



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Child
Family
Community
Australia



Collaborative practice in child and family welfare: Building practitioners' competence

Nicole Paterson, Toni Cash and Chloe Warrell

CFCA webinar

18 March 2020

Please note: The views expressed in this webinar are those of the presenters, and may not reflect those of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, or the Australian Government.



House keeping

- Send through your questions via the chat box at any time during the webinar.
- Let us know if you **don't** want your question published on the online forum following the presentation.
- All our webinars are recorded.
- The slides are available in the handout section of Gotowebinar.
- The audio and transcript will be posted on our website and YouTube channel in the coming week.

Working together to keep children and families safe: Strategies for developing collaborative competence



- A new practice paper aimed at supporting practitioners to navigate collaborative relationships
- Co-produced by CFCA and Emerging Minds: National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health
- Informed by consultations with professionals in the child protection and child and family welfare sector

[The full practice paper is available for download on the CFCA website](#)



Why focus on collaboration between child protection and child and family welfare services?

- Cross-sectoral collaboration is an essential part of effective practice with children and families who have complex needs.
- Service system is still fragmented, leaving practitioners without guidance on how to collaborate in an imperfect environment.
- We identified a need to help practitioners to navigate cross-sectoral collaboration.



What is collaborative competence?

- An individual practitioner's collaborative skills or capabilities
- The ability to develop and sustain effective cross-sectoral relationships in real-world working situations
- Not something that can be prescribed through protocols and procedures, or acquired as technical competencies (Hood et al., 2016, p. 493)
- A skillset that practitioners can draw on while collaborating in far-from-ideal service environments (Hood et al., 2016)

Strategies for developing collaborative competence

- **Understand** the differences between sectors
- **Clarify** the specifics of collaboration
- **Communicate** with collaborative partners



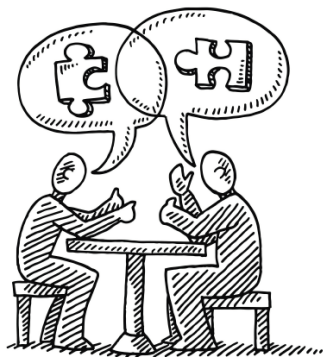
Strategies for developing collaborative competence

Understand the differences between sectors, for example:

Feature	Child protection	Child and family welfare
Primary client	Children	Families, parents, or children
Primary focus	Safety and wellbeing of children	Safety and wellbeing of family members
Client engagement	Mainly involuntary	Mainly voluntary
Coverage	Resources concentrated on families at high risk	Resources available to more families at an earlier stage
Expertise	Identifying (risk factors for) child abuse and neglect	Identifying therapeutic needs of family members



Strategies for developing collaborative competence



Clarify the specifics of collaboration:

- Own roles and responsibilities
- Others' roles and responsibilities
- Possibilities for collaboration



Strategies for developing collaborative competence

Communicate with collaborative partners

- Articulate your shared understanding of collaboration
- Share information
- Address differences and conflict
- Discuss how collaborative practice is going
- Celebrate joint successes!



Summary

- Three broad strategies of collaborative competency: **understand, clarify** and **communicate**.
- Both structural and practitioner-level solutions are needed.
- Remember that there is often a common goal to support vulnerable children (or families), regardless of any differences between practices and ideas.
- Don't forget that children and families should be part of collaborative action as well.

References

- Atkinson, M., Jones, M., & Lamont, E. (2007). *Multi-agency working and its implications for practice*. Reading, UK: CfBT.
- Hood, R. (2015). How professionals experience complexity: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Child Abuse Review*, 24(2), 140–152.
- Hood, R., Gillespie, J., & Davies, J. (2016). A conceptual review of interprofessional expertise in child safeguarding. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 30(4), 493–498.
- Hood, R., Price, J., Sartori, D., Maisey, D., Johnson, J., & Clark, Z. (2017). Collaborating across the threshold: The development of interprofessional expertise in child safeguarding. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 31(6), 705–713.
- Orchard, C., & Bainbridge, L. (2016). Competent for collaborative practice: What does a collaborative practitioners look like and how does the practice context influence interprofessional education? *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 11(6), 526–532.
- Price-Robertson, R., Kirkwood, D., Dean, A., Hall, T., Paterson, N., & Broadley, K. (2020). *Working together to keep children and families safe: Strategies for developing collaborative competence*. Melbourne, Vic.: CFCA.
- Sims, D. (2011). Achieving collaborative competence through interprofessional education. Lessons learned from joint training in learning disability nursing and social work. *Social Work Education*, 30(1), 98–112.

