be in and create their own life
- focus on a person's strengths and potential
- facilitate a person's choices
- actively share power through respectful and balanced relationships with a person
- advocate for fairness and social justice and
- foster organisational person centred culture and practice.

Person centred approaches and strengths based approaches are complementary in their value base and stated objectives. In our practice framework, we adopt a person centred, strength based paradigm as two important cornerstones of the services we deliver.



Understanding the importance of culture when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

It is important for practitioners working with young people to understand and appreciate the importance of culture to the health and wellbeing of individuals, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As Muriel Bamblett said:

Organisations must rise to the challenge of protecting their cultural identities. If we neglect this aspect of our children's best interests we deny them the cultural and spiritual life that is their birthright. We also risk fundamentally damaging their wellbeing, growth, education and life prospects. Our children need to know their culture and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culture and family are inextricably linked. Culture and spirituality are part of the meaningful ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people interact with their families and communities and their land. There are no shortcuts to keeping our children culturally and spiritually strong: maintaining connections to family and community is the only way...

(as cited by Commission for Children and Young People, 2013, p 21)





The impact of the past

It is widely accepted that the many challenges facing Aboriginal people must be seen in the context of colonisation, disadvantage, oppression and marginalisation. The resulting impact is often one of fractured communities and the fragmentation of family relationships across successive generations.

At Anglicare NT we commit to challenge the structures that continue to colonise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities using decolonising methodologies. The impacts of the past reverberate into the present for Aboriginal people and continue to flow through systems unless we advocate for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be equal in our society. Practice with Aboriginal people must be embedded within a strong social justice framework. It must integrate an appreciation of the impacts of the **past** into current ways of understanding, assessing and intervening in the **present** with at risk and vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Intergenerational trauma

The wellbeing of Aboriginal populations cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the events and processes that followed Australia's colonisation. Aboriginal health is a product of a history of dispossession, exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation and inequality in various forms. Racism has affected a high proportion of Aboriginal people in contemporary Australia. It has created a lack of trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and impeded the process of healing and reconciliation (Paradies et al., 2008).

These legacies are implicated in the unique stress profile of Aboriginal people. Stress is highly prevalent across the spectrum of Aboriginal society today, irrespective of socio-economic status (Silburn et al. 2006). The stresses faced by Aboriginal children commonly include serious events such as the death or incarceration of a close family member (Milroy, 2008). Frequent and ongoing stressful events in early life can have a damaging effect on the developing brain of a child and alter the functioning of important bodily systems. This type of stress can be particularly harmful to mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in childhood (Zubrick et al., 2004), with negative consequences for wellbeing throughout life (McEwen, 2006).

The effects of stress and racism, and the related ongoing effects of colonisation, have created a burden that extends across generations of Aboriginal families.

'Intergenerational trauma' or 'Collective Trauma' is transmitted across generations and defined as

the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adults to children in cyclic processes as 'cumulative emotional and psychological wounding'

(Mu'id 2004: 9).

Where trauma is left unresolved, people can begin to internalise shame and guilt and, in more severe and sustained cases, whole communities can begin to think that pain and chaos is normal (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009).

Underpinned by the intergenerational trauma of past practices of colonisation and removal together with the current complexities and challenges facing many Aboriginal families and communities, Aboriginal peoples report significantly higher levels of stress than the wider Australian community. Multiple stressors were more commonly experienced in remote areas.

Reported stressors identified include:

- the death of a family member or close friend
- overcrowding at home
- alcohol or drug-related problems
- serious illness or disability and
- having a family member sent to jail or currently in jail.

It is argued that for Aboriginal people, healing must seek to address two inseparable layers of hurt – 'the harms of the past, as well as contemporary manifestations of trauma' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2007).

Guiding principles for practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Anglicare NT has adopted the following principles proposed by Smith et al (2006) to ensure that they implement culturally safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that is underpinned by relationships which are:

- non-judgemental
- respectful
- strengths-based
- holistic
- client-centred
- empowering
- inclusive
- transparent and
- responsive.

They also aim to integrate multiple ways of knowing with greater emphasis on experiential and cultural knowledge; and, facilitate healing and trusting relationships.

It is widely acknowledged that practitioners need to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. A partnership approach will reflect a respect for Aboriginal self-determination and be responsive to community needs and aspirations. It is important to recognise that families and communities, Aboriginal co-workers and other professionals are equally 'experts' in the process of ensuring the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children.


