



Government
of South Australia

Working with Vulnerable Youth

Key Concepts and Principles

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1. Introduction

For young people, the period between 12 and 25 is a critical time during which they experience significant physical, mental and emotional changes. While most young people manage the transition from childhood, through adolescence to adulthood successfully, a minority do not. Some young people are at particular risk because they have additional challenges to overcome and fewer resources and supports to draw on; these young people face a higher risk of doing poorly and not reaching their full potential.

This document identifies key concepts and principles relevant to understanding and working with vulnerable young people. It is intended to inform the work of organisations so that services to vulnerable young South Australians are provided in a manner that supports them to achieve the same outcomes that are sought for all young South Australians – that they have a strong sense of wellbeing and are positive about their futures.¹

2. Vulnerable Youth²

2.1 Definition

There is no universal definition of the term ‘vulnerable’. For the purposes of this document vulnerable youth are defined as young people aged 12-15 ‘who, through a combination of their circumstances, stage of development and barriers to participation, are at risk of not achieving positive life outcomes’.³

2.2 Vulnerable Youth Framework⁴

As indicated in the vulnerable youth framework below, most young people (Level 1) transition through adolescence without experiencing any significant stress or crisis, and/or any problems or vulnerabilities are managed by existing familial, material, social and cultural supports. However, for a number of young people (Level 2), these supports are limited and require early intervention responses or, in some respects simply do not exist - or their level of vulnerability is so high that additional intervention is required to ensure their safety and wellbeing (Levels 3 and 4). Young people may move from one level to another over time.

The vulnerable youth framework can be useful when conceptualising programmatic responses so that the needs of young people from across the spectrum are being met with an appropriate and corresponding quantum of community support and service provision.

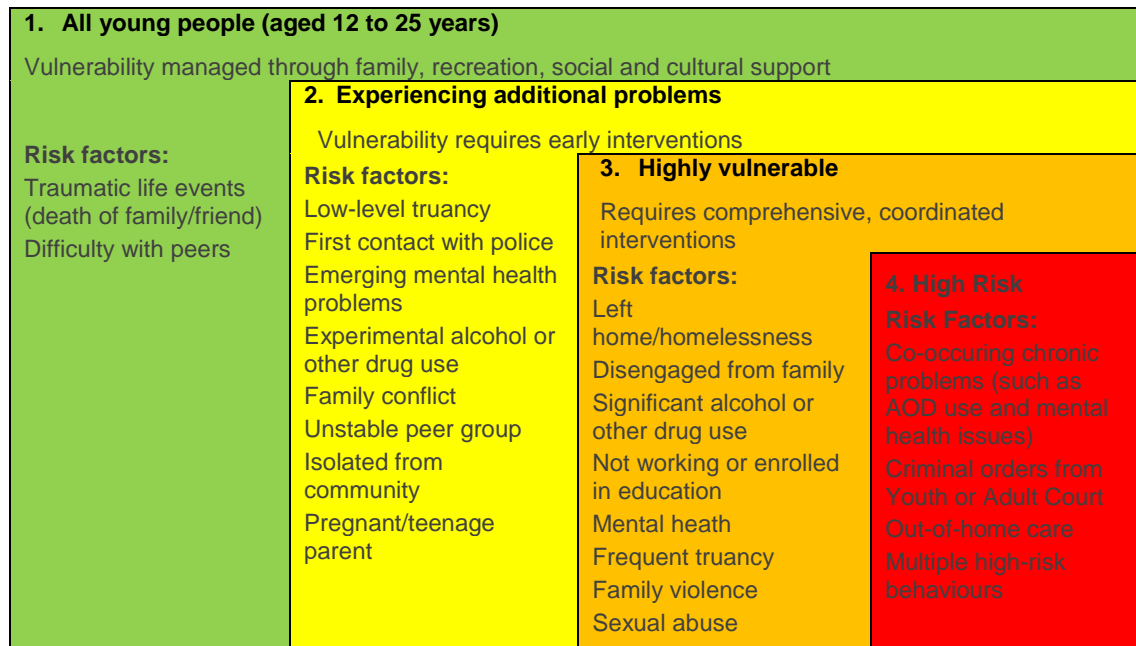
¹ *youthconnect* South Australia’s Youth Strategy 2010-2014 Government of South Australia p6

² The use of the term ‘vulnerable youth’ is not meant to imply that some young people are inherently vulnerable; rather their vulnerability is caused by the circumstances they may experience or are exposed to.