Partnering in our work with young people with complex needs

Toni Cash

Manager, Practice Advice and Support
Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

Chloe Warrell

Team Leader
BEROS Brisbane & Lower North Coast



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Acknowledgements

- ▶ We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which we are standing, talking and thinking together today. We acknowledge elders past and present and emerging leaders and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the room today. We also recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have protected and raised their children for centuries and families and communities continue to do so while healing the hurt of colonisation.
- ▶ We also acknowledge the young people and their families who have taught us so much. Their stories and their spirit are here with us in this room as we think through ethical practice solutions to partner with young people with complex behaviours and needs.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Session outline

- ▶ Working agreement and our knowledge assumptions for the session
- ▶ Working in partnership
- ▶ Values and principles in our work
- ▶ Working with complexity
- ▶ Barriers to partnership
- ▶ Case study in parts
- ▶ The *Human Rights Act*
- ▶ Reflections
- ▶ Questions



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Young person 3 quote

‘They’re really good for emotional support, and if you need help with majority of things, like appointments and things like that, they come and pick you up and take you there and make the appointments with you, help you work through the stuff. And yes, they’re really supportive with a lot of things.’ - YP3



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Naming some assumptions

- ▶ Values, attitudes and beliefs are critical in this type of work ... do some 'exercise' of your values and beliefs.
- ▶ There is an evidence base to our work with young people. Key assumed knowledge bases are: trauma, attachment and development.
- ▶ Our organisations hold different frameworks for practice and we see this difference as a point of strength - not conflict.
- ▶ Young people experiencing high risk behaviours/complex needs are more vulnerable to having their human rights neglected (*Human Rights Act (Qld) 2019*)
- ▶ Use of language has the potential to help or hinder our work:
 - ▶ Use young person not kid
 - ▶ Say 'the young person we work with' not our/my young person.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Our Frameworks - Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women & BEROS



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

BEROS

- ▶ Relationship
- ▶ Voluntary cooperation
- ▶ Confidentiality across systems
- ▶ Transparent practice
- ▶ Young person takes the lead on change
- ▶ Work with the young person's reality
- ▶ Unconditional positive regard
- ▶ Sitting with risk

Knowledge base and theoretical perspectives:

- ▶ Harm minimisation
- ▶ Trauma-informed practice
- ▶ Development

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Strengthening families | Protecting children

Framework for practice

Best hopes **Safety** **Belonging** **Wellbeing**

Our vision Queensland children and young people are cared for, protected, safe and able to reach their full potential.

Values	Principles	Knowledge	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Family and community connectionParticipationPartnershipCultural integrityStrengths and solutionsFairnessCuriosity and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We always focus on safety, belonging and wellbeingWe recognise that cultural knowledge and understanding is central to children's safety, belonging and wellbeingWe build collaborative working relationships and use our authority respectfully and thoughtfullyWe listen to children's, families' and communities' views and involve them in planning and decision makingWe build and strengthen networks to increase safety and support for children, young people and familiesWe seek to understand the impact of the past, but stay focused on the present and the futureWe are rigorous and hopeful in our search for strengths and solutionsWe critically reflect on our work and continue to grow and develop our practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Individual and family basedCommunity and cultural basedResearch basedPractitioner basedSystems based	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engagement – the development of effective working relationshipsAssessment – critical reflection and robust decision making at key decision pointsPlanning – collaborative process for building rigorous change plansProcess – focus on processes that support and reinforce the practice





MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Young person 1 quote

‘I’m just like, it’s the best service. I’m just like honestly, it’s the best service I’ve ever worked with, yes, with all the connections through the department, and being in care. Honestly, BEROS and all that, definitely my favourite out of all them. There’s just more of a, they just care more. I don’t know. It just seems more genuine, the workers.’ - YP1



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Working in partnership - collaborative competence

Understand the difference in sectors

- Managing power dynamics and effective power sharing
- Accessing resources and strengths - the sum of our resources and strengths is greater in partnership than individually

Clarify the specifics of collaboration:

- Clarity of roles and responsibilities to underpin effective partnership
- Clarifying who is best positioned to undertake tasks

Communicate with collaborative partners:

