



Believing In
Children,
Young People,
Families &
Their Future.

Inquiry Into Capturing Data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria **Questions on Notice**

Berry Street appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to questions taken on notice during Berry Street's Inquiry hearing 6 August 2024.

Response to Committee Chair Ella George's question on notice

Outline any data or analysis relating to children in Residential Care who have experienced family violence?

Berry Street has a range of data and information relating to children in residential care that is provided at referral and through ongoing work with care teams while children are in our care.

At present this isn't reported as data relating to a history of family violence, but this information is readily available and is used on an individual basis to ensure we are meeting the needs of all children placed in our care.

A survey of the present cohort of young people in residential care indicated that approximately 90% had experienced family violence. To ensure Berry Street best meets the needs of these young people we have implemented the Teaching Family Model (TFM) across all homes. TFM is a trauma-informed, therapeutic, Evidence Based model of care that ensures young people are supported with the highest quality of care. The model builds strong and healthy relationships, enables young people to learn new skills and to reconnect safely with family.

Response to Annabelle Cleeland MP's questions on notice

In relation to the recommendation for increased funding for child and family service programs. List any funding deadlines, what support is needed. What research and assessment are available on effectiveness. Specify where this relates to the terms of reference to the Inquiry.

- **Family Violence Advisor (FVA) role:** Berry Street's Family Services program in the North is funded for a 0.8 FTE FVA role. The FVA role provides advice, consultation and build capability across the workforce in the North East (NE) metropolitan Family Services Alliance in relation to responding to families experiencing family violence. Family Services programs can work with the whole family unit, including people using violence. The NE Family Services Alliance has recently grown by over 20% servicing eleven

organisations, without increased funding for FVA role. According to Alliance data analysis, families where family violence is indicated are 20% more likely to close successfully after an FVA consultation, evidencing the benefit of this role to the families we partner with.

This role contributes significantly to the identification, assessment and management of information and risk relating to people using violence in families engaging with Family Services programs. It is recommended to fund and integrate this role throughout all regions to ensure specialist support is available to all programs and Practitioners where there is an intersection of family violence, to further support identification, assessment and safe intervention.

Outline any risk associated with a database that includes adult and youth perpetrators.

More information is required to understand the purpose and composition of a shared database, who will have access to the data, to provide a comprehensive response.

Considerations in relation to risks placing adult Person Using Violence (PUV) and young people using harmful behaviours in a shared database include:

- **Language considerations.** Young people using harmful behaviours should not be referred to as “perpetrator” given their developmental context, and often trauma context as victim survivors of family violence. Placing them in the common database may lead to inappropriate and unhelpful use of labelling.
- **Impact on Responses to young people:** Potential risks for conflating the response to Young People using harmful behaviours and Adult PUVs.

Supported by ANROWS research, Adolescents using violence in the Home (AVITH) programs identify that the drivers for use of violence/harmful behaviours are different for young people. The majority of whom are victim survivors from an adult PUV themselves.

There is limited research relating to Young People using Intimate Partner Violence to fully understand the implications for a database shared with Adult PUV.

- **Misidentification:** Concern in relation to misidentification of young people as “perpetrators” being placed in a shared system, when service assessment clearly identifies that they are victim survivors of adult PUV. Misidentification may occur following incidents fuelled by a parent’s use of violence, or the young person scapegoated by the adult PUV or other parental capacity concerns due to the actions of an adult PUV.
 - What would be the mechanisms for correcting misidentification as “perpetrator” of violence/harmful behaviours on a shared database?
 - What are the implications for information stored on a shared database in relation to misuse in the Children’s Court and Family Court systems?

- **Impact on seeking support through police involvement:** While police involvement should primarily be used in relation to risk/safety issues, what impact could a shared database have on families contacting police as part of a safety plan for a young person using harmful behaviours in the home? Barriers already impede families contacting police including fear relating to police, Family Violence Intervention Orders, Child Protection, shame. The unknown implications of a shared database could create additional barriers to seeking police support.
- **Recommendation:** PUV, AVITH, programs supporting young person using harmful behaviours in intimate partner relationships, and victim survivor programs be included in any design considerations in relation to a shared database for Adult PUV and young people using violence/harmful behaviours.

Consideration of risks that may reinforce over-policing/over-surveillance of marginalised groups including First Nations people, and culturally and linguistically diverse people.