³ *Vulnerable Youth Framework - Positive Pathways for Victoria’s vulnerable young people: A policy framework to support vulnerable youth*. 2010 Victorian Department of Human Services Melbourne Victoria

⁴ The information in this section is, with a few minor changes, from the discussion paper written by Johnson B., Leebeek M., Crane P., and Buckley J., *Re-visioning the Queensland Youth Sector: Principles to inform the Queensland Government’s Youth Strategy and Sector Review Process* viewed on 7 August 2013 at <http://www.dovetail.org.au/media/58447/re-visioning%20the%20qld%20youth%20sector.pdf>

Figure one: Vulnerable Youth Framework



Source: *Development of a policy framework for Victoria’s vulnerable young people*, Victorian Government, 2008 p12 (Note - age range in Victoria is 10-25 years).

2.3 Risk and Protective Factors

The vulnerable youth framework is useful in identifying common risks or harms that certain groups of young people face. However it does not explain why some young people fare better than their peers even though they face identical circumstances and risks. Therefore it is useful to extend upon this framework by identifying the range of both risk and protective factors, and how these interplay to determine the overall resilience levels of a young person. The following table lists the various risk and protective factors across social, environmental and individual domains⁵.

⁵ Note this is not an exhaustive list.

Figure Two: Risk and Protective Factors ⁶

Social Factors		
Location	Protective factors	Risk factors
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular school attendance positive relationships with teachers, coaches and peers participation and achievement in school activities access to personal, interactional and academic support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic challenges truancy peer rejection bullying suspension and exclusion perceived irrelevance of school lack of support for learning needs ascertained learning difficulties
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nurturing, supportive attachments to family and extended kinship networks parental supervision and interest in child's growth and development parent access to relevant resources and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> family conflict and violence neglect or abuse parental rejection lack of consistent nurturing and supervision family poverty and isolation parental offending alcohol and drug dependencies
Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> associating with pro-social peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> associating with offending peers participating in anti-social behaviour
Environmental Factors		
Location	Protective Factors	Risk Factors
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stable and affordable housing access to services participation in community activities, such as sport and recreation involvement with supporting adults income security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of support services socio-economic disadvantage discrimination lack of training or employment non-participation in sport /recreational clubs and activities lack of income lack of housing security
Life Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> avoiding, surviving and recovering from harm caused by loss and trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> death and loss severe trauma repeated out-of-home placements exiting care early pregnancy homelessness
Individual Factors		
Location	Protective Factors	Risk Factors
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pro-social attitudes competent social skills regard for self and others substance avoidance self confidence positive sense of identity and belonging healthy diet and weight, activity, fitness, and mental wellbeing sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offending history poor social skills low self esteem self-injury substance misuse/dependency anti-social attitudes and behaviour low self-control disregard for others poor physical, mental or sexual health.

⁶ *At Risk Initiative – program guidelines*, Version 1, Queensland Government Publishing Service, Brisbane; <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/communityservices/youth/yari-interim-program-guidelines.pdf>, (retrieved December 2012)

2.4 Vulnerable Groups

There are some groups of young people who may experience particular vulnerabilities. These include young people: of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; experiencing mental health issues; living with disability; with caring responsibilities; experiencing homelessness; under the Guardianship of the Minister; involved in the criminal justice system and disengaged from family and school.⁷ They may also include young people who: are experiencing chronic economic and social disadvantage; are migrants or refugees; are pregnant and/or parenting; with substance misuse issues; identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer; have an intellectual disability or learning difficulties.

