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Safe and well

Supporting families, protecting children

Resilient Families Annual Report – Executive Summary

Reporting Period: July 2021 to June 2022

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Government of
South Australia

Executive Summary

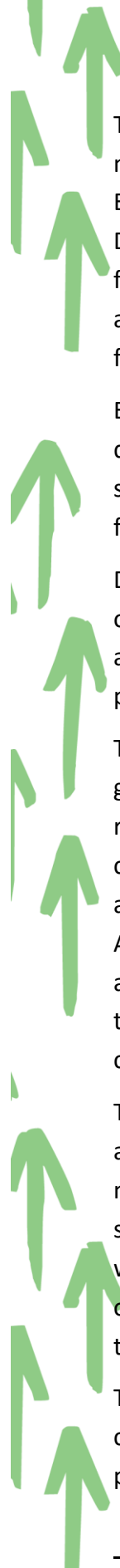
Resilient Families (RF) is an evidence-informed, therapeutic service that delivers outcomes for vulnerable children through intensive, long-term, in-home support that has been evaluated and shown to prevent children from entering Out of Home Care. RF takes a whole-of-family approach to building safety, resilience and stability for families where the presence of risk factors indicates the need for intervention to reduce risk and prevent harm to the child or young person. In South Australia, RF is a social impact investment, transacted as a 'pay by results' contract where TBS, DHS, DCP have agreed to work together to achieve a shared outcome, of preservation within the family home (and in community and culture) of a child under 9 years of age, or is unborn, where they might otherwise be removed to out of home care.

The catchment area for RF was determined through analysis of child protection data and consideration of the age range of children most likely to at risk of escalating into Out of Home Care. Via negotiated agreement, the Marion, Onkaparinga, Murray Bridge and Mid Murray Local Government Area were identified for operations as they contain the highest proportion of eligible children for the program.

Referrals to RF started in July 2021. DCP referred 15 families in the initial quarter to allow for RF caseworkers to engage with them as quickly as possible and fill individual caseloads. This was met with some initial challenges in identifying families with the appropriate complexity level and within the identified regional boundaries. Over the three subsequent referral quarters, referrals were provided as caseworker capacity became available for the high intensity engagement period with a total of 73 referrals provided. Families may be excluded from RF within the first 3 months of service provision, and with the exclusion of 13 families, the Intervention Group includes 54 families, 6 lower than the target of 60. In the first year, 9 families exited RF having achieved safety, 1 family had their child placed in OOHC¹ and 1 family disengaged from the program.

There were some initial challenges regarding eligibility of referred families. This included the age of the children being referred, the location of families being referred, and the level of family complexity. Identification of appropriate families greatly improved over the first year of the program as a result of active efforts by all parties. This is reflected in the Family Complexity data captured by CFSS Pathways Service. Most families presented with at least 2 of the main parental ecological risk factors (domestic and family violence, mental health and/or alcohol and other drugs).

¹ This child was returned to the care of the family at a later date



TBS uses the Family Outcomes Tool, which comprises four standardised measures of wellbeing, mental health, and empowerment: Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI), Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM), Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10, K5), and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The first three measures are parent-focused, and the SDQ is child-focused. Subjective adult wellbeing is measured using the PWI. When considering each individual at the measurement points, this smaller matched sample showed that PWI scores increased (5%), from 67.8 (n = 23) at initial assessment to 72.2 (n = 23) at follow-up.

Eligible children² engaged with the RF program experienced greater behavioural and emotional difficulties than the general Australian child population of 8. Scores increased (21%), in the matched sample, of behavioural and emotional concerns recorded over time (initial assessment, 14 (n = 11); follow-up, 17 (n = 11)).

Data will be sought for future reports regarding renotification of RF participating families, as well as other Government system indicators data, such as hospital presentations, educational attainment and welfare participation, to contribute to an understanding of the holistic changes for families who participate in RF.

Throughout the past 12 months of implementation, TBS has developed relationships with both government and non-government providers seeking collaboration, information sharing, advice and referral points. TBS are working directly with the relevant schools, kindergartens, and childcare centres, as well as the Department of Education's truancy team to support families with attendance at, and engagement with their education. They have advocated with the South Australian Housing Authority (SAHA) and housing providers to find support and accommodation; and worked collaboratively with Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS) to support families with the initial challenges of having a new baby. TBS is developing its relationships with the Aboriginal community within the southern metro region and connecting with ACCOs where appropriate.

There has been some staffing turnover, as was expected when forming a new clinical team, as roles are intensive and requires practitioners to be experienced in working within high levels of risk and managing very complex families. Towards the end of the first year of operation, the team had stabilised. All staff within RF have tertiary backgrounds and a minimum of 3 years' experience within the child protection sector. TBS has provided extensive training and development opportunities to support the implementation of the Resilient Practice Framework used by the RF team and its practices.

The impact on COVID-19 has been realised both in the workforce and in the client group TBS has continued to provide face-to-face services throughout the period and working within the pandemic provided opportunities for practitioners to engage through different mediums.

² Only children aged 8 years and 11 months at referral are included in the wellbeing and outcome indicators, which aligns with how the outcomes payment will be calculated for the Intervention Group