Developing an effective partnership takes time, trust and personal relationships. For most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, **who** you are is more important than **what** you are. Anglicare NT is committed to working in collaboration with Aboriginal Community Workers and other cultural consultants, who will advise about cultural matters, provide guidance in appropriate behaviour, and mediate between the practitioner and the family/ community. Most importantly, Anglicare NT acknowledges the experiences of Aboriginal peoples as being located not only in the histories of colonisation and abuses of power from the past but that they remain affected by continued practices of oppression. It is critical for all Anglicare NT staff in IYSS and Out of Home Care Services that they work to uncover the layers of language and entrenched beliefs that normalise racism, blaming and stereotyping of Aboriginal young people, their families and communities. This approach underpins the creation of relationships which are safe, valuing and respectful.

Understanding Therapeutic Crisis Intervention is important for responding to young people in distress

Anglicare NT has implemented the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) system as a behavior support model utilising de-escalation techniques for individuals in high states of stress. This crisis prevention and management system is an evidenced based and widely used approach in residential programs nationally and internationally. TCI provides staff with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and tools to help young people when they are experiencing a crisis in their lives that is causing them distress and they are not able to regulate their emotions.

The purpose of TCI is to provide a crisis prevention and intervention model for residential care facilities which will assist an organisation in;

- preventing crises from occurring
- de-escalating potential crises
- effectively managing acute crisis phases
- reducing potential and actual injury to children and staff
- learning constructive ways to handle stressful situations and
- developing a learning circle within the organisation.



Developing an effective partnership takes time, trust and personal relationships

What are our principles?

We work to repair the past to prepare young people for their future

Our objective is to support young people within their network of relationships to repair the impact of past trauma, disruption and loss in order to resource them to be more adaptive, open and resilient into their future.

- We believe that effective services aiming to prepare young people for their future and break cycles of chronic disadvantage should provide responses which address the patterns of recurring consequences of unmet needs which have been left unattended in the lives of young people.
- Our practice with young people will contain a mix of strategies which combine practical and emotional support in the present, therapeutic intervention which tracks hurt and vulnerability into their past and facilitates change oriented goal setting into the future.

We maintain a focus on the needs and rights of young people

Our approach keeps young people’s rights, needs and welfare as the primary focus at all times and declares that they are valued, heard and protected.

- Our approach enables young people to be empowered, to be respected and heard. It promotes their involvement in processes that affect them and incorporates features that are specific to childhood and adolescence, and integral to their ways of experiencing their world.
- It is imperative that we are sensitive to young people’s vulnerabilities and rights and take account of the issues that entrench adult authority and young people’s powerlessness and silence.
- Young people have an inherent right to protection, care and support.
- Young people who have experienced abuse related trauma and engage in challenging behaviour have experienced a range of abusive and disruptive experiences and are significantly influenced by their environmental context.
- All young people need to have their experiences of abuse and trauma acknowledged, be assisted to communicate and give expression to their experiences and to have these experiences understood.
- The language used to describe young people’s behaviour, motivation or functioning should not disempower them.
- An understanding of child development is pivotal in recognising the differential impact of trauma on young people. Young people who have experienced or continue to experience chronic traumatisation frequently experience developmental delays across a broad spectrum, including cognitive, language, motor and social skills. As a result, they display very complex disturbances, with a range of different presentations.
- Young people often show a combination of appropriate developmental behaviours as well as dysfunctional patterns of responses.
- Sensitivity to the developmental capacities and stages of young people is in itself a respectful orientation to practices of assessment and intervention.
- Young people with disabilities require additional support in order to ensure they are protected from abuse and supported to recover from their experiences of trauma.



We are relationship oriented

Relationships which are attuned and compassionate resource young people, in particular, to develop capabilities that will enable them to manage future challenges less reactively and more effectively.

- Improved outcomes for young people who engage in challenging behaviour are enhanced if a co-ordinated and unified approach within a young person's personal and professional network is developed and supported.
- Young people should be provided with opportunities and assistance to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- Young people rely on relationships to establish a sense of self, others and their world.
- Young people's families provide the platform for young people's development and their capacity to connect.
- Young people rely on attuned and contingent communication with adults that affirms and legitimises their experiences.
- Young people's understanding of their experiences is influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of their social network, including cultural and community discourse.
- The engagement of informal networks of support for a young person and his/her family greatly enhances the achievement of positive outcomes for the young person.
- Intervention will be sensitive to diversity of gender, sexuality and ability.
- Positive outcomes for young people are more likely when provided with continuity and stability of placement and/or care arrangements.
- Young people's experience of change is not separate to their experience of their culture. Young people strong in their own culture have access to relationships which heal.

We are person centred and strengths based

We work with the goals that young people set for themselves in relation to change. We respect that young people will commit to change when they are supported, connected and safe.