Tailored responses are required in order to effectively support these groups of young people where ever they may find themselves along the spectrum of vulnerability.

It is important to note that while these characteristics may mean a young person is at a higher risk of being vulnerable, they do not in and of themselves predict adverse effects on a young person's wellbeing.

2.5 What works? Key approaches with vulnerable young people

As the need for more holistic approaches to complex needs has been recognised, programs and services for young people have increasingly appreciated the significance of families and informal social support in working with young people.

2.5.1 Young People and their Families

Generally, families are a significant (or potential) source of economic, material, emotional, and social support, and young people are often dependent on parents and care-givers for resources. Conversely, family factors can be a major cause of stress and trauma and a significant number of those young people who either disengage from school or work and/or experience social dislocation and homelessness come from highly dysfunctional or abusive family environments.

Evidence shows that connection to 'a family' is a significant protective factor for longer term wellbeing. Importantly, this is not always the biological family of origin. Sophisticated interventions recognise the ideal extent of involvement that biological families - and other types of 'families' - can play in a tailored responses on a case-by-case basis, as well as the role that new relationships play in the development of enlarged 'families of destination'.

2.5.2 Young People and their Communities

Young people are also members of communities. A number of community level characteristics have emerged as having a positive or negative impact on a young person's wellbeing. These include feeling welcomed and valued in their community, safety and freedom of movement, a variety of interesting activity options, cohesive community identity, safe green spaces, provision of basic needs such as food, water, electricity, medical care, sanitation, security of tenure, peer gathering places that are safe and accessible where they can meet others/ play, and a tradition of community organising and mutual help. It is also important that young people feel that their culture is valued in their community and they have a sense of cultural connection. Building

⁷ *youthconnect* South Australia's Youth Strategy 2010-2014 Government of South Australia p24

these community characteristics for all young people, including those who have high vulnerability is essential.

2.5.3 Young People, Learning and Earning

Education is the most effective means to enable young people to thrive, learn and grow to enjoy a productive, rewarding and fulfilling life. It is also an avenue to break cycles of disadvantage and a powerful way to reduce exposure to harm or participation in risky behaviours or crime.

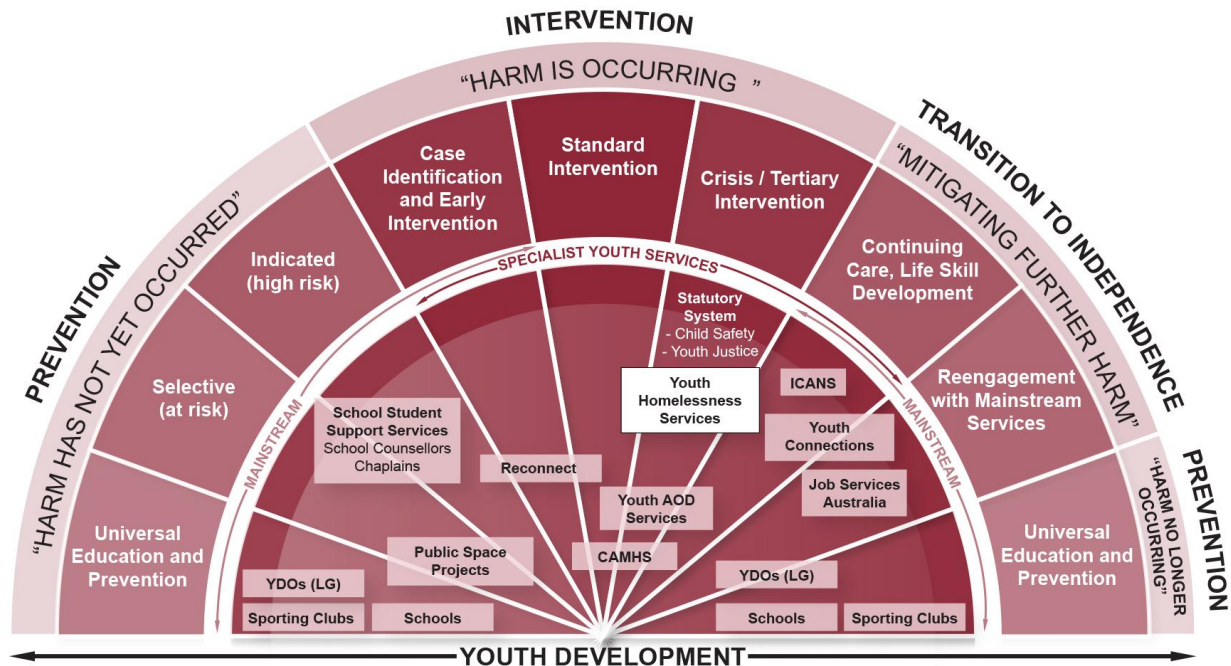
Service systems responses which focus on improving and sustaining young people's access to or engagement in these opportunities are considered best practice. An inclusive approach which supports multiple pathways of learning is critical to the participation of all young people in opportunities which result in lifelong wellbeing.

