

YOUTH PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Youth Justice Model

2021 Practice Framework & Evaluation Summary

The Youth Partnership Project set out to design and pilot an alternative approach to youth justice – based on the premise that if we can predict the young people likely to end up in the justice system, we have an obligation to provide proactive support to prevent this outcome.

The resulting Youth Justice Model has been piloted in the Armadale District since 2017. This summary provides an overview of key highlights of the Phase 2 Pilot: the development of an evidence-informed Practice Framework, and evaluation reports by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation and Social Outcomes.



About the YPP’s Youth Justice Model

The Youth Partnership Project (YPP) is a strategic project, bringing state government agencies, local government and the not-for-profit community sector to work better together to improve outcomes for young people with complex needs through the planning and delivery of community services.

When the YPP was established in 2015, the data showed that despite lots having been tried to combat youth issues, little was changing. A better, proactive approach was needed – and we set out to design that approach.

It is premised on the theory that if we get the **RIGHT SUPPORT**, to the **RIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE**, at the **RIGHT TIME**, we will not only create significant savings in expenditure on statutory services but, more importantly, **YOUNG PEOPLE WILL THRIVE** in their communities.

A New Practice Framework to Support Young People with Complex Needs

After an initial 3-year pilot, the Youth Partnership Project’s Youth Justice Model entered a second pilot phase in 2020, with a focus on strengthening our approach through the development of an evidence-informed practice framework to support young people and families across the domains of youth, family, and education support.

We partnered with the Centre for Evidence and Implementation, who helped us develop the practice framework by drawing on our experience of the initial pilot, expertise of our partners, and the existing evidence base. The new practice framework was implemented throughout the YPP’s second pilot phase, with extensive training and coaching of the YPP Operational Team, and minor adjustments made to improve its delivery. This strong practice framework has now been embedded into the Youth Partnership Project’s Youth Justice Model, which is summarised below.

 <p>Engagement & Building Relationships</p> <p>People change people’s lives, not programs. We intentionally provide space to build positive, safe, and trusting relationships with & between young people, families and the YPP Team, which means we can face challenges head on, together</p>	 <p>Youth Support</p> <p>Youth workers help young people strengthen their capacity to make positive life choices & avoid risks by developing social-emotional skills for regulating their behaviour. Young people practice and apply these skills at home, school and in the community.</p>	 <p>Family Support</p> <p>Families build skills to solve problems and increase safety, and improve overall family functioning.</p> <p>Family support workers help families focus on ensuring positive, warm & responsive caregiving to bring families together.</p>	 <p>Education Support</p> <p>Working with young people, families, & schools, we build capacity for young people to attend & engage in educational activities, & promote a positive sense of self, while increasing the family involvement in the young person’s education.</p>	 <p>Coordinated & Holistic Support</p> <p>Every families need are unique, but working with our partners, we can provide specialised support.</p> <p>We help families navigate and engage in the complex system to ensure they get the right support for their situations.</p>	 <p>Sustainability Planning</p> <p>We’ve always got eyes on the long-term goal, and plan to sustain gains and overcome setbacks as they arise.</p> <p>Our ultimate goal is to enable families to create stability and to independently access the supports they need in the community.</p>
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About the Evaluation Process

Two external consultants were commissioned to support the implementation and evaluation of the YPP’s Phase 2 Youth Justice pilot. The Centre for Evidence and Implementation delivered the evidence-informed Practice Framework and evaluated its implementation. Social Outcomes was engaged to report on client outcomes and provided a high-level economic analysis. Both organisations analysed client data from validated tools and government agency administrative datasets. Several focus groups and interviews with critical stakeholders and participants were also conducted.

Findings

Implementation

“Staff consistently deliver the practice framework with strong fidelity.”

CEI found that the practice framework was implemented with high fidelity (i.e. delivered the way it was planned) and is well received by staff.

Meeting A Need

There are estimates of “sufficient local need for approx. 80 families per cohort”

There is strong evidence of local need for the service in the Armadale District– and most likely in other locations.

Collaboration

At a systems-level, stakeholders agreed the approach to identifying and supporting young people with such complex needs was a significant improvement on business-as-usual and would ideally be replicated elsewhere. For example, in the case of one boy, child protection, police and schools worked in ‘lockstep’ to provide the needed family and domestic violence supports in the home and developmental learning supports at school. In some instances, however, there were limitations to what the partnership could achieve in influencing housing, which could have had a significant stabilising effect for families.



“Because we’ve identified a group of kids – and using police information, education department information, CPFS information – you’ve got buy-in, because the central thing is that there is a purpose here.”

“In the YPP, senior agency leaders [are] brought together to troubleshoot issues...It’s not just case coordination –it’s actually doing the required work, which is different to the default position.”



Indications of Success

Social Outcomes found that while the total size of the cohorts is small, there were indications of success:

All participants had
AVOIDED OFFENDING BEHAVIOURS
at program exit

“ I feel safe.”

There was a decrease of
85
suspension days across the cohort

“Dad has now started advocating for himself with the school and for his children”

ENGAGEMENT remained **EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH**
across the service period

“[Kenny] has shown significant improvement academically, linked to how he has engaged and how his confidence has been built up.”

Some improvement in **PROTECTIVE FACTORS** like:

- parenting skills
- children’s management of social & emotional behaviours
- academic success at school

Return on Investment

Social Outcomes found that without the intervention, Cohort 4 **participants are likely on track to cost the government substantial money** – ~\$3 million, based on *Their Futures Matter* modelling.

It follows, that if the YPP Youth Justice Model reduces the future reliance of these children on government by 10% **the program almost pays for itself** (~\$300k savings). Meanwhile, a reduction of 20% would equate to net positive (~\$600k savings).

Summary

The YPP Youth Justice Model epitomises a pilot project at the cusp of making significant discoveries of vital importance to the WA government: about how best to prevent children at significant risk of entering the justice system from fulfilling their predicted criminal pathways; and improve the systems to support those outcomes.

The outcomes that have been observed, whilst created for a small cohort, have the potential to improve the futures of many more young people who would otherwise fall into patterns of offending and intergenerational disadvantage. While additional investment will be required to test these outcomes at scale, this investment can potentially pay for itself with just a 10% reduction in the interaction with government systems and reliance on government services, and therefore is an investment that may be worth making.

The YPP Youth Justice Model is a collaborative cross-sector initiative, led by:

Department of Communities, Department of Education, City of Gosnells, Save the Children & WA Police Force