- All individuals are entitled to play an active role in exploring their options for change and leading the decisions that affect their lives, including young people.
- The relationship between practitioners and the young person and their family is what really counts in the change process.
- All individuals have the potential for change.
- Being honest and transparent with young people and their families will promote relationships with them and make it easier for them to see that practitioners are also aiming to make change possible for them.
- Change occurs in a sustained way when people's own internal capacities and strengths are harnessed and mobilised by their motivation to live in ways that are meaningful to them.
- The problems that individuals experience do not define who they are. Everyone is far more than labels which have been applied to them.
- Focusing on problems does not lead to change. Generating discussions about the strengths that people have in facing their problems, no matter how small they have challenged the problems, is more likely to lead to change.
- The culture into which a child is born has strengths and resources to support families. Culture is not a part of the problems experienced in families. Culture is a source of solution for families.
- Change is promoted when young people actively participate in the development of a plan which reflects their capacities, current and future needs, what is important to them and specifies the support they require to make a valued contribution to their community;
- When people experience a crisis, they also have created for them an opportunity to change.



We promote cultural connection

Every effort will be made to ensure that young people are able to strengthen and maintain their connection to their family, community, culture and land.

Children are not born automatically knowing their culture. They rely on others, including their family and residential care workers, to develop cultural understandings through their experiences.

Culture is conceptualised as a dynamic process of social and individual meaning making about relationships embedded in collective beliefs that enable those within the culture to understand themselves and their place in their community.

Strong cross-cultural practice within the program relies on reciprocal learning, facilitated by deep listening and working in partnership with children and young people to design, develop and test support or action that may be helpful.

In particular, our approach recognises the value and significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history and adheres to a holistic definition of health and well-being. There is wide agreement that the best approach to meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people is a combined approach – a western approach and a traditional cultural approach with a significant focus on understanding the intersection between Western and traditional understandings of trauma and well-being. Caring and parenting practices must reference appropriate cultural norms, practice and experiences.

Stemming from the Aboriginal holistic approach to health and wellbeing, we recognise the individual's interrelated physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural health and wellbeing, including their connection to their land, family and community. Thus healing approaches must be targeted at the individual, family and community level.

All of our workers pay attention to Aboriginal core values of interdependence, spiritual connectedness, links to land, language, group cohesion and connection to community. We encourage each other to think outside solely Western cultural frames of reference. This can be achieved by adopting a position of informed curiosity about cultural frames of reference that are different from one's own and using cultural knowledge brokers.

We use a trauma integrative approach

A trauma integrative approach shifts the focus from what is 'wrong' with this young person to what has happened to this young person.

Trauma is the emotional, psychological and physiological reactions caused by exposure to experiences of high impact stress related to abuse, violence and other forms of relational disruption.

Young people are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their developmental immaturity.

The way that trauma affects young people can vary depending on their age and developmental stage at the time the trauma started, how severe it was and how long it lasted.

Trauma is experienced in young people's thoughts, feelings and bodies. It impacts their relationships with family and friends, their ability to feel good about themselves, their ability to concentrate at school, and their ability to make safe decisions for themselves.

Young people's development can slow down or be impaired following trauma. It can often lead to them developing in some areas and not in others.

In reaction to experiences of trauma, young people engage in initially adaptive responses to survival which if they continue can become maladaptive patterns of functioning.

Because young people rely so much on the adults around them, they are even more intensely affected when it is these adults who cause harm to them.

Even after the trauma is no longer present, young people cannot move on and forget what has happened to them. Their brains and bodies continue to react as if the trauma is still continuing. They can experience the consequences of this in all aspects of their lives on a daily basis.

Without support, the effects of trauma that may have occurred in infancy, during childhood or in their teenage years will continue to reverberate through the lives of young people as they grow into adulthood.

The effects of trauma is mediated by the availability of safe and supportive relationships.

With support, young people can and do recover from traumatic experiences. We will always remember that the process of healing from trauma takes time. Patience is required. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

We create safety

Young people who have experienced toxic and high impact stress have a need for safety in their physical and relational environment. Their environment and the people in it have often been chaotic and unpredictable.

We create safety for young people by:

- letting them know that we are committed to keeping them safe
- being respectful in our interactions with them at all times
- conveying a sense of control, reassuring them that “we will get through this together”
- supporting them to keep their environment predictable and consistent
- by ensuring that we practice in ways that are culturally safe and respectful and
- spending time with them at times of the day that they might find difficult or challenging as well as creating opportunities for fun and enjoyment together.