2.6 Service responses

Providing an appropriate service response to young people requires a continuum of services that seek to match youth risk and need on an individual basis.

The diagram below provides a schematic overview of the continuum of possible youth service responses available. It is important to note that the continuum does not indicate the relative size or distribution of these services across South Australia: some of the services are very small and some are not available in all areas

Figure three: Service Response Continuum



3. Principles for Service Organisations⁸

The principles outlined below should inform the work of organisations providing services to vulnerable young people.

3.1 No wrong door

The needs of vulnerable young people are best served by coordinated and integrated service responses.

Services should seek to develop collaborative partnerships within their local service system to ensure that whichever door the young person opens they are able to access available services. It is common for vulnerable young people to require responses from two or more services. Service responses that are integrated and jointly planned are easier for young people to navigate and access.

In order to facilitate a No Wrong Door approach, workers must have a broad knowledge of the other services and resources available in their community and the skills to engage young people with them as required. Organisations should make provision for workers to participate in networks and inter-agency activities to maintain relationships and keep their knowledge up to date. Services should also ensure they regularly distribute current information about their operation throughout their networks and local community.

3.2 Needs-informed services that respect human rights

Local communities, including the young people in them, have a central role in identifying the needs of young people in their area. Services should consider local need in developing their service models and in identifying particular target cohorts.

Services should be responsive to emerging need and promote the involvement of young people in community networks that build knowledge about locally emerging priorities. Acknowledging young people as experts in their own lives with the right to be involved in determining their own goals enables services to adjust their delivery of support services to better meet the needs of young people. This contributes to informed and coordinated community responses to emerging priorities.

Respecting human rights obliges services to be cognisant of young people's needs when accessing services, for example physical accessibility of buildings, access to translators, and childcare for children of young parents accessing services.

3.3 Proactive

Many young people do not actively seek help or understand that particular services exist to help them. Services need to adopt assertive approaches to identifying and engaging the young people they target. Common examples include assertive outreach (sometimes known as 'case finding'), co-location with existing points of contact, or providing free activities which appeal to the target group. Services may also provide

⁸ Information in this section from *Department of Communities Youth at Risk Initiative Program Guidelines March 2012* viewed on 9 September 2013

<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/communityservices/youth/yari-interim-program-guidelines.pdf> and the discussion paper written by Johnson B., Leebeek M., Crane P., and Buckley J., *Re-visioning the Queensland Youth Sector: Principles to inform the Queensland Government's Youth Strategy and Sector Review Process* viewed on 7 August 2013 at <http://www.dovetail.org.au/media/58447/re-visioning%20the%20qld%20youth%20sector.pdf>

information at community and public events. These provide opportunities for relationships to be built between workers and young people, often in informal, non-threatening settings.

3.4 Flexible service models

Good service responses should be able to flexibly engage and respond to the young person's specific situation in a way that the young person finds useful. Services should seek to employ a range of engagement strategies such as outreach, activity-based approaches and drop-in, rather than purely appointment based work. Responses can include a mix of experiential and verbal, structured and unstructured, individual and group strategies. When young people's circumstances change, practitioners require flexibility, drawing on a 'toolbox' of possible responses, for example, switching from counselling to the provision of material support.