- Developing effective communication processes and pathways - including management of conflict when it arises
- Reflecting on our successes and challenges to keep improving



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Case study

Part 1

- ▶ Referral for 14-year-old young woman who had been self-placing for a number of months across locations - including family and peer networks
- ▶ Dis-engaged from her CSO and hadn't physically been sighted for a number of months
- ▶ Child Safety identified concerns were around drug use (usually meth), more specifically intravenous use
- ▶ Disconnection from supports
- ▶ Youth Justice involvement - breaching orders due to not attending probation meetings
- ▶ Potential exploitation and transactional sex occurring for drugs and housing



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Values and principles

Part 1

- ▶ We know that some young people need a different response because of the complexity of their behaviours.
- ▶ We want our casework to be responsive to the individual needs and circumstances of the young person.
- ▶ We know that relational practice is effective in working with young people with complex needs.
- ▶ We understand that these complex behaviours - while they can look dangerous and destructive to us - meet a need for the young person.
- ▶ We all have in common that we want each young person to be safe and have their belonging and wellbeing needs met.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Values and principles

Part 2

- ▶ Together - we bring a variety of skills and resources that we can use to build relationship and provide support/help for better outcomes for young people.
- ▶ Using the difference in frameworks allows us to have a critical/reflective lens to the work we do.
- ▶ No one can hold this level of complexity (danger and risk) on their own ... partnership is the ONLY way we can work safely.
- ▶ This type of complex work also takes a toll on those who are directly working with and caring for these young people.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Young person 6 quote

‘Yes, they don’t tell Child Safety or anyone anything unless they feel like I’m in danger ... It feels good. I’ve told [worker] a lot of things and I feel safe.’ - YP6



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Case study

Part 2

- ▶ After a number of months of BEROS engaging with the YP's ex-foster carer who was her one safe person she would regularly return to and referred to as 'Mum', the YP had the opportunity to meet BEROS and began engaging in case management support.
- ▶ It became apparent that the young person was not only dis-engaged from Child Safety but was actually finding herself in a highly conflictual relationship with her CSO and Team Leader, resulting in punitive responses to the young person's choices and access to resources.
- ▶ The YP continued to engage with BEROS but would often refuse to engage with Child Safety and on occasions where BEROS supported YP to attend the service centre, there were significant practice concerns observed.

For example: CSO grabbed the YP arm in reception to see if there had been any recent intravenous drug use.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Working with complexity

- ▶ Relationship-based practice
- ▶ Young people's genuine participation
- ▶ Using partnership to hold risk
- ▶ Responses are individual to the young person
- ▶ Caring for the safety and support network
- ▶ Consulting with others - including invited specialists



Case study

Part 3

- ▶ Young person accessed legal support to make a formal complaint about her CSO and see a new CSO.
- ▶ YP was supported through BEROS service for three years through many different contexts/circumstances.
- ▶ Pregnancy whilst in care - IA unsubstantiated



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Barriers to working in partnership

- ▶ Staff turnover
- ▶ Supervision and support
- ▶ Ideas around best interests of the child/young person
- ▶ Statutory authority and power Child Safety hold
- ▶ Lack of communication
- ▶ Time pressures and restraints
- ▶ Competing agendas
- ▶ Propensity to tell their partners what to do



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Young person 2 quote

‘I had the option. It was you could work with us and we’ll help you out with a lot of the support stuff. Or you could easily just say no and we wouldn’t bother you again. And I felt like that was really good because it gave me the choice. Well, if I wanted to work with them or not.’ - YP2



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

References

- ▶ Venables, J. (2019). *Emergency Response and Outreach for Young People Under Child Protection Orders: The Perspective of Service Users and Practitioners Regarding Service Delivery*. Unpublished raw data.
- ▶ Queensland *Human Rights Act 2019*.



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government

Contact Us

- ▶ **Toni Cash**
Manager, Practice Advice and Support
Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
toni.cash@csyw.qld.gov.au
+61 (07) 3097 5942
- ▶ **Chloe Warrell**
Team Leader
BEROS
cwarrell@communityliving.org.au
0447 385 199



MICAH PROJECTS

Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community



Queensland
Government



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Child
Family
Community
Australia

Continue the conversation...

Please submit questions or comments on the online forum following today's webinar:

aifs.gov.au/cfca/events/collaborative-practice-child-and-family-welfare-building-practitioners-competence