We collaborate and work with each other and other services

The most effective responses occur when workers take responsibility to sustainably build coalitions of mutual respect with others to ensure that the needs of young people are met consistently across the contexts in which they live, learn and play.

- Establishing trust, transparency and accountability are important qualities of networks of practitioners who are working together to support disadvantaged young people
- Co-ordination of effort means that resources are applied efficiently and effectively, with an identified lead case manager
- Respect for difference enables networks to hold their unique approach and relationship with a young person but not jeopardise the overall outcomes being achieved collectively.

We are responsive to all forms of risk

Young people need us to continually resource them and those in their network to identify risks and be able to put in place effective plans that keep them safe from harm.

- The realistic evaluation of risks to young people from themselves and others is critical in ensuring that they can be supported to be protected
- The implementation and review of safety plans is a cornerstone of effective practice with vulnerable young people
- If appropriate, support people who know the young people the best are the starting point for all plans aimed at reducing risks.

We promote adaptability and resilience

Adaptive and resilient young people recover from challenges and are optimistic. They hold a mindset about themselves that tells them: I am not my mistakes, I can try again, things will get better, and I am not alone.

Adaptability and resilience are conceptualised as encompassing the qualities as depicted in the diagram on page 19. Adaptability and resilience requires:

- a belief in one's own self-efficacy, characterised as optimism and a belief that one's own efforts can make a difference
- an ability to trust in others
- feeling safe enough within a relationship to explore the world and take positive risks
- a consistent stable place to live and continuity of wider relationships
- opportunities to undertake meaningful roles (eg achieving at school, sport, household responsibilities) that provide both a positive sense of identity and source of self-esteem
- an ability to make decisions and learn from mistakes
- a good capacity for self-regulation with the support of key relationships
- a sense of identity based on understanding and knowing who one is, where one belongs and to whom they are important
- an ability to develop insight into one's own difficulties and
- a sense of humour.



What is our Practice Framework?

Drawing on the key messages from the knowledge base, our values and principles, our Practice Framework is presented in Diagram 2.

The three circles represent the experiences of children and young people across time. The top half of the circles are in green and represent the positive trajectory that flows from early childhood experiences of relationships which are attuned, predictable and secure. In the present, these young people are growing up with personal strengths, are connected to others and actively involved in learning through safe developmental opportunities. As they move into their future, their past serves to provide the foundations that promote relational experiences that lead them to develop a hopeful orientation and outlook, continue to value learning, stay engaged in education or employment and are resourced interpersonally to move confidently into young adulthood. The transitions between each time point are characterised by experiences which promote them to be adaptive to change, open to new information and able to use challenges and manageable stress to act and feel resilient.

The bottom half of the three circles are in red and represent a developmental trajectory that reflects the detrimental impact of early experiences of disruption, trauma and loss. In response, young people engage in self-protective strategies which attempt to minimise the physiological and emotional correlates of fear associated with their internalised sense of threat and danger. They lock down to new experiences and become resistant to change. In the present day to day experience of their lives, these young people prefer to be disconnected from relationships having very little trust in their capacity to support and care for them.

Their minds and bodies are highly stressed and easily triggered into even greater experiences of dysregulation. As a result, their behaviour is often challenging and complex to understand. Their reactions can range from withdrawal to provocation. Without any form of intervention and compounding

experiences of trauma and stress, their future feels hopeless and not worth investing in. They are indifferent to their own belief systems, are out of touch with their own capacities and feel separate to important relationships. They feel alienated from the resources inherent in their culture and the relationships which help them to draw meaning from it. They experience deep shame for their failures and do not know how to resolve the distress that leads from it.

The staff in Youth Services run by Anglicare NT offer support to young people in the present with the view to young people experiencing these relationships as reparative of their past experiences and preparative of their future. To do so, Anglicare NT staff engage in practice which are strengths based, culturally strong, trauma integrative, relationally oriented, person centred and risk responsive.



Young people are resourced to engage socially in ways that promote their capabilities and strengths

This is visually represented as the large beige circle that spans the present, moving back and forward into the past and into the future.