A service model should also allow communities and local services to make an assessment of their own particular needs, and to attribute expenditure to areas of most significant concern. A balance needs to be found between the governance and parameters of funding agreements and local design of programming and service response.

3.5 Evidence based services

Service models should be based on evidence of service responses that have been demonstrated to contribute to achieving client outcomes. Ideally services should share information about good practice and innovative intervention strategies. This will help build a body of evidence on practice that can be accessed across the whole service system.

3.6. Measuring client outcomes

Services should capture and report on an appropriate level of client outcome data to inform future service development.

3.7 Continuous improvement and reflective practice

Services should seek to embed a culture of service improvement and practice reflection in their organisations. This culture encourages services to review and reflect on what has and has not worked at both the practitioner and the broader system levels. Workers should be supported to access training and encouraged to utilise professional supervision to increase their knowledge and skills, and to actively reflect on their practice. Feedback from young people, and where appropriate their families, can provide important information to inform these processes.

3.8 Planned support

Services should have an established approach to working with young people in a focussed and purposeful way.

Working with vulnerable young people requires constant ongoing consideration of their needs, the barriers they are facing in meeting their needs, and the strengths they possess which may assist them to achieve their goals. Assessment of client needs occurs through several phases of interaction which may vary according to level of client engagement and readiness as well as the service being offered.

At any of the stages identified below it may be necessary for the service to refer the young person to a more appropriate service, or engage partners in providing a coordinated approach aimed at meeting multiple needs.

A planned support approach may include the following stages which do not necessarily occur in a linear process:

- referral of the young person to the service
- entry/screening process
- engagement and intake
- initial and ongoing assessment (may occur throughout several phases)
- collaborative support planning
- engagement of networks
- direct service provision
- coordination of additional services
- monitoring and review
- exit planning/case closure and follow up
- evaluation.

There are many approaches to planned support, which may be driven by the practice framework of the organisation providing a service. The Queensland Council of Social Services has developed a handbook, *Planned Support Guide: An approach to case management* which can be used as a guide to working with young people in a focussed and purposeful way while still respecting their unique individual needs.⁹ The guide is available at http://communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Planned%20Support%20Guide_0.pdf

3.9 Working with particular groups of young people

There are certain considerations that must be taken into account when working with young people under 16 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, culturally and linguistically diverse young people, and young people with mental health problems.

3.9.1 Young people aged under 16 years

Services need to consider the following principles and activities when working with young people under 16 years of age:

- Develop age appropriate strategies for entry screening and ongoing service responses.
- Early assessment of the young person's capability and understanding of the needs for which they are seeking help, the choices available to them, and the likely and possible consequences of any proposed course of action.
- Assessment that:
 - includes consideration of whether the young person is at risk of harm or has been harmed, and whether this information needs to be reported on the Child Abuse Report Line.
 - determines the young person's ability to understand confidentiality and the types of support that would best meet the needs of the young person.

⁹ Queensland Council of Social Services, *Planned Support Guide: An approach to case management*
http://communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Planned%20Support%20Guide_0.pdf

- Support young people wherever appropriate to reconcile and strengthen family, kin and community relations in a culturally competent way, including:
 - consideration of the young person's family structure and extended family relationships, mentors and friendship networks
 - consideration of their role in the community and support provided by other government or non government agencies, including teachers and coaches
 - where reconciliation of the young person with their family is not a viable option, assisting the young person to establish and maintain relationships with kin, friends, mentors and community support networks and ensuring that they have access to safe and secure accommodation
 - supporting young people who are unable to return home (or refusing to return home) due to allegations of physical or serious emotional harm, neglect or sexual abuse, in accordance with duty of care responsibilities and the organisation's policies and procedures. A service may support the young person to contact the nearest Families SA office or the nearest Police Station to have their circumstances assessed. The young person must be informed about the service's reporting obligations in line with relevant legislation, the organisation's policy and procedures and duty of care responsibilities.

3.9.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are often at a greater risk of facing barriers to education, employment and health services, and are over represented in the youth justice and child safety systems. Therefore, cultural competency must be embedded in the organisational culture of youth services and in all aspects of service delivery.

Assessing a young person's strengths and needs includes an assessment of the young person's family and kin relationships, family/kin structure, and the role and involvement of extended family, the Indigenous community, friends and other agencies.

The incorporation of family engagement principles when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in assessment and case management is essential to achieving a positive outcome for the young person, their family and their community.

Working with community elders, Indigenous-managed services and extended family is important when responding to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to ensure responses are informed and supported by the key people and services in their lives.

Where appropriate, services should employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to provide services to Aboriginal young people.

3.9.3 Culturally and linguistically diverse young people

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds comprise approximately 30 per cent of the youth population in South Australia. Of these many are refugees or migrants, or the children of refugees or migrants, and have experienced conditions and circumstances known to increase their risk of vulnerability.

Barriers to CALD young people accessing services including: a lack of knowledge about services; a cultural mismatch between the services offered and the young people needing to access them; general distrust of services, stigma associated with needing and seeking help as well as difficulties with transport and finances. Where services are provided with assistance from same-culture professionals, young people may also be

concerned about confidentiality, particularly if they belong to small and emerging refugee communities.

Practices known to address these barriers and increase service uptake among CALD populations include:

- engaging in planned, regular outreach so that young people know about the service and are encouraged to use it
- orientating clients to the services so they know how it operates and their rights and responsibilities
- reviewing agency practices to ensure they are culturally inclusive and responsive
- consulting with CALD young people and encouraging their full and active participation in needs assessments and service planning, development and evaluation
- establishing and maintaining links and partnerships with multicultural agencies
- recognising and responding to the different needs within and between cultural groups, based on age, gender, religion, education, social and economic status and other factors including whether they arrived in Australia as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, the extent to which they have acculturated to mainstream Australian culture and where they are situated in the resettlement process.

3.9.4 Young people with mental health problems¹⁰

Mental health is the number one health issue facing young Australians aged 12 to 25 and contributes to almost half the burden of disease in this age group.

Mental health problems can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of young people and have long term consequences for them. Treating mental health problems in their early stage leads to improved treatment outcomes and prevention of future mental health problems.

Although young people have higher rates of mental disorder they are less likely than other age groups to seek professional help. Many young people are not aware of the signs and symptoms of mental illness and the stigma attached to both mental illness and suicide is a further barrier to them accessing appropriate services.

It is important that services working with young people appreciate the extent of mental health problems and have the capacity to identify the signs and symptoms of mental illness and knowledge of the health services available for young people.

Components of good practice in delivering health services to young people have been identified and include: being able to access services without appointments; assurance of confidentiality; promotion of health literacy to increase access; participant clarification of what the service does and what to expect from it as well as what is expected from the young person; monitoring young people's views of the service; and appropriate and smooth referrals.

¹⁰ Information in this section from **headspace** National Youth Mental Health Foundation Ltd, *Position Paper – young people's mental health* 12 October 2011
<http://www.headspace.org.au/media/10064/Young%20Peoples%20Mental%20Health.pdf> viewed on 11 March 2014.

4. Principles for supporting vulnerable youth¹¹

The following principles underlie quality, evidence-based approaches to supporting vulnerable young people. These principles may assist services to develop responses that contribute to the ongoing effectiveness of services provided to young people and are based on what has been demonstrated to work, through research and professional reflections on practice.

4.1 Build trusting relationships based on respect for human rights

Developmentally, adolescence and young adulthood can be characterised by times of difficulty in relationships as young people develop their identities and transition to independence. This experience is compounded for young people who have experienced significant loss and trauma in their lives, and lack supportive relationships to assist with these transitions.