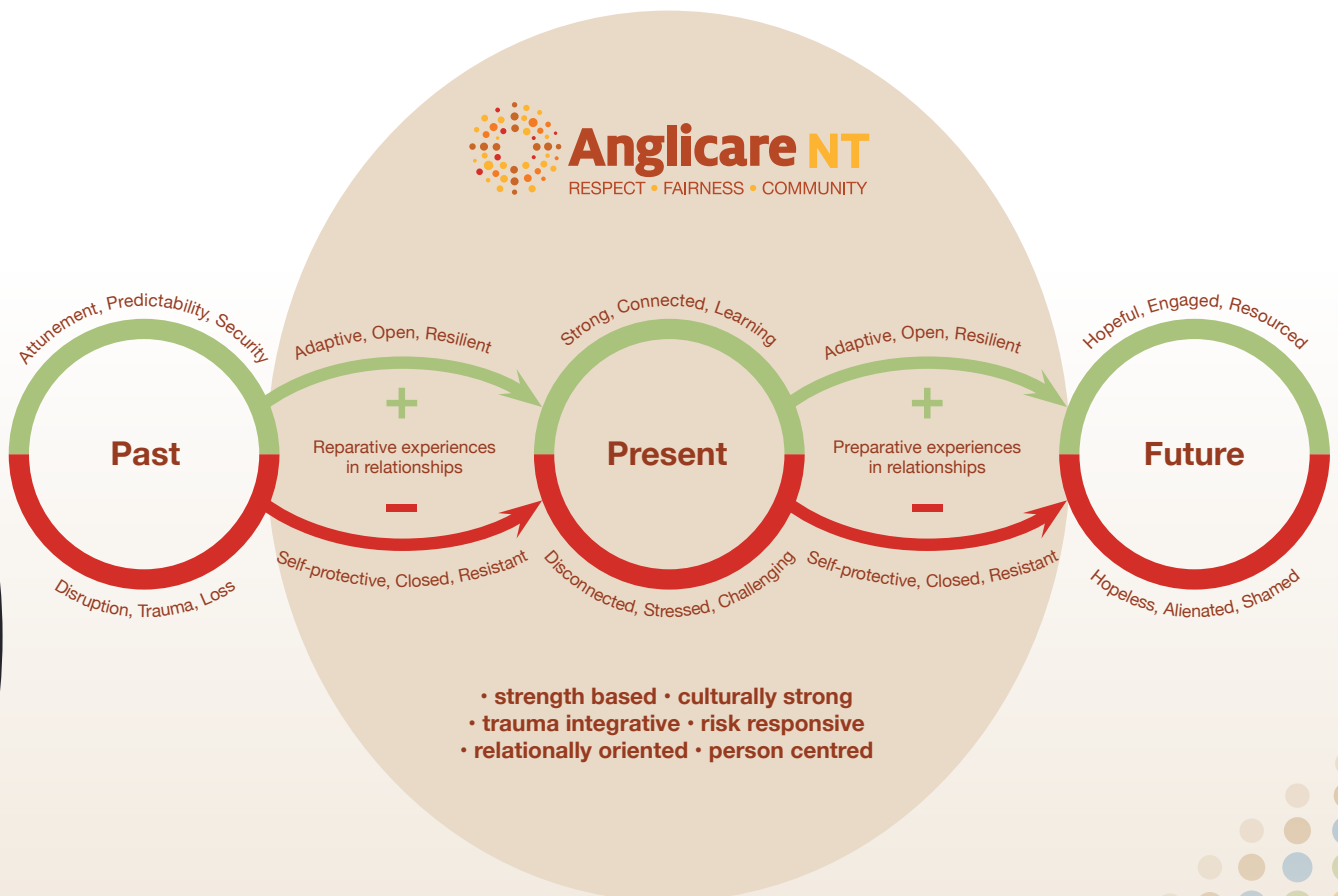
This map supports the implementation of practice that aims to improve the quality of family and peer relationships, connecting young people to their culture, providing attuned and comforting responses to distress, supporting the strengths already experienced by young people in their lives, working in a way that is inclusive of young people's own intentions and goals for their lives, and responsive to active risks of harm to the young person from others, themselves or their environment.

The specific focus of this integrated approach to practice is to afford staff everyday opportunities to engage young people in ways that acknowledge the deeper function of the behaviour that they are engaging in, facilitate interpersonal exchanges that address past patterns of unmet need and offer them a compassionate experience of relationship that reduces the stress load they carry with them.

At the same time, the practice framework reflects the need to collaborate with the families and community, where possible and safe, to support them to more effectively and sustainably meet the past and present needs of their young people. It acknowledges the importance of engaging in ways that make possible the positive influence of culture for young people and their relationships with important adults.

Ultimately, by reducing the stress load on young people, they are in a better place to be able to become more adaptive to the challenges in their relational and physical environment. They become better prepared for their future. These young people are resourced to learn and engage socially with others in ways that promote their capabilities and strengths. They become more resilient and are able to use and rely on networks of care and support which have been strengthened around them. They begin to have hope that their life can change and be better.


Diagram 2. Practice Framework for Anglicare NT Youth Services





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