Building working relationships based on respecting and valuing the rights and individual circumstances of each young person is critical to engaging clients in services, and empowering them to achieve long term outcomes. In this way, workers develop an understanding of the young people they work with — a pathway for affirming their capabilities and right to be treated fairly while challenging harmful behaviour and reinforcing the continued development of their competencies.

Young people must be able to trust the services that they access, and feel confident that their right to privacy will be respected and their information treated confidentially. They also need to know what recourse they have when their trust is betrayed.

4.2 Build on strengths and enhance protective factors

Understanding young peoples' strengths and capabilities is critical for accurately assessing needs and risks, and reducing high-risk behaviour. Workers can build on young people's unique skills, interests, abilities, experiences and competencies in ways that strengthen their protective factors and build their skills to actively participate in the community and economy.

Young peoples' family, friends, teachers, community and cultural connections, and networks are the primary sources of support in their lives. Risk assessments should be conducted in a way that identifies and reinforces these primary sources of support as well as the unique interests and talents of each young person.

Young people should be actively involved in planning and working towards the goals they decide to achieve. A focus on strengths enables young people to view themselves and their experiences more constructively and achieve the changes they seek in their lives.

¹¹ Information in this section from *Department of Communities Youth at Risk Initiative Program Guidelines March 2012* viewed on 9 September 2013

<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/communityservices/youth/yari-interim-program-guidelines.pdf> and the discussion paper written by Johnson B., Leebeek M., Crane P., and Buckley J., *Re-visioning the Queensland Youth Sector: Principles to inform the Queensland Government's Youth Strategy and Sector Review Process* viewed on 7 August 2013 at <http://www.dovetail.org.au/media/58447/re-visioning%20the%20qld%20youth%20sector.pdf>

4.3 Be responsive and flexible

Workers need to be flexible to respond to changing needs and circumstances, encourage innovation, and change and strengthen the young person's linkages with their peers, families, school, local community and culture.

Workers should seek to develop services that are relevant, innovative and responsive to the needs of young people in their community context, taking into account their organisation's resource capacity.

Responsiveness requires workers to take into account the young person's age, life experiences, beliefs, identity and circumstances when providing support.

Workers need to be flexible to respond to changing needs and circumstances, and encourage innovation and change, and strengthen the young person's linkages with their peers, families, school, local community and culture. Responsiveness in practice means that workers constantly assess with the young person the level and intensity of support they require as they work towards achieving the goals they have set for themselves.

Workers need to refer young people to other agencies when they cannot offer the assistance and support young people require. This transition needs to be done at the young person's pace, as change may trigger uncertainty and mistrust. Most young people look for reassurance and ongoing support during referral to new services and workers.

4.4 Promote young people's participation

It is important that young people have the opportunity to participate in making the decisions that affect them. Participation strengthens motivation, legitimacy and quality of interventions, as young people commit to their support plans and achieving the goals they set for themselves. Participation processes build skills that promote personal development and recognise young people's contributions to the community.

Young people have a right to voice their opinions, have their views listened to, and to be taken seriously.

Adopting a strengths approach invokes the important principle of 'power-with', which emphasises the development of collaborative relationships where the expertise, knowledge and resources of all stakeholders are valued and shared in an integrated approach to change. Figure four is a useful resource table to use when determining whether interactions with young people are occurring in a power-balanced environment.¹²

¹² McCashen, W (2005) *The Strengths Approach, St Luke's Innovative Resources*, Bendigo.

Figure Four: Power-over vs. Power-with

Power-Over	Power-With
Relies on dominant knowledge to diagnose and describe people	Avoids composition of dominant knowledge, stories and labels
Validates and acknowledges people's experience but interprets experience according to particular models	Validates people's unique experience and honours the meaning they give to their experience
Tends to ignore or minimise structural and cultural contexts and under-value people's knowledge and meanings	Acknowledges the structural and cultural contexts of people's lives and the uniqueness of their experience
Ignores or minimises the value of people's strengths and capacities relying primarily in the worker's skills and expertise	Seeks to recognise and mobilise people's strengths and capacities as a central focus in change efforts
Is driven by organisational, state and professional priorities	Values people's aspirations and goals over other agendas
Expects people to meet workers on their ground and expects people to adapt to their context	Enables professionals to enter into people's worlds and landscapes, and honours their language
Confines practice to therapeutic or social work models, conventions and traditions	Creates a context of discovery and action, improvising and trying new things
Relies on worker expertise and gives weight to professional knowledge and skill	Relies on the shared expertise and knowledge of all stakeholders and gives priority to inclusive, transparent and consultative practice
Believes in objective knowledge Values diversity of knowledge and acknowledges subjectivity	Values diversity of knowledge and acknowledges subjectivity
Relies on having to know the answers and tends to blame people for failure, framing them as uncooperative, resistant or hopeless if things don't work out	Relies on finding the right questions and a team approach where responsibility is shared
Enables processes and outcomes to be determined by professionals	Enables processes and outcomes to be determined in partnership

4.5 Prevention and early intervention

It is critical to support vulnerable young people and families as early as possible. Social intervention research¹³ provides a model for developing and articulating prevention and early intervention in practice.

Prevention usually means stopping a social or psychological problem from developing in the first place. Early intervention aims to stop their further development as early as possible. The distinction between the two terms is relevant to the stage of problem development, rather than age of the young person or length of time they have been known to a particular agency.

Prevention also refers to activities which aim to avoid the need for more intrusive or intensive interventions such as income support or safe sex and contraceptive advice. These activities may be undertaken with young people already experiencing significant

¹³ Walker, M. (2005). *The statutory social worker's role in prevention and early intervention with children*. Social Work Research Centre, University of Stirling, United Kingdom.

issues in their lives, or in anticipation of issues that they may be at future risk of developing, such as homelessness, offending, unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

Preventing problem development and avoiding the need for more intensive services may be achieved by the same course of action, but this is not always the case. Early intervention to prevent problem development might indicate the need for more intensive services at an earlier stage than would otherwise have been the case.

4.6 Value and support families as a primary place of nurturing

Strengthening family relationships and parents' capacity to supervise and support their children can reduce the risk of young people engaging in risk-taking and offending behaviour which is associated with a lack of supervision. Where parents are supportive, antisocial peers are less likely to exert a negative influence and this further reduces risk factors for negative behaviours.

Young people should be encouraged to maintain connections or reconnect with their families where appropriate. This includes kin, extended family, foster carers and guardians who the young person identifies as a possible source of support.

Pregnant and parenting young people may require a range of service responses to meet their interrelated needs. While the wellbeing of young people is paramount, young people who are pregnant or have children also need attention focused on the safety and developmental needs of their children. Some young people may need to have support to strengthen their capacity to care for their children.

4.7 Respect and celebrate diversity

Young people come from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, interests, cultures and languages. Services need to be accessible and have the capability to address the needs of young people regardless of cultural, social or sexual identity. Engaging young people requires an inclusive, safe and respectful environment in which individuals are treated fairly. Young people should be actively encouraged and supported to maintain their cultural, social and friendship connections.

This means that workers need to respect and celebrate the diversity of young people who are refugees, speak different languages, live different cultures and identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Responding to their specific support needs means considering their family and kin relationships, cultural values, sexuality, and gender identity issues.

Where possible, services should employ workers who respect and understand a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, cultures and languages.

4.8 Strengthen culture and connections

Service responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people should ideally be delivered by an appropriate service or individual who is from the young person's community or language group. Where that is not possible or appropriate, responses should be delivered by a non-Indigenous person who has undertaken cultural awareness professional development, in consultation with a relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person/organisation.

Young people from CALD backgrounds have varied degrees of connection to their culture, both in Australia and in their home country. Each young person's story of arrival to and/or growing up in Australia is different and they may have suffered loss, conflict, trauma or abuse.

5. Further Information

For further information please contact:

Office for Youth

Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Phone: (08) 8207 0452

Email: officeforyouth@sa.gov.au

Web: www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au